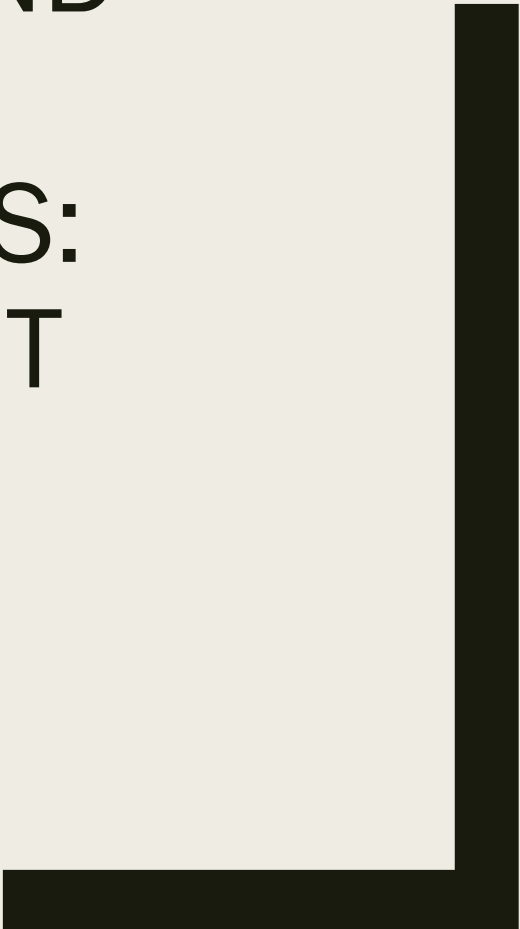


SPIRITUALITY AND  
CARING IN  
ORGANIZATIONS:  
THE COVENANT  
METAPHOR

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Mini-Conference, Cluj-Napoca, 26/10/19



# Organizations as rational – economic entities

Goals

Interests

Instrumentality

Control

Bottom line

Specialization, standardization, replicability, predictability

Cold, calculating, instrumental exchange relations between people

# Caring organization – oxymoron?

- Emotional (feel affection)
- Cognitive (paying attention)
- Instrumental (help and protect those in need)
  
- Positive, benevolent, helpful and emotional connection between people

# Metaphors

- Metaphors are figures of speech in which a term or phrase with a literal meaning is applied to a different context in order to suggest a resemblance (Sackmann, 1989)
- Metaphors provide a structure to facilitate thinking about abstract concepts in Organizational theory.
- Metaphors expose and conceal ideologies (Deetz, 1986, 1992)
- Metaphors both describe the world and produce its realities (Wood, 2002)

# Care

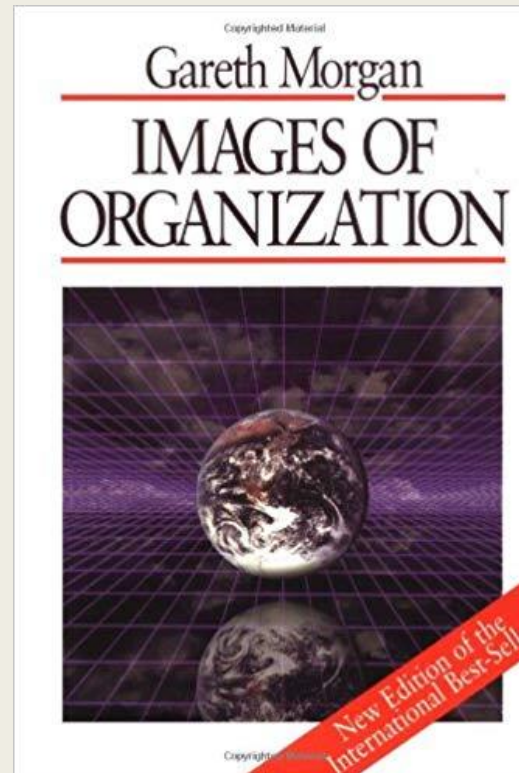


# Spirituality

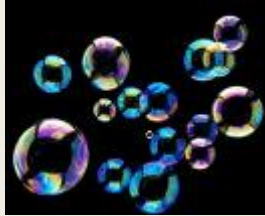


# Organizations – Gareth Morgan

- Traditional metaphors of organizations reflect distinct, but incomplete, ways of visualizing organizations:
  - *Machines*
  - *Organisms*
  - *Brains*
  - *Culture*
  - *Political system*
  - *Flux and transformation*
  - *Domination*
  - *Psychic prison*



# Hundreds of organizational metaphors

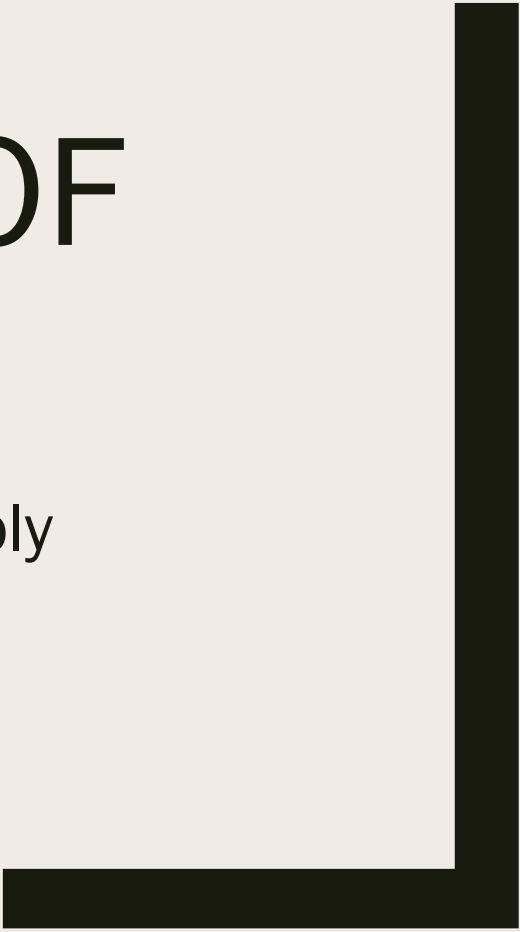






**BUT NONE OF  
THEM...**

Include, describe or imply  
**spirituality**



# In the following presentation I will

- Offer a viable metaphor that allows for visualizing spirituality in organizations and the business world
- Demonstrate it in the field of knowledge sharing
- Test its validity in an empirical study

# Entitlements and obligations

## Entitlements (Lerner, 1987)

- The experience of entitlement is a the judgment, often tacit, that someone, or some category of people, is entitled to a particular set of outcomes by virtue of who they are or what they have done.
- The "entitled to" is experienced affectively and motivationally as an imperative, a sense of requiredness between the actor's perceived outcomes and the person's attributes or acts.

Kabbala – the major force acting on us as human beings: the will to get

## Obligations

- The experience of obligation is a cognitive, affective and motivational components.

Kabbala - the major life principle of altruistic giving, loving, being part

# Daniel Bell – the revolution of rising entitlements



- Are you entitled to severance pay?
- Women are entitled to be exceptional...
- Is your child receiving everything he is entitled to?
- We are entitled to respect
- Celebrities are entitled to privacy
- Entitled to your opinion? Not any more...
- People are entitled to know what is going on
- You are entitled to our opinion...
- Your furniture is entitled to .....
- (One day's newspaper )

# Entitlements and obligations : three metaphors

- Market – Balance sheet



- Legal - Contract



- Socio-Political - Covenant



# Market: balance

- Exchange, equity theories (Blau, 1964, Adams, 1965)
- Assumptions
  - *people are “intuitive accountants” calculating equity ratio based on inputs and outputs (but accountants are not...)*
  - *Inputs and outputs can be calculated and measured in the short term, with a clear “bottom line”.*
  - *There should be a balance of values*
  - *Balance or imbalance will create predictable behaviors*
  - *Environment is stable, thus calculations of present and future inputs and outputs are possible*
  - *People are capable of making cognitive complex calculations*

# Contract: agreement, consideration, promise

- Social contract, psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990, 1995, 199, 2001).
- Transactional (market) and relational contracts
- Numerous breach and violations studies
- Formal, implied, normative and psychological contracts
- Contracts are agreements based on consideration, reciprocity that mutually bind the parties, enforced by the law (Attiya, 1986).

# Contracts:

- Assumptions

- *Good faith*
- *Freedom of choice*
- *Not necessarily balanced*
- *Numerous multi-level contracts*
- *Everything is implied by the contract, including changes and exit options*
- *Conditional, legally binding.*



# Both balance sheet and contract do not explain

- Why people are still working while having unbalanced, non equitable work relations
- Why people believe that they are doing more than their obligations and getting less than what they are entitled to, and still go on working and performing... well
- Why formal agreements include only a small part of the overall relations, as contract are usually interpreted narrowly.
- Why sometimes small, insignificant things cause them to stop working, while others, more significant, don't.

SO... HERE COMES  
THE COVENANT



# Covenant in Judaism: the BRITH

The basic Jewish religious, communal and political principle



- Noah
- Abraham
- Jacob
- Moses
- David

# Covenant can be

- One sided or with two sides
- Conditional and non conditional

# Daniel Elazar (1998)

*"A **covenant** is a **morally**-informed agreement or pact based upon voluntary consent and mutual **oaths** or promises, **witnessed by the relevant higher authority**, between peoples or parties having independent though not necessarily equal status, that provides for joint action or obligation to achieve defined ends (limited or comprehensive) under conditions of mutual respect which protect the individual integrities of all the parties to it.*

*Every covenant involves consenting, promising and agreeing. Most are meant to be of unlimited duration, if not perpetual. Covenants can bind any number of partners for a variety of purposes, but in their essence they are political in that their bonds are used principally to establish bodies political and social".*

# Covenant VS. Contract

## Covenant

- *Morally binding*
- *Lateral and vertical (higher power or authority)*
- *Mutually non-dependent set of present and future promises*
- *Higher power as witness*
- *Stable, not sensitive to violations*
- *Undefined time frame*
- *Violations do not void the covenant*
- *Social and political in nature*
- *Emphasize on obligations*

## Contract

- *Legally binding*
- *Lateral only (between the parties)*
- *Mutual, reciprocal and conditional set of present and future promises*
- *Law as enforcer*
- *Stable as long as there are no violations*
- *Constricted duration*
- *Violations void the contract*
- *Economic in nature*
- *Emphasize on entitlements*

# Covenant as metaphor

- Pro: include many elements not explained by other metaphors, like mission, vision, altruistic behavior and spirituality
- Con: No common shared belief in the existence of a higher power – GOD
- But: higher power can be the “organization as an organism” or even the “whole world” as an organism.

# Example: Knowledge sharing

(Prusak & Davenport, 1998)

	*Market-contract	Covenant
Knowledge is	Property, possession	Public good
Why share?	Exchange, Reuse	Cooperation and creation of “Fountains of knowledge”
Players	Buyer, seller, broker	Partners and servants of human knowledge
Value in	Personal utility	Development of organization or society
Rewards	Tangibles, intangibles (recognition, reputation)	Recreation, personal growth
Conditions	Trust and rules, entitlements	Trust and faith, obligations



# VALIDITY OF COVENANT METAPHOR

Is measured by the conditionality of the categories

questions: Entitlements and obligations:

According to the informal agreement in your organization, would you define receiving /doing..... as

1. unconditional – anyone in your position should get/do it, independent of performance or behavior
2. Conditional – depends on performance or behavior
3. Personal – subject to negotiation or discretionary

## Average, S.D, and Frequency (%) of conditionality of Entitlements , scale - 1 -5, (N=325)

	Average	S.D.	Discretionary Market	Conditional contract	Unconditional covenant
Work tools and resources	4.71	0.48	9.2	12.9	<b>77.8</b>
Leadership	4.59	0.46	12.1	18.9	<b>69.0</b>
Care, "soulful" organization	4.20	0.73	8.0	23.9	<b>67.8</b>
Social benefits	3.68	0.90	14.3	19.5	<b>66.2</b>
Justice, fairness, ethics	4.75	0.40	8.9	33.7	<b>57.4</b>
Information, influence	3.87	0.76	24.8	20.5	<b>54.7</b>
Helpful coworkers	3.93	0.79	11.1	42.9	46.0
Incentives, gifts,	3.13	0.88	19.0	41.0	46.0
Security	3.59	0.86	7.6	<b>50.2</b>	42.3
Recognition, development	4.11	0.76	19.0	40.2	40.8
Salary	4.74	0.52	18.6	<b>47.2</b>	34.2
Meaningful, "rich" job	4.28	0.63	13.7	<b>58.6</b>	27.7
Promotion	4.02	0.71	21.7	<b>59.0</b>	19.3

## Average, S.D, and Frequency (%) of conditionality of Obligations (N=325)

	Average	S.D.	Discretion - market	Conditional - Contract	Unconditional - covenant
Professionalism, service, responsibility	4.79	<b>38.</b>	4.1	10.3	<b>85.5</b>
Work morality	4.35	.53	7.0	14.4	<b>78.6</b>
Cooperation with coworkers	4.11	.78	13	20.8	<b>66.2</b>
Commitment, Loyalty	4.25	.64	5.7	29.3	<b>65.0</b>
Effort			14.1	27.8	<b>58.1</b>
Obedience	3.94	.77	20.0	31.2	<b>48.8</b>
Initiative	4.11	.78	20.2	42.9	36.9
Disclosure	4.08	.76	31.7	34.5	33.8
OCB	2.94	.95	37.6	39.7	22.7
Willingness for mobility and changes	3.02	.86	32.6	<b>50.2</b>	17.2

# Discussion

- More items of the “give and take” in organizations, as discovered in the research, are based on covenant than on contract or pure exchange: 6 out of 13 entitlements and 6 out of 10 obligations are predominantly unconditional, while only 4 entitlements and 1 obligation are considered conditional .
- The more “covenantal” the relations, employees report more positive attitudes and better fulfillment of the agreement, more intense relations. However, employees with high human capital value are less inclined to favor the covenant view.

- The larger the organization and work unit, obligations are more conditional (but not entitlements)
- Stability and security are considered conditional: that rules out the assumption that the preference for covenant is based on fear

# People as HOLONS

- Ken Wilber defined Holons : "reality is composed neither of things or processes, neither wholes or parts, but whole/parts, holons, all the way up, all the way down". (1996).
- Findings may suggest that we hold complex perceptions: don't give up our individuality, but we feel our interconnectedness, being a unique part of a whole.

# So?

- Covenant and contract are both valid metaphors, that are additive: none stands alone.
- Organizations are both economic, exchange system, legal system and social and political system.
- Underneath the exchange, there is a basic, shared covenant, that is moral and unconditional, to which all parties are part of.
- Using only the exchange and contract metaphor, not only exclude spirituality, but blind us to these feelings, values and behaviors, that are aspects of the mutual relations of employees and organizations.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
PATIENCE

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