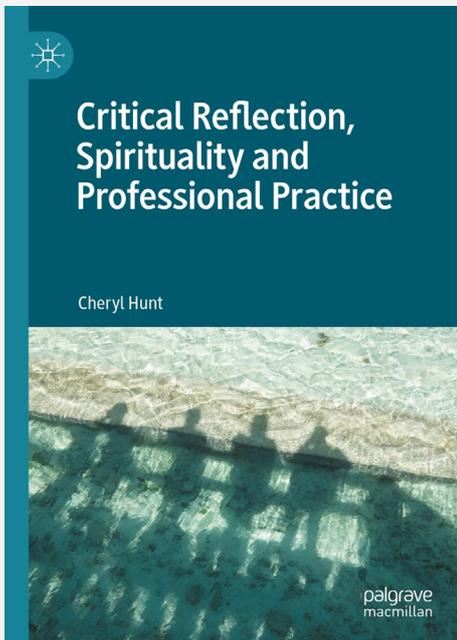


# Book Review

Hunt, Cheryl. 2021. *Critical Reflection, Spirituality and Professional Practice*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.



This book is rich in the wisdom of a career long commitment to the development the fields of spirituality and critical reflection in professional practice. Seeing spirituality connected to reflective practice fills a significant gap in the literature and this book makes a valuable contribution to this interdisciplinary field. Dr. Cheryl Hunt offers an innovative and creative understanding of the role of critical reflection in developing self-awareness with the intention of enhancing professional practice, particularly in her specialist field of education. This book is an excellent resource for academics in this field, practice teachers as well as practitioners themselves who want to continue as lifelong learners and continue to hone their critical reflection skills and their understanding of the significance of spirituality in practice.

The book consists of four parts. The first introduces the quest of the book. The second part focuses on the concept of

reflective practice. The third part delves into the author's own approaches to reflective practice and understandings of spirituality. The final part explores how practitioners can reflect most meaningfully on their lived experience highlighting the importance of critical reflective practice in the current climate. Each chapter comes with detailed notes which expand the chapter and provide further references to explore.

Part One consists of one chapter, *Joining the Dots*, which gives a brief history and context and situates the book within the realm of autoethnographic style writing. It highlights the importance of metaphor for the book and then introduces the remaining three parts of the book. It is a valuable example of reflexivity which addresses the *who* of the author, and in so doing offers spiritual insights which enrich the text and make it more than just another book about reflective practice. It emphasises the importance of our stories and the value of the spiritual nature of experience and reflection on it.

Part Two includes three chapters which provides valuable insights on what reflective practice is, how one might facilitate it and the significant role metaphor plays, particularly in the formation of one's worldview. There are a wide variety of sources of reflection including such things as Wordsworth's poem about Daffodils and this highlights the rich vein of sources that one might use in developing critical reflection skills. A key element in this part of the book is the definition of reflection that is arrived at and then forms the basis of understanding (Hunt 2021, 45):

*An understanding of reflection as both: a 'route' towards one's 'internalised knowing', and a 'process' of making meaning out of that knowing in order to understand one-self and one's practice better.*

The worked examples in this part of the book are particularly useful in grounding the theoretical discussions. Pertinent for the study of spirituality is a focus on the importance of and individualized nature of engaging in meaning making which “*may be idiosyncratic, needs to be respected – and provides the basis for dialogue, the development of shared understanding, and new perspectives*” (Hunt 2021, 106) all worthy aspects of a spiritually oriented approach to reflective practice.

Part Three again has three chapters and follows the pattern of exploring the concept, looking at it in practice and drawing out some of the implications of this way of working and thinking as well as significant autoethnographic content. What underpins this part of the book is the idea that “*we each create, understand and tell the story of the world in which we live*” (Hunt 2021, 151). I particularly appreciated the Gaian model of community education as an example of this conceptualised. It is an inventive and original application of spirituality to inform a different discipline and is indicative of the creativity inherent in the book.

The final part, like the first part has only one chapter. It draws together the threads from other parts of the book and, aptly is called *Seeking Integration*. This chapter also looks at concepts re-

lated to reflective practice thus locating the book in the wider body of literature about professional learning. There is a useful discussion about approaches to defining spirituality and the complexity of that task. This is one of the most valuable contributions of the book as spirituality continues to be a contested term in literature around different modes of professional practice. I found the discussion of vocation in this chapter a significant synthesis of some of the underpinning themes emerging from the previous parts which again emphasises the richness that spirituality brings to our understanding of life.

The most off-putting thing about the book is the cost. It is frustratingly expensive, even in eBook format for a practitioner but is an excellent resource for libraries and should be a key text on the reading lists, particularly of postgraduate courses where critically reflective practice is a core skill to be developed further. The main improvement for me would have been to have discussion questions at the end of each chapter to encourage me to contextualise what I had been reading. The range of sources used is broad and reflects the key thinkers in the period covered by the book, there may be some emerging voices to consider as the field moves forward.

This book will have resonances beyond education, and I highly recommend it as a well written, sophisticated text which should be come an essential book in this field.

***Dr. Sally Nash***  
sally.nash@stpadarns.ac.uk



## Mission

Spirituality Studies is a double-blind peer reviewed academic journal published twice a year in English for international readership. The journal welcomes original contributions from various academic fields reflecting the phenomenon of spirituality in its multiple forms and from multiple perspectives.

Spirituality Studies covers a wide range of theoretical and practical (lived spirituality) issues related to spirituality, such as processes of spiritual transformation as reported and described in various traditions of mysticism (in Christianity, Judaism, Islam etc.) or yoga (in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, new religious movements etc.). The journal publishes research studies, both theoretical and empirical, academic articles, essays, interviews, reviews and poetry.

Spirituality Studies also provides a forum for sharing personal spiritual experiences of spiritual practitioners elaborated in a form of an autobiographical essay or poetry. By combining academic and personal approaches to spirituality, the journal aims at providing an exceptional interdisciplinary platform for constructive dialogue between a variety of viewpoints, approaches, and methodologies in the study of spirituality.

The third area of the Spirituality Studies' focus is spiritual education. When publishing studies on spiritual education as well as teaching and methodical materials, which reflect practical experience of educators, Spirituality Studies facilitates education related to spirituality and fosters the awareness of the importance of spirituality for personal, interpersonal and social well-being.

The journal is published by The Society for Spirituality Studies in partnership with the Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (DIM-MID), European Union of Yoga, and the International Network for the Study of Spirituality. It is housed on the spirituality-studies.org website.