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# From Temples to Organizations: The Introduction and Packaging of Spirituality

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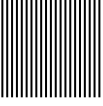
**Abstract.** *This article is based on a research of Israeli spiritual consultants and their interaction with local organizations. The incorporation of ideas of spirituality into the world of efficient management and organizations seem on the outset to be ‘unnatural’. We show that while this inherent contradiction does not disappear, spiritual consultants employ various ways to overcome the anticipated resistance and to make an impact. These ways include not only attentive processes of selection and reframing of ideas before introducing them to the new setting, but often enough also methods of concealing and lack of transparency in the consultants’ interactions with managers and or employees. We use domestication, as a key analytical concept. In spite all the familiarization and disguising techniques, spiritual consultants do bring new ideas into the organizational context. Unlike conventional consultants, they set an emphasis on the individual’s awareness of his or her body, thoughts and feelings at the moment and by that challenge management expectation that employees*



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would conform to their jobs and roles. Finally, we argue that consultants create 'noise' in terms of the ideas that they promote but most of them 'keep order' in terms of the way they choose to deliver these ideas. **Key words.** advice industry; consultants; domestication; Israel; organizations; spirituality; translation



Since the 1990s, workplace spirituality has been the subject of an enormous number of popular books (Bell and Taylor, 2003). Business periodicals are filled with articles heralding both the renewed interest in religion and the growing emphasis on spirituality in society in general and in the workplace in particular (Cash et al., 2000). In addition, there is a growing market for workshops and seminars claiming to enable spiritual self-development at work. In the United States, for example, management magazines discuss the impact of spirituality in the workplace, and a significant number of large companies have received in-company New Age training. Businesses in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands express a similar interest (Auper and Houtman, 2006; Bell and Taylor, 2003).

Most literature about spirituality and institutional practices is discursive and focus on recounting how different spiritual traditions can be or should be used at work (e.g. Barnett, 1985; Carroll, 1998; Frost and Egri, 1994; Ray and Myers, 1986). This literature tends to be popular and uncritical in tone (Brown, 2003).

The incorporation of ideas of spirituality into the world of efficient management and organizations seem on the outset to be 'unnatural.' Spirituality is associated with interconnectedness—a relationship of self with others, with the divine and with all that exists in the universe (Carroll, 1998).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, spirituality, as a process, is an end in itself, and it pertains to intangibles. Workplace spirituality is generally based on the same general ideas, including a recognition that employees have inner lives, an assumption that employees desire to find work meaningful and a commitment by the company to serve as a context or community for spiritual growth (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003). In contrast, organizations focus more on outcomes and on tangibles. They must turn a profit. Furthermore, whereas spirituality is concerned with 'the source of light' or the 'inner God' within each person, organizations are enmeshed in a competitive struggle to commodify human activity for the marketplace. For the latter, an individual is defined foremost as a member of the organization with a specific role.

Our research, which is based on a study of Israeli spiritual consultants and their interaction with local organizations aims at exploring this intriguing interface between what seem to be two totally contrasting set of ideas and ways of operation. We suggest a critical view of the complex process of the introduction of spirituality or New Age ideas into organizations.



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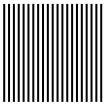
Organizational consultants are known to use various 'translation' techniques when in their attempt to bring new ideas into the organizational setting. 'Translation' often entails displacement, drift, invention, mediation, creating new links and modification of those who translated and that which is translated (Czarniawska and Sevon, 2005; Doorewaard and van Bijsterveld, 2001). Research on translation in organizations has focused on the names, forms, practices and artifacts that travel (Czarniawska and Sevon, 2005; Hwang and Suarez, 2005) as well as on the process itself (Doorewaard and van Bijsterveld, 2001). The case of spiritual consultancy gives a unique instance of translation. The apparent inherent epistemological and practical disparity between the organizational setting and the New Age worldview entails a uniquely *active process* of translation, which we choose to describe in terms of '*domestication*'.

The term '*domestication*' has been suggested to describe a process 'in which the foreign is rendered familiar and palatable to local tastes' (Fadlon, 2005: 2). The *active* character of this process of demystification has been emphasized (Tobin, 1992). The careful analysis we give in this article which follows the multiple stages and possibilities of this process, enables us to characterize different techniques which are used by consultants as they aim to make an impact. We suggest that these ways include not only attentive processes of selection and reframing of ideas before introducing them to the new setting, but often enough also methods of concealing and lack of transparency in the consultants' interactions with managers and or employees. We name the latter techniques, *camouflage*.

For many scholars, consulting is closely related to the creation of order (e.g. Cleverley, 1971). Such views propose that consulting should first be seen as an exercise in reducing complexity, and seducing management into simple, comfortable and secure solutions. Others suggest the importance of chaos, noise and disorder in the consultancy work (Clegg et al., 2004, who quote others). If indeed spirituality is alien to organizations, do consultants create noise by introducing it?

We argue that the ideas spiritual consultants convey to the organization challenge well-based expectations including that which expects the employees conformity to their jobs and roles. Their emphasis on the individual's awareness of his or her body, thoughts and feelings at the moment is an idea strongly remote from conventional organizational ideas. We will show that while the inherent contradiction between the New Age and the organizational ideas does not disappear and spiritual consultants are anticipated to face resistance in any of the stages of interaction with the organization, they nevertheless do create what we chose to call a 'quite revolution' in the organization.

While it is too early to say that the various domestication techniques really help spiritual consultants in transforming basic organizational principles, we dare to say that they may create 'noise' in the organization which may eventually make some change.

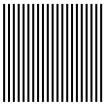


## The New Age and the Advice Industry in the Israeli Context

Israeli spiritual consultants do not form a clearly defined group; they can be largely categorized as part of the general New Age movement. The term New Age refers to the self-awareness movement that emerged in the early 1970s in the West. The message of the New Age is the hope in personal transformation, which can be achieved through body work, spiritual disciplines, natural diets and renewed human relationships. The New Age is a multifaceted movement; its components include channelling, healing and growth, scientism and Neopaganism (Hanegraaff, 1998). Its members can usually be described as a 'diffuse collectivity', comprising of individuals, networks, societies and small groups (see Campbell, 1972; Sutcliffe, 2003). It is thus difficult to present the New Age as a viable social or religious movement and in fact it has been described as a relatively open field that tends to merge with the central culture (Hanegraaff, 1998; Heelas, 1996; Wallis, 1984).

This same tendency of merging with the mainstream has been identified also in the Israeli context, which seem to be highly saturated with New Age manifestations (Simchai, 2007; Tavori, 2007). Since the 1990s, the New Age movement has seen an increasing participation in Israel; there are hundreds of local New Age groups and the number of people who relate to or participate in New Age activities or rituals has been estimated to amount to hundreds of thousands (Tavori 2007: 10). The incorporation of New Age ideas into the Israeli mainstream can be identified in various fields including the high popularity of three main annual festivals which attract tens of thousands participants (Simchai, 2007). New Age books have also been on lists of best sellers. New Age ideas and practices have, in fact, been also incorporated in typical mainstream institutions such as the Israeli public medical services, which have seen a tremendous growth in the incorporation of complementary and alternative medicine (Fadlon, 2005) or the public education system which has recently tended to include 'alternative' activities including Yoga and other Oriental spiritual practices (Drori, 2006).

While it is certainly difficult to locate the sources of all the variety of New Age manifestations in Israel, it is safe to assume that some of the ideas and practices have been imported to Israel from the USA and Europe while others have been a result of a more 'direct' impact of the 'Orient,' mainly India. The Far East has become a very popular destination for young backpackers after their mandatory military service and has grown into a large-scale phenomenon (Mevorach, 1997; Noy and Cohen, 2005; Simchai, 2000). Yet, like any other global phenomenon, Israeli spirituality has its local flavour. The relationship with Judaism is interesting in this respect. Among the New Agers themselves there are people who see Judaism as a spiritual source while others see Judaism as one resource among others. Yet others reject or are indifferent to Judaism (Ruah-Midbar, 2006; Simchai, 2005). However, when interacting with the mainstream, initiators tend to take into account the importance of Judaism as a culture in Israeli society



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as well as the emerging contradictions between Judaism and the New Age. Thus, the organizers of New Age festivals are careful to relate to core hegemonic Jewish practices like the observance of Jewish holidays and they avoid including what can be considered 'foreign or pagan elements' in ceremonies (Simchai, 2005).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in a comparative study of New Age shops, Zaidman (2007a, 2007b) found high resistance for having masks and specific sculptures (which were found in shops in New Zealand), in light of the biblical ban on the carving of human or animal forms in stone, wood, etc., for the purpose of worship (Exodus 2, 4–5). Zaidman also found a rejection of any activity in the stores that might be associated with idol worship. We will show that most spiritual consultants tend to be indifferent to Judaism or they use it as one source along with others.

In addition to the above, there are two main characteristics of the New Age which explain consultants' accessibility and activity in organizations. The first is high level of acceptance of amateurs (Verter, 2003; Zaidman, 2003) and the second relates to the strong orientation to marketplace activity (Ruah-Midbar, 2006; York, 1999). In both aspects there is a surprising similarity between the field of New Age and the field of the advice industry in Israel.

Similarly to the field of New Age, the field of consultancy in Israel is loosely structured. There is no clear control of authorized specialists. As a result, any person can attribute the title 'organizational consultant' to herself [similar accounts describe the field in the UK, see Collins (2006)].

The field of the advice industry has been described as a market in which various knowledge suppliers (e.g. management gurus, business schools and management consultants) are involved in 'productivizing' management knowledge into a packaged and commercially valuable commodity. New product development efforts are crucial for knowledge suppliers to keep their services in tune with market demand (Heusinkveld and Benders, 2005, who quote others).

To the best of our knowledge, no systematic research has been focused on the advice industry in Israel and on the impact of New Age ideas on Israeli organizations. The results of our survey of the field show that only a few organizations have gone through a full process of open spiritual consultancy. On the other hand, there are a relatively significant number of people (e.g. managers) who have been trained individually in New Age/spirituality workshops outside of their organizations.

In what follows, we attempt to identify which New Age concepts and ideas are introduced into organizations and which are left behind. We consider how spiritual consultants turn ideas into practices and how they introduce them, as well as what they contribute to the 'consultancy basket' for organizations

## Methods

The article is part of a larger qualitative research project focusing on the penetration of spirituality into mainstream Israeli institutions. We used a



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combination of several qualitative methods including interviews, document analysis, website analysis and observation in order to produce a more complete and contextual portrait of the object under study. The data were collected in Israel between 2005 and 2006.

### ***Interviews***

We conducted interviews with thirty-two consultants and four managers—twenty-four men and twelve women. We used several ways to find the relevant consultants: reviewing advertisements in New Age magazines; finding information in daily newspaper articles that focus on spirituality; searching the web and finally, snowballing, i.e. asking interviewees to refer us to others who possess similar attributes (see Berg, 2007: 44). Participants' ages ranged from 35 to 60, though most of them were between 45 and 55. More than half had university degrees (see more details about the participants in the section about actors, below).

### ***Procedure***

We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews individually with each subject. The purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of the participant's perspectives on spirituality and its introduction and transplantation into organizations. We asked several standard predetermined questions but also let the interviewees raise more topics which resulted in further questions (the questions are listed in Appendix 1). All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

We used Atlas.ti computer software for text analysis. The first step was to go over each interview and code its content based on a list of codes. The initial list contained several topics, such as *spirituality*, *consultancy*, *alternative/conventional* and *organizational response*. During this process, the coders added more codes that appeared important to the analysis, such as *individualism*, *emotions* and *language*. The coders reviewed each interview and assigned a code or several codes to several sentences or a whole paragraph. The output came in the form of several lists of quotations, which were analysed to discover major themes or arguments. For each list, we selected a representative quotation to demonstrate the participant's main theme.

As a final step we read again all the original interviews in order to complete our understanding of the field.

### ***Document Analysis***

We reviewed several articles written by consultants as well as a doctoral dissertation in which consultants introduced their world views and ideas. These documents provided a window for the perspectives of individual consultants. We usually reviewed the material before our meetings with



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our interviewees and thus were able to develop a common background during the discussions.

We also surveyed twenty-nine newspaper articles that were published in the main Israeli daily newspapers (*Haaretz*, *Yediot Aharonot* and *Maariv*) between 2000 and 2006. The articles focus on individuals or discuss general topics, such as yoga in Israel, the meditation industry, the attraction of Indian spirituality, etc. The goal of the survey was mainly to gain background information about consultants' activities as well as a broad view of the field.

### ***Website Analysis***

We surveyed seventeen websites of individual consultants and private and nonprofit organizations that provide spiritual consultancy services. We developed a standard pattern of analysis to collect data for this article as well as for future articles. It includes the following topics: the content of the opening page, presentation of the individual or organization, pictures, poems, the creed of the organization or individual, the goal of the individual or organization, their characteristics, profiles of the individuals involved, life stories of the individuals involved, client response, activities, attached articles, references to books, links, forums and notes.

### ***Observation***

In order to get a general and wide context understanding of the field, the first author participated in a large number of activities associated with spirituality in Israel such as lectures, meditation retreats and festivals. We also attended an introductory lecture by a coach in which she promotes her courses. Moreover, we carefully watched a video recording of a workshop with employees of a selling organization. The goal of the workshop was to enhance selling via training in a series of spiritual exercises. The three-day workshop was managed by an external consultant whom we later interviewed. In all these occasions, detailed notes were taken.

## **Spiritual Consultants and Their Encounter with Organizations**

### ***Spiritual Consultants as Business Consultants with a Unique Flavour***

The spiritual consultants that we studied are in many ways similar to 'conventional' business consultants as they tend to occupy multiple fields simultaneously (Verter, 2003). Their professional biographies show that they have been exposed to both formal and informal ways of learning. Eighty-seven percent of our participants had an academic background (BA: 4; MA: 14; PhD: 4; PhD candidacy: 2; unknown: 2). Most of the participants have had formal education in some aspect of psychology; nine had a degree in psychology or psychotherapy and six studied organizational psychology.



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Five others had a degree in business administration. The other six had degrees in law, engineering, theatre and public administration.

The spiritual edge of our interviewees' consultancy has been acquired in various ways. Most of them have been involved in a variety of workshops and training programs, covering topics such as yoga, meditation, coaching, Buddhism, psychotherapy and bio-energy. They obtained this training from various institutions, from monasteries to sport colleges, and in different locations (e.g. India, Israel, Korea, the United States, the Netherlands). While two consultants mentioned learning in the US, others were critical about American New Age. Our impression is that consultants blend different cultural sources and that there is a noticeable focus on what is defined as 'Eastern' sources in their practices. More knowledge is typically acquired through books. Participants mentioned books about emotional intelligence, energy, management theory and combat doctrine. While the sources of the books vary and include books written by both 'Oriental' and 'Western' writers, we have noticed that at least some of the participants were critical of American 'gurus' like Robin Sharma.

Spiritual consultants provide a variety of advisory services, including organizational guidance and coaching for managers. They also deliver lectures, workshops and courses. The following are several titles of workshops delivered by consultants: 'choosing from the heart'; 'personal responsibility'; 'stretch your team'; 'work life balance'; 'listening'; 'self discovery' and 'a world without judgment'.

### ***The Encounter with the Organization***

It seems that spiritual consultants are called to help organizations at times of unsatisfactory performance. These situations are described in terms of periods of very hard work, tensions or significant declines in profits. As one of the consultants put it: 'They call me to improve performance. They don't call me to improve the organization's spirituality'. In other words, managers are in fact interested in 'practical results' or 'the bottom line' and practices that are introduced by consultants are judged based on this measure.

Although the main initiative for contacting a spiritual consultant may be related to practical aims, we nevertheless observed another quality that adds to the attraction of the 'products' offered by spiritual consultants. This appeal is related to the 'Otherness' that New Age practices carry with them. The same fascination explains, for example, the appeal of Chinese or 'alternative' medicine (see Fadlon, 2005) or more generally the attraction of unfamiliar and especially 'exotic' goods or concepts in the West in general (see Howell, 1995; Howes, 1996). As explained both by managers and by consultants, the clients are looking for 'something different'. A consultant explains: 'People approach our office because they have heard that there are unique things here. No one comes to us because of spirituality'. This attitude, however, often leads to misunderstandings as in the following





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example when the program offered by the consultant, a Chi Kong practitioner, is categorized by the organization as a leisure activity for the fun of the workers:

I was going to work with a group of ten senior managers in Bank A. The HR person told me: 'Listen, we don't need a theme, we want to have a little fun'. I said to her: 'No. I am not a stand-up comedian'. I do have a group of actors that I bring along with me, but I need to have a topic. I asked to talk to one of the managers, and she said that there was no need. I told her, people don't play just like that; yes, I dress them, but if they have a problem, for example, a problem in intercultural communication, so that can be the theme. So she said: 'Ah ... can we do it on a yacht?'.

The liminal role of consultants within the organization has been observed in other contexts (see Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003). Nevertheless, this liminality is accentuated when the content of the advisory service is considered not conventional. Very similar to the case of diversity trainers as reported by Litvin (2002), there is often an inter-organizational disagreement about the legitimacy of their ideas and especially about the probability of their contribution to solving the organization's problems and improving the bottom line. A manager in a big production company who had been exposed to spiritual coaching said: 'Many people laugh and see it as a joke. They are not willing to understand or to accept it'.

The overall suspicious attitude towards spiritual consultancy leads to a general resisting approach towards their intervention. Most spiritual consultants we interviewed described their encounter with organizational clients as difficult. They emphasized the resistance they faced when they tried to introduce new ideas and practices and tended to describe organization people as 'rational', 'cynical', 'stiff', 'skeptical' and 'dogmatic'.

## The Process of Domestication and Packaging of Spirituality

### *Selection of Ideas*

One of the major ways in which spiritual consultants deal with the anticipated resistance and potential misunderstandings in organizations is that of *domestication*. Ideas are taken from the field of New Age, however, consultants—very similar to festival organizers (Simhai 2007)—carefully *select* ideas and practices that have a higher potential of being accepted.

The New Age is often described as a highly individualized subculture (Heelas, 1996). Yet, we observed that the selection process described by the different spiritual consultants we interviewed resulted in a similar, almost identical set of ideas. This set of ideas includes some of the main elements that have been described as constituting an imaginary trope that represents an alternative to modern existence including: authenticity, profundity, holism and purity (Fadlon, 2005: 123). On the other hand, some less attractive ideas and practices, in particular, those ideas that are perceived as foreign to the organizational context, are left behind.



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Consultants give primary significance to the existence of an *authentic source* (of light and love) within each individual. This source, which is sometimes referred to also as the 'inner light' or 'the centre' is often portrayed as hidden or obscured by negative emotions such as fear and anxiety. Consultants talk about the need to be connected to this centre and about the need to learn how to open the heart. An organizational psychologist and a coach now involved in spiritual training described this as follows:

I used to provide 'technical' consultancy, that is, how to operate people, how to manage team meetings, how to solve conflicts. Now I get more into the inside, to the human being himself ... I believe that a person has a center and that, theoretically, he can always be in his center. There are disturbances, but I think that people can be in control and be all the time with an inner smile.

This authentic source which is associated with the heart, with the 'inside', is also related to intuition. Consultants instruct managers to 'turn to the inner self' to 'listen to themselves' and to 'work with their heart, not just with logic'. These instructions are often discussed in reference to the process of decision making.

Spiritual consultants attribute great importance to the process by which an individual learns how to be connected with the power within. Consultants emphasize the notion that one should not be controlled by feelings or behavioural patterns. Rather, they say, a person should be 'connected to himself or herself'. The individual is often portrayed as holding to his or her 'automatic behaviour'. The attention to the inner source could be facilitated by *awareness*, which is associated mainly with being in the 'here and now'; that is, a person should be aware of his or her feelings at the moment. Most participants stress that awareness is directed inwardly, and it has little to do with the person's external situation, including the people in the organization and the tasks that the person have in the organization. Two consultants, however, did talk about the awareness that one can direct toward clients.

The focus on the individual's inner self and on the importance of developing awareness reflects the notion that the individual is the source of wisdom. This presumption is reflected in consultants' preferences regarding their role. One consultant told us: 'You see, my basic assumption in the process of consulting is that I don't have the answers, the client has them. I am here, to reflect, to think together. I don't express my opinion'. The client's point of view of this process has been described by a manager in a large manufacturing organization:

The process is different. It is a special experience. It is not as if you have someone who sits opposite to you and explains to you that you are wrong and that he has a better way. It is something else. You open up and look at your problems and suddenly you start seeing things in a different way.

*Emotions* also play a central role in the work of consultants. They often mentioned fears, anger, anxieties, worries and love. Anger or anxiety covers



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the ‘real me’ and affects a person’s behaviour at work. Emotions are associated with the process of developing awareness, as shown by the following quotation:

When I come to [an] organization I work on emotional intelligence, or one can call it awareness to emotions ... I try to help people to see and identify their emotions ... to understand why they are frustrated and angry at work and what we can do with it.

Another consultant talked about ‘releasing the emotional blockage’. Although most usually referred to individuals while focusing on emotions, some did make reference to the ‘emotional energies in the organization’.

Another dominant element in the consultants’ interactions with organizations is a *holistic* approach. The consultants we interviewed often used metaphors such as the ‘whole individual’ and the ‘whole organization’. When facing problems related to the individual, they argue, one should consider the interconnectedness of several components. For example, physical pains or bothering thoughts affect the way a manager runs a meeting. Consultants talk about the need to integrate cognitive, emotional, behavioural and physical aspects. They tend to use the same metaphorical descriptions for organizations and for the individuals within them. One of the consultants, for example, said that his work combines a ‘physical’ aspect—a change of procedures—with a focus on ‘emotions’—referring to communication and interpersonal relationships in teams.

*Experience* is another premise embedded in consultants’ descriptions of their practices. This is related to the New Age idea that a person is the master of his or her own life and that people create their own reality. External circumstances are of little importance; what matters is one’s reaction to them. As expressed by the two following descriptions given by two consultants:

I believe in experiencing. People often use discussions and analysis in coaching. But when people experience something, the way for wisdom and for true work with results is short, simple and enjoyable. The experience is burned in one’s body.

My company deals with organizational consultancy using holistic or alternative ways. We try to avoid the classic organizational consultancy. We focus on three directions of experience: The first is physical challenge (e.g. ropes, Jeeps and bicycles). The second is spirituality (we call it ‘Eastern Perceptions in Western Management’). And the third is theatrical games. The whole system is called: ‘How to Improve Performance in Organizations.’ *The root of the activity is the experience.* [our emphasis]

Scholars argue that a ‘binding doctrine’ or central element in New Age thought is the belief that in the deeper layers of the self one finds a true, authentic and sacred kernel, which informs evaluations of what is good, true and meaningful, and that we ourselves are responsible, from moment to moment, for creating our own reality. Authority lies within the individual, and self-experience is important. Negative situations in our lives



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reflect limiting beliefs or unresolved emotional patterns, which may be quite stubborn. The removal of these 'blocks' may involve hard work via a great range of spiritual disciplines, rituals, meditations, dance, shamanic practices, magic and drugs (Aupers and Houtman, 2006; Hanegraaff, 1998; Heelas, 1996).

Nevertheless, while taking some of the core ideas of the New Age, spiritual consultants evidently ignore or omit others in their interaction with organizations. These neglected concepts are markedly associated with religion or with mysticism. One example is avoiding the practice of channelling, when interacting with members of organizations. Channelling refers to the conviction of psychic mediums that they are able, under certain circumstances, to act as a channel for information from sources other than their normal selves. Most typically, these sources are identified as 'entities' living on higher levels of being (Hanegraaff, 1998). Consultants also avoid referring to the New Age cosmology (e.g. the theory about the Ages), ancient civilizations (e.g. Egyptian mysticism), the use of crystals (which is associated with the belief in crystals as transformers of cosmic energy), New Age science (a search for a unified world view that includes a religious dimension) and neopagan thought and practice (movements that claim that the problems of modern world are a direct result of the loss of pagan wisdom about man's relationship to the natural world) (Hanegraaff, 1998).

In summary, consultants select the 'secular' premises of the New Age. We believe that this careful selection is the first part of the process of *domestication*. In other words, consultants select ideas and practices which have a higher potential of being accepted by the organizational field, while at the same time neglecting those ideas which have a higher probability of meeting higher levels of suspicion and resistance.

We should note that we have evidence showing that consultants do deal with some of the non-secular ideas and practices in their encounters outside of organizations. Two or three consultants said, for example, that they use channelling as individuals, but they do not teach it to their clients. Others talked about their knowledge and exposure to mysticism. Thus, there is a good reason to presume that consultants have been exposed to a variety of key notions of the New Age and that their choice is calculated.

Are the ideas that consultants select new for organization members? Are they part of conventional consultants' world view or discourse? It is quite hard to fully answer these questions, since there is no one canon of 'conventional consultancy'. We can, however, reflect on several topics including the nature of these ideas to create change. First, as discussed earlier, participants see consultancy as a process in which the client has the answers. This approach reflects the New Age premise of an inner centre of knowledge (or self as authority). From the point of view of the literature on consulting, participants in our study adopt the 'process-oriented' rather than the 'task-oriented' approach. Process-oriented consultants give more attention to people and relationship matters. Within this approach, the consultant and the client aim at joint diagnosis of the problem. The role



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of the consultant is to assist clients in finding the answers by themselves (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003).

The way spiritual consultants approach emotions is another point of comparison. It has been argued that the dominant image of organizations is mechanistic. The 'myth' of rationality is perpetuated by aligning concepts such as reason and cognition with rationality, while feelings are part of the subjective, chaotic domain of emotionality and hence are marginalized (see Domagalski, 1999). Most of the consultants in our study are employed by organizations to assist in matters of content and business process (e.g. strategic planning, change facilitation) and the language of rationality, logic and analysis dominates diagnosis, problem identification and solving, planning, design and implementation (Domagalski, 1999). Spiritual consultants, however, focus on emotions and on awareness to them.

Finally, we ask about the degree to which the consultants' approach is generic or site-specific (Golembiewski, 2000). Our participants appear to use a generic approach, as they give little attention to contextual variables. As opposed to conventional consultancy, in which most consider the unit (e.g. a team or department) or the system (e.g. the organization) as the primary entity, spiritual consultants focus on the *individual*. The organization is perceived as a 'growth environment'—similar to the family—for the individual. The significance of work is transformed, as it is conceived as providing the opportunity to 'work' on oneself. The emphasis on 'here and now' is also focused on the individual and his or her awareness of his or her body, thoughts and feelings at the moment, and not on the organization as a system.

This approach can be interpreted as functional and or non-functional for the organization. Self awareness can be a useful way to deal with negative emotions (e.g. reducing their volume) but it can also lead to the realization that one can find better platforms for self growth and thus leave the organization. Furthermore, the focus on the individual rather than on the individual in relation to his surroundings can be less functional to the performance of group oriented processes.

### Turning Ideas into Practice

The selection of ideas from the New Age is only the first stage of domestication. In the interaction with the organization, the consultant must turn ideas into practice. While doing so, consultants appropriate principles and tools from different areas. They accept some elements as they are, change others, combine them and mold them to create their own consultancy packages.

The making of practices is impressively diversified and highly individualized. We found, however, that our participants talked about common 'tools' and 'concepts' and that they referred to a limited number of sources from which they borrow these tools and concepts.



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These processes are illustrated in Figure 1. At the top, we placed the sources from which consultants choose. The areas that emerged as relevant to our interviewees are Buddhism, Chi Kong, theatre, New Age and management and organizational psychology. From these areas consultants select principles (e.g. impermanent reality) and tools (e.g. meditation).

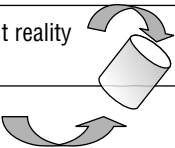
The following are several combinations:

*Example 1: Using borrowed concepts and tools from a single source.* Gabi a lawyer, coach, mediator and organizational consultant, employs concepts and practices from a single source. Gabi believes that Zen Buddhism is the best source to employ for adapting a new approach towards ‘change’. According to him, Buddhism ‘relates to the world as something that changes

**Figure 1. Examples of combination of ideas and practices**

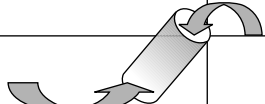
#### Example 1

Areas	Buddhism	
Concepts	{ Impermanent reality Awareness	
Tools	Meditation	



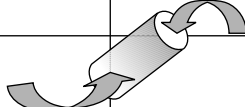
#### Example 2

Areas	Theatre	New Age
Concepts		Release blockage/ Getting to centre
Tools	Acting	



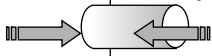
#### Example 3

Areas	Management	New Age
Concepts		Inner exploration
Tools	Time management	



#### Example 4

Areas	Management	New Age
Concepts	Leadership	Authority of the self
Tools		





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all the time internally and externally. Once you accept it, your reaction to change is much better'. In order to develop awareness of the 'here and now', Gabi appropriates the Buddhist principle of impermanent reality and the concept of compassion. In his work with teams, he uses Buddhist meditative tools and focuses on topics such as burnout and change.

*Example 2: Combining New Age concepts with other tools.* Ron is a consultant and coach. He explains:

I try to release the suppressed artist in the person by acting, which takes place in the organization. The performance is a sort of a dialogue with the audience based on the organizational context. The workshop includes about 20 or 30 people; sometimes we bring our own actors as well. I take the role of the organization consultant, and we also have a director with us. We bring costumes, wigs and make-up, and the organization's members perform ... and at the end there is a list of understandings.

Ron follows a New Age premise emphasizing the significance of revealing the inward *authentic source* and uses theatrical tools of expressive behaviour in order to 'release' the barriers or blocks of the individual. Acting becomes an activity that is associated with inward processes and not with performance.

*Example 3: Combining tools and concepts from New Age with conventional consultancy principles.* David, who has an MA degree in psychology, chose to describe the process he offers to organizations as follows:

I use existing theories and models from organizational psychology and communication and create the connection with Chi Kong. ... I don't have one template, but more or less we start with little movement ... I talk, and then we get more into talking about the organizational topic. We talk about pressure, organizational communication and learning, team work, etc. And then we do several Chi Kong exercises. For example, one of the things that is associated with vision is finding direction... Through the body they understand what I am talking about.

Like others who use music, theatre and body movement, David's efforts reflect the New Age perception of learning as a holistic process in which different aspects of the individual play different roles, both cognitive and physical.

*Example 4: Combining New Age and management concepts and creating a new meaning.* Ruth studied psychology and has been participating in various New Age and spiritual workshops since. She is also a partner in a consulting company. She describes her own combination of what seem to be conflicting ideas:

Eventually spirituality and leadership are crystallized together to one perception ... There are two ways of coping with life. The first is: whatever happens to me depends on external circumstances. The opposite perspective is that I perceive myself as an individual who can shape my environment, my life ... One can face many difficulties, but it all depends on the individual, how to cope with it ... This is the concept of leadership that we take up. It means first of all taking the leadership of your life.



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Ruth appropriates the New Age idea that the individual is responsible for creating his or her life; she then uses this same idea to attribute a new meaning to the concept of leadership. Leadership is thus taught and practiced not only as an act focusing on people or tasks but as an attitude directed inwardly.

## Packaging (and Non Packaged) Spirituality

In this section we inquire into the overall approach of consultants in the second stage of domestication when introducing spirituality into organizations.

We found a wide variety of responses regarding the introduction of spirituality. On one end of the spectrum, there are consultants who package and deliver it as a commodity, governed by patterns of production, distribution and consumption. These consultants tend to create a product that fits in with the needs of the organization's members, as well as with their expectations and interpretation of what spirituality is. On the other end of the spectrum, there are consultants who conceive of their intervention with clients as a long-term process by which individuals are directed to make an inner change (e.g. to reveal the authentic self). Several such consultants see their job as an inner calling. Yet there are others who fall somewhere in the middle; they deliver spirituality as a diffused process and at the same time package several aspects of it.

Iris is an example of a consultant who does not bring a specific, finalized practice or a product into the organization. She interacts with people and talks. While doing so, she finds ways to reflect on and deliver her perspectives. She says:

I clarify that I am not a psychologist ... My background is in business administration. I am an organizational consultant, I understand organizations, and I am a person who lives according to a spiritual world view, and that is what I am willing to give you. If you want to learn how to meditate ... there are a million places that would be happy to teach you. Go and do it over there.

Iris constructs spirituality as a way of living. As such, it also shapes her professional approach to work, which is generic, encompassing and process oriented. She handles life and work situations in accordance with her spirituality. In her discussions with us, she does not emphasize the need to mold spiritually. She even explicitly denies using tools such as meditation, which other consultants do use. Spirituality is part of her identity and way of living and it is expressed in her relationships with her partner, with family members and with her clients.

While several consultants see spirituality as a deep and personal process, others emphasize its practical aspects and the need to package it in a way that suits the expectations of their clients.

You need to translate it [spirituality] to something more practical ... the point is to ventilate people and create their ability to be more productive ...





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What I do is prepare the level of spirituality according to the need of the client ... In organizations, people are task oriented, and one should take this into account. It is completely different from a workshop outside of one's job ... Thus, it is necessary to either dress it differently or to find a good link that creates insight ... this experience should be packaged. This is what organizational consultancy is all about—in organizational consultancy, things are packaged.

Tamar is a coach and the head of a centre that has twenty-five staff members. The centre runs several programs and courses, among them a program 'for developing intuition for successes in life and in business' and a 'spiritual program for economic peacefulness and personal growth'. The goal of the centre is 'to bring people and business to peacefulness, calmness and focus so that they create clarity in different areas of life and get to unusual results that materialize in their daily life'.

In this centre, spirituality is *the way* to reach the goals, which are success, profit and growth. Meditation is described as 'a medical, cultural, personal and business tool'. The consultant uses it 'because only from a place of peace can one produce results'. Although meditation thus is described as a tool, spirituality is perceived as a state of being: 'spirituality is being focused, accurate, specific, calm, and peaceful' (quoted from an introductory lecture). Yet this state of 'being' is a precondition for the right state of 'doing'. Thus, Tamar crafts spirituality as a vehicle for success and packages it as a product in the form of the courses that she and her staff teach.

Another example of the packaging approach is the way Doron, a consultant who also works outside of Israel, operates. He translates spirituality into several exercises aimed at reducing the stress level and improving the performance of employees involved in selling. Doron states:

One of the problems in selling is that people get 'no' many times. The question is how a person faces this 'no'; from where can one get the spiritual strength to face the 'no' to live with it and knock on another door? Can we influence this strength? That is, as I see it, the practical translation of spirituality is spiritual strength ...

To summarize, consultants like Tamar and Doron *domesticate* spirituality as a vehicle for success in the 'material world' in aspects such as career or making money (see also Aldred, 2002; Heelas, 1996). From this perspective, spirituality is used as capital. It is packaged as a commodity and governed by patterns of production, distribution, exchange and consumption (Verter, 2003). Like 'conventional' consultants, several spiritual consultants follow the rules of the consultancy market by 'productivizing' knowledge into a package and commodity (Heusinkveld and Benders, 2005, who quote others). Yet others, like Iris, avoid packaging. This latter approach, we argue, reflects the consultants' response to client resistance and, at the same time, it might indicate the perspective of several consultants that spirituality is non-concrete (or insubstantial) and thus cannot be packaged.



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More generally, our findings indicate the high creativity in the Israeli consultants' production of their own combinations of practices. There are several plausible explanations to this relatively high creativity of the Israeli case. One of them may be the Israeli tendency to improvise (Hickson and Pugh 1995; Shamir and Melnik, 2002). The local propensity of spiritual consultants to use eclectic sources and not necessarily to dutifully follow neither the 'American gurus industry' nor Jewish tradition also contributes to the variety in combinations.

### Camouflage and Verbal Tactics

Consultants are generally known to use various persuasion and impression management tactics in order to gain organizational resources for new ideas (Bloomfield and Danieli, 1995; Heusinkveld and Benders, 2005). Common techniques include active listening (Sturdy, 1997), accepting the definition of the problem as framed by managers in order to avoid rejection (Jackall, 1988) and applying a rational and progressive rhetoric which may appeal to managements (Abrahamson, 1996; Huczynski, 1993; Jackson, 2001).

As argued above, spiritual consultants are usually faced with higher levels of resistance. In this section, we would like to present one of the techniques which spiritual consultants use in order to overcome such resistance. We term this technique 'camouflage'. We have noted that it is more often used by consultants who regard and introduce spirituality as a process and not as a finished product whereas those who package spirituality tend not to use this strategy.

The following are examples of three consultants who use 'camouflage':

After a few years of experiment and trial, I have learned that it is a waste of time and money to try to handle all the resistance. Today I enter the organization as a conventional consultant. The titles of my workshops are boring and only after I get the group's trust do I start, very carefully. People are skeptical at first. When I suggest practicing yoga or meditation they are unconvinced about the whole process. I wait some time and then raise it again. It is a gradual process. Today I get into an organization with a topic such as time management, evaluation of employees or contact with clients, and via this window I start the process of organizational consultancy.

I work in a conventional way. Once they accept me, I use the unconventional tools that I believe have the capacity to create change.

Whatever I want to bring to the organization, thoughts, heart, language, I bring. It does not matter what the organization is or who the person is. I only do so with different nuances and with different force. I don't say to a blind man: 'Here, look at the picture.'

Other consultants have less need for camouflage, as they already have a tangible product with putative benefits.

Another more minor technique of camouflage is related to language. We found that all consultants, regardless of their initial approach with relation to the process, select and create terms and metaphors in order to reduce



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their clients' resistance. Common terms in the New Age subculture, such as 'meditation' are abandoned. The term 'spirituality' itself is often avoided or replaced. As an experienced consultant noted:

Spirituality is a problematic concept. It is amorphous, it is not focused, and it can be interpreted in different ways. Let's say I would like to deliver a message to businesspeople. What am I supposed to tell them: 'let's be spiritual?' It does not work.

Another consultant expressed a similar view, arguing that he avoids 'spiritual or cosmic terms' because they might elicit rejection. 'Channelling' is another term (and practice) that consultants often avoid using because 'it is associated with sitting in a trance, closing your eyes, using crystals...'

Another form of camouflage is by replacing New Age vocabulary with a vocabulary that is more familiar to the clients. A consultant told us: 'Regarding language, I don't use words such as "spirituality" or "I am connected". Instead I use the word "intuition".'

An elaborate example of conscious labelling was provided by a Buddhist consultant:

I have several expressions for the word 'meditation'. One of them always amuses me, it is '*de-frag*', from the word 'defragmentation'. It means that the computer is performing meditation. The computer is in a mess, so you run a program, and that is the only program that works at a specific time, and when it ends, the computer works better. I tell them [the organization people] that every person can make this self-arrangement for half an hour a day. Managers in high-tech organizations understand that.

Setting ideas and practices in a familiar discursive context is a necessary step for the success of consultants in their work. Consultants' attempts to change their language reflect the gap between New Age discourse and organizational discourse. The example below, given by Doron, demonstrates translation not only of words or labelling but more generally of the discursive framework.

I used to talk about spirituality, but they did not listen. I said, I can prove it to businesspeople if I examine it in the most practical area, in selling. I wanted to prove that all the methodologies that I talk about have an impact on selling. I wanted to show something concrete that can be translated into money. And then I can expand and talk about the impact of the topics that I am talking about.

Doron's language reflects his affinity with the utilitarian discourse and his attempts to frame his interventions within it in order to persuade his clients. The *utilitarian* discourse, which is usually associated with the language of business, health and politics (Askehave, 2004), is characterized by clarity, brevity and sincerity, as well as an antirhetorical, positivist-empirical, deductive, individualistic, egalitarian and public approach (Scollon and Scollon, 1995). Thus, Doron talks about 'proving', 'practical data', 'impact', 'something concrete' and 'money'. Doron's mode of *domestication* assumes that there is a need to set a common ground for communication in order



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to succeed in delivering his message. The *domestication* process includes a rational and empirical rhetoric. Furthermore, he actually set a scientific procedure that includes a group who experienced several exercises and a control group. By doing so, he, like other consultants, uses a scientific paradigm that includes rational, objective and replicable techniques which engender trust (Whittle, 2006).

To summarize, spiritual consultants use camouflage and other disguising techniques as a way to curtain the real focus of their consultancy work which is estimated as creating resistance when introduced as is. They do not do so in order to create ambiguity regarding the quality of their skills (Whittle, 2006). It can be assumed that this kind of tactics will be used when there are significant gaps between the way consultants and clients perceive the situation and the solutions to it. Thus, one can assume that the more legitimate spirituality would be the less consultants will need to use the tactic of camouflage.

## Discussion and Conclusions

In recent years there has been a growing interest in spirituality, both in the general mainstream culture as a whole and more specifically within the organizational field. This interest does not necessarily imply that organizations are themselves becoming spiritual. In fact, we found that in Israel spiritual consultants are called to help organizations mainly to enhance productivity. Moreover, organizations' members often express resistance to spirituality, which they do not consider a legitimate way to solve the organization's problems and to enhance the bottom line. Spiritual consultants respond to these basic conditions in various ways which we generally labelled as a process of '*domestication*', in which they actively bring home, make familiar and demystify ideas taken from the general network of the New Age.

We can generally conclude that all the spiritual consultants we studied were aware of the epistemological and practical gaps between the ideas they wanted to convey and the organizational set of ideas. They also anticipated the organizational resistance, thus, all of them used some kind of *domestication* techniques. However, through our careful examination of *domestication* as a complex process, we could see that while all agents went through the initial stages of selecting appropriate or less threatening ideas several of them insisted on bringing a fully-ready 'package' when actually confronting the organizations. Others, on the other hand, continued molding their 'products' in direct response to the organization and used more elaborate techniques of concealing and gradual exposure.

The power of the agent of the *domestication* process is of importance to the analysis of the implementation process, a topic which we did not discuss in this article. Being in a liminal position in the organizations, consultants had limited legitimacy to introduce change. One can assume that other agents of change such as managers could have motivated such processes with more impact.



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Nevertheless, we would like to argue that in spite of spiritual consultants' liminal position in the organization and withstanding all the familiarization and disguising techniques, they do bring new ideas into the organizational context. Unlike conventional consultants, they set an emphasis on the individual's awareness of his or her body, thoughts and feelings at the moment. In our view, this focus is quite revolutionary. It challenges management expectation that employees would conform to their jobs and roles. The focus of spiritual consultants on emotions and experience, which are usually marginalized in Israeli work organizations, is also novel and it challenges rationality, a common paradigm in Israeli work organizations.

Finally, how can one evaluate the work of spiritual consultants? Do they enhance the creation of order or chaos (noise) in organizations?

Based on our research and as described in detail in this article, we would like to suggest that while consultants tend to 'keep order' in terms of the ways they choose to deliver novel ideas to the organization, they do create chaos in terms of the ideas that they promote. These ideas might be foreign to Israeli work organizations at this stage but certainly they are followed by employees who have been exposed to them in other contexts reflecting the borderless nature of the field of New Age and possibly the 'longing' found in the mainstream for real experience. They are, however, quite revolutionary within the organizational context. Yet, as discussed at length in this article, consultants tend to camouflage their ideas. By doing so, they don't create noise but plant seeds which can be nurtured by individuals.

Future research should further explore managers and employees argumentation regarding the impact of spirituality in organizations as well as the responses of members from different departments to spirituality within the same organization.

## Notes

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- 1 Unlike institutionalized religion, which looks outward and is anchored in formal rites and scriptures, spirituality is inwardly directed and is concerned with deeper motivations and with existential moments in the life course (Brandt, 1996; Cash et al., 2000; McCormick, 1994).
- 2 As reported by Simchai (2007) the great majority of festival participants are Jewish and do not include Israeli Palestinians, it can be estimated that this is true in general for the participation in New Age activities in Israel. This observation no doubt deserves a wider scrutiny.

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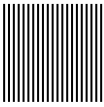
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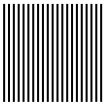
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## Appendix 1

### Interviews with Managers

1. How, when and why did spirituality enter the organization?
2. Who introduced spirituality to your organization? Who objected to the idea or the practice? Who in the organization is exposed to the practice?





## The Introduction and Packaging of Spirituality

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3. If there were objections what were they? What did the supporters say? What were the terminology and the rhetoric of those who objected and of those who supported the practice?
4. In your view, did spirituality become a part of the organization?
5. What is your personal view (thoughts, feelings) of the organization's spirituality?

### *Interviews with Organizational Consultants*

1. What is spirituality? How would you explain or define it?
2. What do you bring to organizations? What are the sources (professional, philosophical, spiritual, etc.) on which you rely?
3. What brought you to include spirituality in organization consultancy? Where have you been exposed to these topics? How many years have you been involved in this area?
4. Please describe your work in organizations.
5. What difficulties do you face, if any, when introducing spirituality to organizations? Do organizations' members accept or reject these ideas and practices?
6. Why do organizations call you to come?

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