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 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 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.

Obligations

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

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

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

- 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 contracts 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
Convenant can be

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Discretionary Market</th>
<th>Conditional contract</th>
<th>Unconditional covenant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work tools and resources</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>77.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>69.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Care, &quot;soulful&quot; organization</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>67.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social benefits</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice, fairness, ethics</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>57.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information, influence</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>54.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helpful coworkers</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>46.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives, gifts,</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition, development</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>34.2</td>
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<td>Meaningful, &quot;rich&quot; job</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
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<td>Promotion</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>19.3</td>
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Average, S.D, and Frequency (%) of conditionality of Obligations (N=325)

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<th>Unconditional covenant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism, service, responsibility</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>38.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>85.5</td>
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<td>Work morality</td>
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<td>.53</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation with coworkers</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>66.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment, Loyalty</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>65.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>58.1</td>
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<td>Obedience</td>
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<td>20.0</td>
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<td>Initiative</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>36.9</td>
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<td>Disclosure</td>
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<td>OCB</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingness for mobility and changes</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 “covenantional” 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.
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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