

Spirituality and Religion – Session R1 (Room D)

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Verticality as non-religious Spirituality

Spirituality is often perceived as a synonym for religion. And if not a synonym, then certainly its close companion. In this paper, I would like to point out the alternative definitions of spirituality grounded in philosophical anthropology by Max Scheler. Scheler states that the essence of a human being is not exhausted by practical intelligence as the culmination of gradational anthropology. In order to name the principle specifically characterizing the human way of being, he chooses a word that includes not only intellect, but also thinking in ideas, as well as a group of volitional and emotive acts such as love, respect, blissfulness, freedom, etc. – and this word is “the spirit” (der Geist). The center of manifestations of the spirit is a person, and its basic determination is the existential detachment from the organic which means freedom – “the openness to the world”. The perception of spirit as a principally personal being, thus enables us to redefine even the essence of spirituality. Spirituality can therefore become a symbol of searching for the meaning of life, awareness of the depths of life, unraveling the ethical and esthetic dimensions of the world, desire for harmony, the experience of transcendence. As a matter of fact, spiritual dimension (also called vertical dimension – with regard to the “depth” and “height” of phenomena associated with spirituality) of human life represents an area in which we can develop our potential. The paper deals with such understanding of spirituality and its connection with sport and education.

Spirituality and Ecology – Session E1 (Room E)

BÉRES Laura

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Celtic spirituality and post-modern geography: understanding narratives of engagement with place

This presentation will present initial reflections from a research project regarding spirituality and place. Iona, a tiny island in the Inner Scottish Hebrides, has been described as a “thin place” (a place where the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds is thinner) and as the cradle of Christianity in Scotland. Although only 105 people live on the island year round, 250 000 tourists and pilgrims visit it during the summer months each year. People of all ages and backgrounds travel from around the world to visit, seemingly ever more attracted to Celtic spirituality as their faith in formal religious traditions has perhaps begun to falter. The restored Abbey on Iona is home to a radical ecumenical community known as the “Iona Community.” However, pilgrims to Iona also stay in hotels, Roman Catholic and Anglican retreat centres, and rent self-catering cottages because they are drawn to the island itself. Over the course of one year I have visited and stayed on Iona three different times, reflecting on my own changing engagement with the place and also interviewing people about their stories of having been moved in their thinking about their lives due to pivotal moments of engagement with place. These stories will be reflected upon through the lenses of Celtic spirituality and post-modern geography. These beginning reflections challenge us to think about space and place in different ways and to consider how best to integrate an engagement with the environment into direct social work, counselling and mental health practices.

Spirituality and Humanity and Social Justice – Session HSJ1 (Room F)

CARRINGTON Ann

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Ways of knowing in a fragmented world

In a fragmented world, where scholars and practitioners across disciplines continue to identify failings within current systems, spirituality is continually being held up as a possible solution. Within this exploration, the various ways of knowing have become a major focus across many disciplines as we move forward through the 21st Century. In the post post-modern world, attempts are taken to recognize various way of knowing and great effort is made not to be homogenous. However, does this positioning actually work to maintain a fragmented world? And if so, can spiritual theory actually assist in learning to hold all ways of knowing as one? This paper explores a section of findings, pertaining to ways of knowing, from a comprehensive and rigorous qualitative research program using the process of

meta-triangulation, which explored spiritual perspectives from paradigm to practice. Three distinct ways of knowing were identified for both the physical and spiritual. It was found that paradigmatic positioning within the physical created fragmentation, as most paradigms only recognized one way of knowing, while the spiritual paradigms explored predominantly recognized, and actively sought to include all ways of knowing. This insight offers a valuable contribution as it provides a possible pathway to holding the all as one, for both the individual and society.

Spirituality and Education – Session ED1 (Room G)

LAMBTON Anne

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Practical Spirituality: The role of spiritual intelligence in teaching and supporting Combined Subjects students

The Combined Subjects Programme at the University of Sunderland has approximately 700 students who are managed by a core team of six people. The programme has a large mature student population and this, coupled with the increasing burden of student fees and debt, means that many students are in part time (or in some cases full time) employment in order to fund their studies and support their families. This can result in less time being spent within the University environment both academically and socially, leading to a sense of isolation. In addition, the nature of a combined studies programme means that the students work across faculties, which can result in a feeling of fragmentation and a lack of identity, in comparison to traditional single honours students. This presentation will examine how the core teaching team use a spiritual leadership model, and exhibit spiritual intelligence in their support for students on the programme. This is expressed in a practical manner when supporting and teaching students to help them develop a sense of identity, belonging and interconnectedness. Individually and collectively, the members of the team seek meaning and purpose in the workplace through constant reflective practice, questioning what they do and how they can do it better to enhance the student experience. This has resulted in refined models of student support and teaching that have developed out of the team's own values and beliefs. These models are student centred and are enthused with personal authenticity, empathy and express spirituality in action.

TUESDAY 15 MAY 2012

17.30 – 17.55PM

Spirituality and Health – Session H2 (Room C)

MARQUÈS-BROCKSOPP Lorna

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Existential wellbeing & sight loss: Towards a holistic framework for research and practice.

This presentation will discuss a project into holistic wellbeing and sight loss by a doctoral student and researcher at Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. A review of the literature suggests a significant positive relationship between existential spiritual wellbeing and chronic illness, and this link has also been made with sight loss. Nevertheless, the specific area of spirituality and its relationship to vision-specific wellbeing has not been addressed by Guide Dogs, or by the vision impairment sector in the UK. Therefore, this presentation will show how thematic analysis of in-depth interview transcripts has enabled an understanding of the role of existential spirituality in the overall wellbeing of individuals with sight loss. It will draw upon personal narratives of spiritual engagement through holistic health activities such as yoga and meditation, highlighting how such practices enable individuals to find meaning and purpose in life, and how existential spirituality may act as a “buffer” to counteract the negative impact of vision loss. Finally, the construction of a holistic framework will enable future research to appreciate not only the functional and physical needs of blind and partially sighted individuals, but also the emotional, social and spiritual impact of sight loss. In doing so, it is hoped that practitioners will consider sight loss rehabilitation that is sensitive to the whole of the person, thus integrating the bio, psycho, social and the spiritual.