

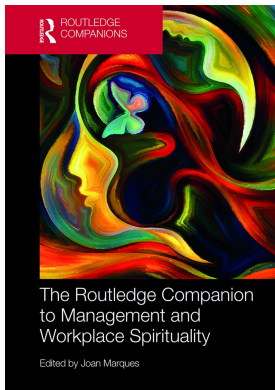
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ORGANIZATIONAL ONENESS

A Possible Vision or an Inescapable Reality?*

Duysal Aşkun

Organizational Oneness: A Possible Vision or an Inescapable Reality?

As the world is suffering today from myriad types of problems starting at individual, relational, cultural, societal, and national levels, the cultivation of the idea of oneness does not seem to be just a luxurious academic pursuit. The exploration, understanding, and later a possible application of the concept can be a very attractive ideal for those of us in the business of human development and evolution.

For the organizations, understanding and application of oneness even looks like a virgin field. Although oneness has been explored most prominently in physics, quantum physics, spirituality, philosophy, and recently as it applied to the self (Ivanhoe, 2017), organizational oneness has not been discussed extensively yet. There are many sources of oneness and its principles which all can be used for organizations though. It is the main aim of this chapter to promote oneness as it applies to organizations with support from whatever source is available in the current literature.

Oneness as a Concept

The idea and understanding of Oneness date back to ancient times since both Western and Eastern thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, Confucius, Buddha, and many others had already said a good deal on the concept as it related to self, others, and the world around us. As a term, Oneness means healthy, whole, or holy (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2005), the original root exists in Anglo-Saxon language as “hal” (Thakadipuram, 2010) while its Sanskrit root is “sampoorna” that means totality, completeness, and wholeness (Apte, 2004; as cited in Thakadipuram, 2010).

Scientific and Philosophical Approaches to Oneness

As a pioneer thinker and academician on the concept of oneness which he defines as the world-view of the 21st century, Malcolm Hollick (2006), in his comprehensive book called *The Science of Oneness*, talks about two approaches to oneness: (1) the one from the many, and (2) the many from the one. The first he defines as the modern Western scientific approach and the latter as

the mystic approach. According to Hollick, the science of oneness needs to synthesize the two approaches. Talking about the Western approach, Hollick refers to *classification* and *systems science* which he thinks are both necessary if we'd like to conceptualize oneness in terms of connections between independent phenomena. Here he refers to analyzing isolated parts which can be a sole scientific endeavor, on the other hand by exploring the connections between those parts thought of as belonging to a larger whole form, the systems scientific approach. Although systems science seems to make a lot of sense in terms of oneness inherent in all beings, Hollick strongly denotes that it is not usually the preferred scientific effort over the analytical one. The only philosopher who tried to reconcile both approaches was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe's (Hollick, 2006) understanding of parts and wholes was something like this: each part is a unique expression of the whole, but they cannot be considered as independent units. Moreover, the interaction of those parts leads the whole to self-creation and this way whole provides the necessary context in which the parts acquire their meaning. Here Goethe purports the understanding of both "many are one" and "many from one."

As a philosopher who is approaching oneness from an albeit different but a related angle, Priest (2014) argued that parts exist even when a unity does not. He makes an analogy to the bricks of a house which exist even before a house exists or does not exist at all. Relying on the ideas of Aristotle, Priest argues that a unity is more than the sum of its parts. This leads to the discussion of parts and wholes are not the same thing. But because of that difference in nature, combining those parts together needs an additional binding function which he terms as *gluon*. The one thing which makes them unified as a single thing. This is more than the plurality of parts which do not necessarily form a unity. To further explain this gluon, Priest (2014) refers to *relationships* between those parts, while relationships also relate. However, this still doesn't explain how unity is formed as I might relate to a person but that does not necessarily create oneness between us. Coming back to the original argument, Priest (2014) adds by talking about the necessary dependence of the part on the whole which, to him, still remains inadequate in explaining the cooperation of the parts to form unity.

The Oneness Hypothesis

While how oneness comes to the fore and enables the whole functioning of the universe, all living organisms and systems still remains much of a scientific mystery, the Oneness hypothesis as suggested by Ivanhoe (2015; as cited in Ivanhoe, 2017) depicts a picture of oneness that reflects not a single theory but a family of views. Having roots in East Asian traditions such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, it is defined as a view about the nature of the world, the nature of the relationship between self and others including not only people but also other creatures, plants, animals, and all sorts of beings. The main claim of the Oneness hypothesis is that we all are interrelated with other beings around us. The main argument is not more about how oneness comes about per se, but more of how it serves the deep need of all beings to belong to larger wholes, communities, and all (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; as cited in Ivanhoe, 2017).

A more expansive conception of self. The Oneness hypothesis entails a relational nature of the self as an alternative to individualistic versions. While it could be argued that this version of self means loss of independence, autonomy, and even self, Ivanhoe (2017) defends it by saying that this understanding of self implies an intimate connection with others which supposedly leads to an enhanced wellbeing and happiness of all concerned, hence the term "expansive" should be taken in this regard. How that translates into people and their relationships is as follows: as we understand our innate relatedness with all beings around us, this inherent interconnection is said to lead to a change in our personal views about ethics, social life, and spirituality. Ideally this

understanding results in more compassion and greater care for all others around us. This obviously leads to a different world picture than it is now. In other words, Ivanhoe (2017, p. 11) beautifully puts it: “When we see other people, creatures, and things as part of ourselves, their welfare becomes parts of our happiness.”

Oneness and Chinese philosophy. Starting with the idea that the universe actually began as an undifferentiated reservoir of *qi* which basically means a vital energy, the universe later on fractured into discrete layers which also differed in such dimensions as clarity, purity, density, and movement. Individual beings and things gradually were created out of this ongoing process of formation of layers and later different structures of energy with different qualities. The main understanding of this message that came from the early Chinese texts (Book of Changes as an example by Ivanhoe, 2017) was that the main essence of all these happenings and structures was *qi*.

Later, Daoists explained all of this as coming from an original state of nothing, not in an absolute sense but more of a description of a stage where there were no discrete and individual entities. At about the same time with Daoists, a related view emerged which purported a worldview as a unified system, interconnected, like living organisms and ecosystems. This idea suggested terms such as the “roots” and “branches” where each part holds a distinctive place and role and, further, some parts are more fundamental and more important than others (Ivanhoe, 2017).

Finally, mostly under the Buddhism influence, neo-Confucians turned more into the relationship between the self and the world. This meant that the world is not an interconnected system or web of patterns, but more of each entity containing a pattern of universe within (Cook, 1977; as cited in Ivanhoe, 2017). This type of self led the way to an understanding of humans’ connection to others, coming with an expansive sense of responsibility with a natural tendency to care for others.

Consciousness in the Context of Oneness

However ideal and promising it may seem, unfortunately humans’ connections with others and their sense of responsibility toward them does not reflect too much of a reality in our world today. In other words, we, as humans, do not seem to operate according to the oneness principle. Increased problems in our ecological, political, societal, and cultural systems have led to all sorts of problems ranging from intense violence such as terrorism, mass shootings, to diminishing sources of organic nutrients, unfavorable climate change, and many unresolved political disputes and economic downturns. As our technologies have evolved, we have enhanced ways of communication, however this did not lead to higher communication quality or collaboration in many different walks of life. Maybe even compared to the past, people are complaining more about “lack of voice,” “problems in governmental policies,” and even “feeling less safe” for their own selves and also their families and communities. This might be the right time to look at consciousness which might be the missing ingredient in trying to conceptualize and ideally apply oneness in our worlds and societies.

Unity Consciousness and How it Comes About

Hollick (2006) introduced a spiritual model that involved cosmic evolution based on consciousness. He wrote about Gnostic sources by Freke and Grandy (2001) which delineated the fundamental essence of reality as consciousness, not matter. This means that our bodies are not given life by their atomic particles, but by consciousness itself which is basically the awareness of the world around us and our own inner selves. If there was no conscious experience of our living, there would be no existence for an individual to know about. Again, according to Gnostics, the mystery

from which existence comes is an undivided whole. This means mystery is not consciousness by itself, as consciousness requires an object to be conscious of. Therefore, consciousness is said to come into existence when the mystery was divided into the consciousness and its object.

According to Hollick (2006), unity consciousness is the awareness of all that is. It is described as beyond our experience, knowledge, or imagination. And the fundamental difference between unity consciousness and other types of consciousness mainly concerns the blurred boundaries of the self and not-self. In normal and transpersonal consciousness there is a boundary between the self and the non-self. In unity consciousness this boundary dissolves and distinct awareness of subject and object stops. But it would be misunderstanding, according to this view, to see self as a disappearing entity in all. But the sense of self here, similar to Ivanhoe's (2017) description, is expansive. The self expands to encompass all that is, separate and distinct, but actually as One. The self, before returning to its original individual position, feels that it is one with reality at least for a while. This, all by itself is an experiential state where the brain usually seems to be quiet and still, without active thought processes, but very much awake and alert.

Scientifically speaking, in spite of recent discoveries, the consciousness spot in the brain remains a mystery. And many practices of spirituality try to help people empty and still their minds till there is an ultimate awareness, desirably with no content/object. Accordingly, Hindu and Buddhist thinkers purport that human consciousness is what emerges from this state of emptiness and not from the brain itself (Hollick, 2006). This results in an understanding of the brain as a tool, not a creator of consciousness which exists outside the brain, that resides in all matter either as a parallel form of reality or as a fundamental one from which pretty much everything comes.

According to Priest (2014), it becomes less straightforward when we conceive of mind as not of a physical nature. He talks about Kant who acknowledges the existence of consciousness merely from an individual saying, "I think." This, according to Priest (2014), makes the thought as mine, as an individual, and that is what determines the unity of my consciousness. But Priest (2014) critically argues that even the thought is existent by the condition that one is conscious. Quoting Dennett (1993) who proposed that:

There is no single stream of consciousness because there is no central Headquarters, no Cartesian theater where "it all comes together" for the perusal of a Central Meaner. Instead of such a single stream, there are multiple channels in which specialized circuits try, in parallel pandemoniums, to do their various things, creating Multiple Drafts as they go.

(Priest, 2014, p. 170)

Following this understanding, Priest creates a reconciled view of self the quiddity of which is determined by its position in a network of relations. He further argues, because of all the relativity concerning self, consciousness, and how we approach ourselves in a sea of relations with all different beings, all of those relations combine to make us what we are. These relations include our parents' behaviors towards us and all our loved ones, albeit in some sort of a hierarchy of significance. This way our very own being is influenced by all those webs of relationships ranging from most to less essential.

Relational Consciousness as a Path to Oneness

As a possible glue that holds humans and related beings together, relational consciousness can be one possible factor to be entered into the equation of oneness. Originally appearing in the work

of Hay and Nye in 1998 on children's spirituality, *relational consciousness* represented the ability of children to perceive their world in relational terms. As part of Nye's longitudinal studies with children, relational consciousness was defined as: "An unusual level of consciousness or perceptiveness, relative to other passages of conversation spoken by that child. Conversation was expressed in a context of how the child related to things, other people, him/herself, and God" (Hay & Nye, 1998, p. 113). The kind of consciousness that is being referred to here meant a specific relationship. The consciousness was mainly relational, existing in the intra- and inter-personal domain. More than a simple alertness and attentiveness, relational consciousness represents being aware of one's mental activity in a certain context. The sense of being objectively aware of oneself as "subject" was deemed as very important for the child to develop its ability to perceive its world in relational terms. Relational was applied in a very wide sense, encompassing I-Others, I-Self, I-World, and I-God.

Although the processes and the contexts in which relational consciousness appear relate to the developmental stage of each child, the consequences of this type of consciousness are of significant importance if we can also reflect on its meaning for the world of adults. Some of the positive consequences included feelings of calmness, peacefulness, holiness, and moral goodness. On the other hand, a sense of oneness, forgetting self, and feeling free were also consequences. Hay and Nye (1998) reported that those consequences were reactions to something outside, something with external reference. In her study, children reported a new desire to search for understanding or meaning and a greater sense of clarity. Nye (1998) concluded by saying that relational consciousness reflected a concept which served as a means to see the different dimensions of spirituality as members of any whole.

Oneness in Organizations

Earlier, we have talked about the parts and the whole in the context of oneness. Many explanations had been given by different philosophers and theoreticians. Among those, the one by Goethe (Hollick, 2006), seems to be a good one to apply for our organizations today. Goethe originally thought each part to be a unique expression of the whole, but which cannot be considered as independent units. And the interaction of those parts leads the whole to provide the necessary context in which the parts acquire their meaning.

Like an organization, a human is also a system, composed of parts, interrelationships between those parts, and something that goes beyond those interrelationships. An organization is another system, operating similarly, albeit on a larger scope. Therefore, humans are systems inside the organizational systems. And to make the picture clearer, the organizations are also part of their surrounding environmental systems (economy, ecology, politics, culture ... etc.) which also operate with the same principles. So, the question would be, how do we locate humans as important and active agents in the organizational system? Can we make a distinction between the types of processes that take place in terms of oneness? How do we draw the line between different albeit interrelated entities: the individual and the organization?

The answer must lie in the distinction between understanding individual oneness and understanding oneness in terms of relationships between the individuals.

Intrapersonal Oneness

As a healthy system, when we talk about oneness within humans, we are talking about the alignment between the interrelated parts. And those parts need also to be healthy so that they can function properly within themselves and in relation to others. When we list those parts as mind,

body, and soul, we need to consider the ways in which they remain healthy and functional. As no human is born and grows up the same in terms of their healthy make-up, we need to accept the fact that there is a variation in society in terms of individuals who we can name as “whole.”

Individual Consciousness. In terms of the criteria to be used to understand the levels of healthiness inside the human as a system, consciousness has been one of the most prominent terms to use (Sadhguru, 2016). And to restrict our terminology to the workplace contexts, we can say that there are basically two approaches to consciousness at the workplace (Marques, 2012):

- Eastern conceptualizations that mainly stem from Buddhism,
- Western conceptualizations that involve approaches by various philosophers and thinkers coming from different orientations (Freud, Hegel, Sartre (Macann, 2015), later Hawkins (1995), Wilber (2002) ... and others).

Focusing on the related definitions of those two different approaches, we can give the following for Marques (2012): “consciousness is an experience related to one’s own experience rather than others’” (Bodhi, 1993; Narada, 1959). As an important aspect of spiritual growth, consciousness, being a continuous construct, enables us to make cognitive improvements while leading us to experience important realizations along the way (Dalai Lama, 1995).

One of the ways in which we can alleviate our consciousness at work was suggested as mindfulness practices. According to Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007), to reach desirable goals, people need to learn to be attentive to their inner states and behaviors, otherwise less conscious behaviors would be the result. In addition, Brown et al. (2007) suggest the cognitive element (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000) to mindfulness related to how an individual makes sense of his/her environment in a mindful manner. In a similar vein, Purser and Milillo (2015) argued that mindfulness should be defined not as a passive individual position but as a more active approach which would happen through complex cognitive processes like memory, covering all time perspectives together (past, present, and future). The authors named it the “right mindfulness” where it defines knowing in all existence levels—the mind, body, and the soul. In other words, they followed Buddhist notions of “wholesome mind and body” which would be producing behaviors they called as wholesome. While the authors did not conduct an empirical study about what those types of behaviors might be, they gave examples of wholesome behaviors as ethical behavior and social responsibility and unwholesome behaviors such as destroying life, stealing, lying, harsh speech ... etc.

The Holistic Self. Hollick (2006) defined us humans as both autonomous organisms and also as dependent and vital parts of the larger systems to which we all belong. In this way, we are parts and wholes at the same time. And he argues that for many of us this is very threatening for our independent conceptions of self. But from the system’s perspective (Macy, 1990) there is an inescapable interaction with the whole system surrounding us which creates further wholes and patterns, leading to a diverse picture enabled through transpersonal consciousness (Hollick, 2006).

Interpersonal Oneness

How does oneness act out in relationships? Especially concerning organizations, what makes those gluons (Priest, 2014) reflect “feelings of unity, oneness or wholeness?” Is relational consciousness possible, especially by two conscious individuals, or does it suffice to have one individual to be more conscious than the other? Most of all, how do we draw the line between the more conscious and the less? Is mindfulness an adequate practice to demonstrate oneness in relationships?

If we think of persons as reflections of their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and something more than the sum of all three, behaviors might be the type of personal reflection that very much make sense in the context of relationships. It is the behavior which is clearly visible and observable, and sometimes much easier to measure compared to the others. When we talk about objective performance measures, for example, we are talking about “behavioral metrics” that were also very clearly identified by Brown (1982) in his book *Managing Behavior on the Job*, creating a guideline for managers to conduct objective performance appraisals based on clear, unbiased, and non-subjective methods of behavioral observation. In short, behaviors are the most visible of all parts and are more readily subject to objective analysis, and which, clearly is what is seen by both parties in the relationship dyad, no matter how much they are able to remain objective in their observations. This of course doesn’t mean that “behaviors” form the only possible units of analysis of what happens between two individuals in terms of oneness. There are of course other psychological processes that happen between the two in terms of thoughts, feelings, mental reactions ... etc. But for the sake of rendering oneness as something more than a philosophy or just an idealized thought, to talk about it in terms of visible behaviors seems like an important scientific pursuit.

Introduction of Oneness Behaviors. As an important attempt to try to demonstrate the evidence of oneness in terms of human behaviors, Aşkun and Çetin (2017), as a result of their 4-year-long study, suggested a behavioral definition of oneness, calling it oneness behavior. They came up with a 27-item measure that represented oneness behaviors which take place in different social environments. The oneness behavior items fell into two categories: focus on one’s self vs. consideration of the other. The individual behaved in one of those two ways which basically represented a self-centered vs. an interdependent state of being. In an attempt to define and understand oneness more from an interconnected state, Aşkun and Çetin (2017) aimed to demonstrate oneness as it applied to the day to day behavior of an individual. As an example, how does an individual react to an old person trying to cross the street? How does he or she behave when there is a line? What is the behavior during group projects/activities when there is more than one person involved? Does he/she adjust his/her style accordingly by considering the other person in that relationship context? Does he/she understand the mood the other is in, or does he/she even care? As a healthy and a whole individual would be composed of healthy cognition, emotion ,and behaviors, it seems necessary to highlight “oneness behaviors” as one of the possible indications of healthy cognition and emotion. In other words, thinking our behaviors as the most visible and evident parts of our individual systems, we are thinking that behaviors that reflect oneness would provide some significant clues to understand and hopefully cultivate oneness for every individual inside the organizational system.

As a consequence, to live in interconnectedness, the organizations need to stay healthy and be in a constant state of growth (Marques, 2012). Thinking about humans as whole systems, considering them as active agents playing critical roles inside the organizations, we can think of some competencies to be developed in addition to achieving the states of mindfulness. Competencies are the types of capacities that help the whole organization to perform in the short and the long run. Some organizations prefer to define their competencies according to their definite set of values, and some others prefer to define them based on their performance metrics. In any case, competencies as expressed by each individual (employee or a manager) are necessary building blocks of positive organizational outcomes that go beyond performance to also include sustainable growth, healthy culture, and happy workforce.

Competencies at the Intra-Individual Level

Consciousness. As extensively outlined above, consciousness is a necessity for a healthy organization (Marques, 2012) and it goes beyond thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and reaches far out to set the cultural tone of any type of organizational entity.

Mindfulness. In accordance with Buddhist ideology and literature, Western researchers studying mindfulness have theorized its strong relation with connectedness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) while Brown and Ryan (2003) originally put forward its strong relation with relatedness.

Motivation. Self Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980) sees human motivation a result of three interrelated human needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The three interact to form a level of motivation for the individual which is a very fundamental area of exploration in today's business world to understand performance and related positive outcomes.

Autonomous-related self. In an attempt to reconcile Western and Eastern conceptions of self, Kagitcibaşı (1996) claimed that autonomy does not have to mean separateness from others. As the original psychological theories of self have promoted individual independence, autonomy, self-reliance, and many other related concepts, the development of the autonomous, independent self has been stressed more for its healthy and significant nature. However, Kagitcibaşı (1996) proposes that autonomy should be understood as what it is, mostly as an agency, not as separateness and there is a possibility that relatedness as another basic human need (Deci & Ryan, 1980) can coexist with it. If we can look closer, her depiction of the autonomous-related self is very similar to what Hollick (2006) described as holistic self.

Resilience. While originally it was defined as a positive adaptation to situations which carried a significant adversity or risk, resilience also means positive wellbeing (Masten & Reed, 2002). In terms of oneness, resilience by the individual reflects health and being wholesome.

Identification. This is the extent to which individuals perceive oneness with their organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Wieseke, Ahearne, Lam, & van Dick, 2009). In other words, Kim, Chang, and Ko (2010) describe it as the perception of belongingness to an organization and a sense of oneness with the organization.

Commitment. One of the possible outcomes of identification, commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) is a necessary competence for a healthy organization performance (Conway & Briner, 2012; Fu & Deshpande, 2014).

Competencies at the Inter-Individual Level

Relational Consciousness. Originally coined by Hay and Nye (1998) in an effort to understand children's spirituality, relational consciousness reflects a relationship process where the relationship enters time and space through the mediation of self-consciousness that leads to the objectification of the self and partner and influences mutual recognition by both parties (Wills, 2012).

Citizenship behaviors. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) coined as a term by Organ (1988) who originally followed Barnard's (1938) conception of an organization as a "cooperative system" which is composed of those willing individuals without whose efforts the organization cannot exist or evolve. In more specific terms, those persons needed to have a tendency to think with an interdependent consciousness that represented an interconnectedness which they truly believed to reflect the eventual benefit for the whole organization.

Emotional intelligence: In their article where they report a series of seven studies, Schutte et al. (2001) found significant high relationships between emotional intelligence and empathic perspective taking, self-monitoring in social situations, social skills, more cooperative responses,

and higher scores for close and affectionate relationships. These are truly the building blocks of any kind of healthy interpersonal exchange between two or more individuals.

Empathic communication. Kameda (2014), while discussing Japanese business discourse on oneness, makes a very clear definition for communication as a competence to be developed. In his outline, there needs to be a you-consideration and you-attitude for at least two individuals to share perspectives and to identify with each other.

Respect. Respect especially as a behavior is the manifestation of belief that another person has value and people react accordingly when respected (Grover, 2013).

Authentic leadership. Leadership wholeness is implied in the definition of an authentic leader (George, 2007; as cited in Thakadipuram, 2010).

Whole-soul leadership. Originally proposed by Fairholm and Fairholm (2009) who mentioned the key elements of this type of leadership as: showing concern for and integration of the whole-soul of leader and the followers; liberating individuals to grow constantly; enabling individual wholeness in the community; developing an organization which is intelligent; setting moral standards; inspiring; freeing followers to build stewardship communities; modeling a service orientation.

Being-Centered Leadership. This is leadership based on oneness and constant reconciliation of apparent opposites (Fry & Kriger, 2009; as cited in Egel & Fry, 2017). Defined as the most inclusive, this is the level of being that only relies on the unity that is transcendent. At this level of being the leader exists in pure emptiness, fullness, and completeness. Here there remains no separation between the leader and the follower. In an idealized state of perception, the leader responds with an open system of knowing and being. There is pure self-actualization in all of the leader's pursuits.

Organizational Outcomes in Relation to the Oneness Principle

Organizational Change through the Wholeness Praxis

What happens when an organization is composed of conscious, wholesome beings? What is the mechanism that helps with the healthy transformation of an organization toward oneness? What is the outcome of oneness in relationships that include dyads, groups, and multi-functions? These are all useful questions that we can ask when we think of oneness either as an outcome or as a process.

In an extensive outline of a new paradigm of organizational transformation that needs to take place in the business world today, Li and Lin (2011) observed that the biggest hurdle on the road to organizational transformation was actually about how we collectively relate ourselves to our problems instead of how we framed those problems. Naming this new paradigm "wholeness praxis," the authors claim that learning organizations are no longer adequate in terms of handling complex problems while the wholeness praxis could serve as a functional integrator of the emerging global communities. In their attempt to formulate a new path to a sustainable organizational development, Li and Lin (2011) predict that learning organizations might transcend themselves toward being wholeness praxis organizations by envisioning possibilities. As a response to the questions about how different entities inside the organization work together for an envisioned world and how diverse perspectives can be reconciled toward a unified goal, they suggest forming horizontal network structures both inside and outside the organization, including the real world. Second, they suggest extending the vertical network from the real world to the envisioned ideal world by cultivating insights (consciousness as an individual competence). However, among the most important of those suggestions, the authors highlight building a

bridge for diverse groups of people where they create a new language to communicate with one another between the worlds of the real and the ideal.

Similarly, Wilber (2002) made a distinction between the subjective world and the objective world of consciousness (Pandey & Gupta, 2007) as a transcendental view which encompasses the all level quadrant approach to consciousness. According to his model, it seems that consciousness at all levels have interrelationships with others. This means we can expect outcomes at the following levels:

- Individual (attitudes, behaviors, emotions),
- Subsystems (top management, departments, units, project groups, teams),
- Whole systems (organization, institution, society, culture),
- Interrelations between those systems.

In terms of how those outcomes come to play in each system, we would be dealing with many variables related to each entity. As an example, at the level of top management we might be talking about values and mission statements, whereas at the level of organization we might be talking about market share, performance, and profit margins. It mainly depends on our choice for the unit of analysis.

Organizational Culture and Practices. Whatever a personality is to an individual, culture is to an organization or groups of people. Following Schein's (1990) conceptualization, culture is composed of assumptions, values, and artifacts. How does a culture look like in an organization embodying oneness? How do people think at a conscious and unconscious level, what do they value, and how do they behave?

As consciousness is an important and an antecedent term for oneness, we believe that consciousness at all levels of cultural model would be significant to attain a oneness culture. And for some related culture types, we can just list the following:

- Compassionate culture (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014),
- Horizontal collectivistic culture (Triandis & Bhawuk, 1997).

Practices that help organizations express themselves in oneness with their surroundings can range from sustainability practices to several corporate social responsibility projects, while high performance and innovative products might be the natural outcome of healthy individual and team make up. In addition, how the organization treats its customers, suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, community, and both its immediate and extended social environment that exists in the network can all be the subject of oneness practice that transcends the organizational boundaries that expand far and beyond. In other words, if we think of organizations as whole entities themselves, their expanded version of self also would have enormously important outcomes.

Organizational Oneness: Just an Ideal or a Reality?

Priest (2014) makes a distinction between realism and idealism in the sense that realism represents more of our common-sense and scientific thinking. All things around us have come into existence somehow and there were some natural universal laws that might have helped with their existence, co-existence, and their relationships. On the other hand, idealism, according to Priest (2014) contends that we only perceive our world through our conceptual lens and even though there was a world before our conceptualization of it, it can only exist to our knowledge by our own understanding of it. In relation, argument of oneness changes if we come from a

realist vs. an idealist standing. In more clear terms, if oneness is an inherent reality, all beings, groups of beings, and others, then it is something that we need to discover and possibly carve out of the current situation of the world, of the organizations, no matter how ugly, distorted, polluted, conflictual, and chaotic it may seem. This possibly requires all of us to dig into more self-awareness, mindfulness, consciousness training, and all else to find the true essence within all of us as individuals, groups, and organizations. In addition, healing all which contaminates our relationships as unhealthy, destructive, and even violent. Removing the barriers that prevent us from expanding to the other, by being open communicators, using perspective taking, listening, and empathizing, and considering the other at all times.

In her extensive discussion on the organizations she defines as Fractured Wholes, Hess (2018) defines individuals who are expected to behave “professionally, rational, goal-oriented” and who have to leave an important portion of themselves at home to be able to survive in an organizational context. The corporations (organizational bodies) are defined as usually large, organized collectives with hierarchies and with set goals that may or may not necessarily be welcomed by its individual members. And, more importantly, those large organizations operate according to rational point of view (RPV by Rovanne, 1998), their own norms of standard behavior, usually reinforced by the top. Here Hess (2018) sees the unity inside the organization not in pure essence of oneness but as a collective participation by the shared commitments of the members. Here that participation and commitment come with an exchange of self-interests and organizational goals through satisfaction of certain individual needs such as security, power, prestige, recognition, rewards ... etc. Here this exchange happens at the expense of “leaving what is true about the whole self behind” as the members are not asked for their expression of their most true values, emotions, or personal choices about what is really important for the world and for them. This also includes their complex personal identities such as familial ties, religious orientations, and anything that belongs intimately to them. This way whatever makes them unique is left at the door. Bringing in only that part of the self which is accepted by the organization leads to fractured wholes which comprise fractured selves. Hess (2018) further argues that the way they are composed of the fractured selves, the resulting organizations would not be conscious entities, not feeling or experiencing anything real, but mostly driven by self-interests fueled by being oriented to their individual goals without a concern or compassion for other beings, groups of people, creatures, societies, and ecologies. This tendency is said to result in more harmful actions than good ones. Then what is the solution for the sake of oneness as a possibility in organizations?

Hess (2018) suggests that although it might seem to be the very practical way of approaching it, healing fractures may not be as an effective strategy as it may sound. She is arguing that actions and intentions of organizations go more beyond the sum total of the related actions of their members and that changing the members would not be the best way to reach positive outcomes as an organization. Rather, she suggests, making a change from the top by implementing related changes in the values, virtues, and the structural levels would be the most effective way to prevent external harms, which is actually more what counts. Here the “Being-centered leadership” by Fry and Kriger (2009) comes to mind as a leadership competency to develop. Through being-centered leadership, not only might the organizational practices and culture change, but also there would be a possibility for change at the level of the followers.

If oneness is just an ideal, not a reality-based principle, then what is the task for all of us and our organizations? In his exploration on the 21st century oneness, Flanagan (2018) talks about the concept starting with the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals signed by each country in Paris in 2015. According to the agenda, every nation should be working toward achieving the goals of ending war, corporate greed, poverty along with economic and political

inequality, enabling access to health care and education for all, and work for the environmental sustainability for the future. Having outlined those goals and their rationale, Flanagan critically questions the power of the belief in oneness to motivate people and societies into related action. And he suggests additional motives for a real change to take place: moral commitment, states of faith and hope, including certain positive illusions of metaphysics which he defines in relation to five theses of oneness: cosmic oneness, sentient being oneness, historical oneness, shared fate oneness, and care oneness. The cosmic oneness entails interconnectedness with everything, historical oneness is about the causal dependency on others who were here before us, shared fate oneness involves dependencies with others existing near us, sentient being is about our common features that make all of us as humans, and care oneness is about our relation being fundamental to who we are, in other words, our core being. The main argument Flanagan (2018) makes here is that whatever the essence of our true nature is, be it oneness or separateness, it is worth believing in the idea of oneness and act accordingly.

In line with Flanagan's (2018) discussion, if oneness is conceptualized as an ideal state for organizations then it is our task to make necessary commitments and get involved in related actions that call for oneness. This understanding translates into transformative consciousness at both intra- and interpersonal levels, development of related competencies (outlined above) through further training, development and change programs, aligning goals of the organization with that of the employees through empowerment, whole-soul, and being-centered leadership, and, finally, enabling a culture of oneness through related value sets, norms, and practices. For the whole organization to become whole, there needs to be a promotion of change starting from both ends, bottom-up and top-down.

Conclusion

As oneness is a new concept for existence at all levels of being, from creatures, animals, humans, organizations to surrounding ecosystems, any attempt toward more understanding seems to be helpful for future prospects. From what is available so far, it seems pretty clear that oneness exists side by side with consciousness, health, expanded self, mindfulness, and relational consciousness. And it is quite imperative to accept the fact that many do not necessarily create oneness just by existing together. There needs to be a glue, a gluon, that connects each separate being together to form a unity. And it is also obvious that the unity is more than just the added sum of those existences.

As for the organizations which cannot be thought apart from its members, departments, management, culture, and practices, oneness offers a new way of being. A way of being that could be reinforced by the leadership but is only possible by the contributing members' evolved ways of existence through enhanced but a unique set of competencies. How competencies come about might be the art and science of hiring, training, and organizational development. Here the cultivation of consciousness at both intra- and interpersonal levels seems to be a priority for those who are responsible for the organization's change efforts.

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