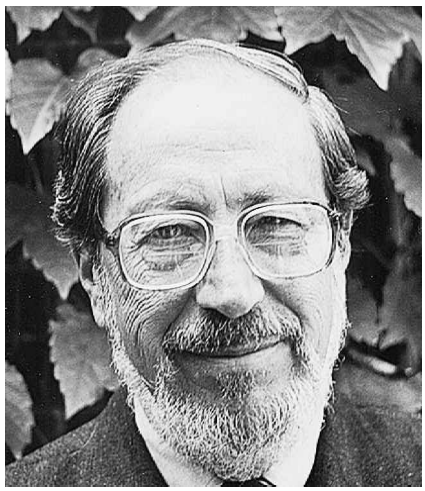
From the Founding Editor

EDITORIAL



I hope that by now our readers have learned that *Reflections* tries to be a coat of many colors. Most of our issues have evolved around themes, and these themes have usually arisen out of a critical mass of contributions that clearly hung together. We have also evolved themes because ''they are in the air.'' For months now, we have noticed more and more articles, newspaper reports, books, and essays that deal with ''spirituality,'' the role of religion in business, with values-driven management and other topics that imply that there must be more to life than work and there must be more to organizations than just fulfilling their primary task. Especially in business and industry, more and more people are experiencing a conflict between their day-to-day duties and the needs of their inner selves. Many people experience a genuine conflict between their deeper inner values and what the world of work requires of them. So our team swallowed hard and, with the enthusiastic leadership of Judy Rodgers, launched into an exploration of these issues.

We found immediately that there are semantic problems. What does spirituality really mean? How is it connected to an issue that goes far back in history, the issue of spirit and its role as a motivator? In our many hours of discussion and reviewing candidates for papers, we could not resolve the semantic issue, so we have decided to forge ahead with a variety of viewpoints. The best way for readers to approach this topic is with a ''spirit of inquiry.''

Ed Schein

In This Issue

Karen Ayas

This issue of *Reflections* could not be timelier. The atrocities of September 11 made us question our deepest held assumptions. They were a wake-up call, stronger than ever, for a clearer sense of what's important.

At the opening of the Society for Organizational Learning Research Greenhouse, 10 days later on September 21, I shared ''a prayer for life'' with participants. Almost immediately, I began feeling a strong presence in the room. It felt as though everyone was calling for help along with me as I read: ''Source of all life, we pray for life. . . . Help us to keep our minds alive. . . . Help us to keep our hearts alive. . . .'' The prayer had a healing effect, and we felt supported by one another. We had a wonderful, productive meeting.

At difficult times, it becomes evident that we cannot separate spirit from our lives or work. There is no way around the pain; we have to go through it. While we each respond in our own way and time, we can find the inner strength

to go through difficult times when we feel sustained and part of something larger than ourselves.

There is an ever greater need for spirituality in the world, and there is more readiness for it right now.

There are many faces to spirituality. The variety of articles, essays, poems, and practices in this issue show the plurality and diversity of perspectives. One overarching theme that is carried across the issue, however, is ''interconnectedness.'' The collection here helps us see how spirit, or any way we choose to describe our essential being, is at the center of our relationships in life and work, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not.

We open with **Judy Rodgers's** account of Nizar's dilemma. That organizations cannot continue their demand for ''split screen'' existence from individuals is carefully illustrated in this story. You will find this dilemma expressed in other stories in the issue, and you most probably have witnessed it in your own life. Read the story by Stephen Buckley if you are still not convinced.

We discover next that there are leaders who do succeed in creating conditions for people to get involved in the workplace with their hearts and souls. From **Roger Saillant**, we learn that living authentic lives in the workplace is not just a possibility but a necessity, if one aims for high performance in organizations. In this interview, he explains why ''connectedness among all'' is a change of state whose time has come. **Peter Senge's** introduction includes an account of Saillant's inspiring talk six months later at the SoL Greenhouse. In his comments, **André Delbecq**, a professor at Santa Clara University, describes Saillant as a leader who truly embodies ''servant leadership.''

Next, two consultants, **Stella Eugene Humphries** and **Kathleen Otterman**, illustrate how one can facilitate the emergence of a pathway into interconnectedness that leads to breakthrough results in a client system. **Francis Crome's** comments underscore the importance of bringing the whole self into the process, rather than expert knowledge, whether one is a researcher or a consultant.

Ben Bruce, a manager at Harley-Davidson, next shares his mid-life reflections and describes his response to the call for servant leadership. **Bill Torbert** offers his developmental map of managerial action-logics as a frame for the transforming path Bruce chose to take. **Sherry Immediato**, SoL's acting managing director, in her comments shows how Bruce, by sharing his story, has served the SoL community. She explores the implications of his story for us as individuals and for our organizations. **Stephen Buckley** next tells a story from his early days at work and presents yet another version of Nizar's dilemma.

We continue with **Bill O'Brien's** brilliant description of his search for meaning in his life's work and what sustains him from inside. In a letter he wrote to a friend and colleague 13 years ago, O'Brien, the president of Hanover Insurance at the time, predicts an epoch change where there no longer is a split between science and spirit, where we reach higher levels of understanding the paradigms that dictate our actions. As we see in his comments 13 years later, most of his foresights are still timely and relevant today. **Alfredo Sfeir-Younis**, a special representative to the World Trade Organization, in a short essay based on an interview with Judy Rodgers, argues that businesses can play a very different role in the world today if we can possibly think of them as having a body and a soul, and leaders can become spiritual entrepreneurs. **Andrew Ferguson**, chairman of Spirit in Business, Inc., comments on the essay.

''Why spirituality, why now?'' is further explored in a thoughtful essay by **Philip Mirvis**, an organizational scholar and consultant. Mirvis draws on his experience in Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE), an organization that teaches principles of community building, and his work with its founder, the seminal writer M. Scott Peck. Next, **Wendy Y.N. Luhabe**, introduced by **Peter Senge**, invites us into the possibility of a world aspired to by FCE, where there is deep respect for humanity. We witness the leadership of a

South African woman to heal the fragmentation and dysfunction that arises from lack of inner understanding and her commitment to create a community that lives from within.

David Cooperrider and **Frank Barrett** next show us how appreciative inquiry, a methodology that they have developed and used in the past decade, might serve as a vehicle in transforming communities. They invite us to explore our own inquiry process and how that might influence our openness to the miracle and mystery of life.

The powerful and positive aspects of human creativity are further discussed by **Peter Senge** and **Margaret Wheatley** in an interview by Melvin McLeod. We get a glimpse into the understanding of life from a Buddhist perspective that includes a commitment to meditation practice, study, and service. How everything one learns in meditation—being aware, listening, letting go—can be brought into the collective experience is particularly interesting.

If you want to learn about the meditation practice itself, read the short essay on how to cultivate mindfulness, based on an interview by Otto Scharmer with a true master, **Jon Kabat-Zinn**, the founder and former director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. **Mark Kriger**, in his poem and reflections that follow, shows yet another kind of meditative practice. Cultivating mindfulness through a walk in the woods and experiencing our interconnectedness with nature is a theme that is covered in another short reflective essay by **Erik Larson**.

We close the issue with an article by **Diana Whitney** that provides four different frames to think about spirit: as energy, as meaning, as sacred, and as epistemology. This is a useful structure for both understanding how spirituality relates to organizational development and deriving a set of principles for spirit as a global organizing potential. **Ian Mitroff**, in his comment, offers another essential framework that helps us understand different dimensions of spirit. Finally, **Peter Senge**, in his column based on sociologist Pitirim Sorokin's thesis, provides an illuminating and hopeful perspective of an integral culture that brings the inner and outer into greater harmony.

We welcome your reactions and comments. Please e-mail us at pubs@SoLonline.org.

Contributors

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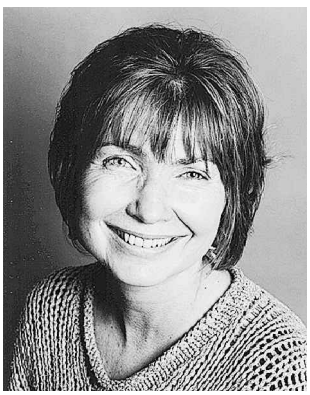
VIEW

Nizar's Dilemma

Judy Rodgers



Judy Rodgers
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Not long ago, I was attending a dialogue at Oxford on the subject of ''The Call of the Time,'' part of a series sponsored by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization for those who are in the field of world service and who also have some spiritual practice in their lives. Dialogue participants come together for four days of dialogue and reflection on the question, ''What is the time calling us to do?''

At the end of this particular dialogue, I was having breakfast with a few people before we headed back to our respective homes. The conversation had turned to the subject of integration—that is, how could we take the sense of inner calm and clarity that we were experiencing in that moment back into our lives. A Kenyan businessman named Nizar Juma began to elaborate on a particular ''schizophrenia'' that was afflicting him.

Nizar has run his own business quite successfully for years, and in his ''semi-retirement'' had agreed to run a number of business interests for H.H. Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims. Nizar had a strong spiritual practice that involved early morning meditation and a vegetarian diet, among other things, and he observed how he often felt that he was moving back and forth between two worlds—the rich inner world of silence where he seemed most in touch with his essential self and the dynamic, fast-paced outer world where he oversaw a considerable business empire as a trustee for the Aga Khan. These two worlds seemed to evolve on parallel paths with a different cast of characters, languages, values, and standard practices.

These parallel tracks collided one day when he made a decision on behalf of the Aga Khan to purchase a profitable meat-packing business. It was ''business as usual'' during the negotiations. However, when the deal was completed, it became clear that, as a part of the due diligence on the business, Nizar was going to have to make a site visit to the meat-processing plant, which included the slaughterhouse. Nizar paused in telling the story and made a face, demonstrating his disgust. He went on, pointing out that the Aga Khan was a Muslim and also a vegetarian, and as far as he was concerned, this was strictly business. However, for Nizar, this visit to the meat-packing plant brought into high relief the disjunction between his two worlds.

The story doesn't have a big surprise ending: Nizar did visit the plant and managed to get through the experience, while still serving the interests of the Aga Khan, but the experience left him mulling the disconnection between his inner world and his outer world. It is a condition that afflicts many of us.

There is our working life, what we do to support ourselves and our families. In this life is our worldly identity. Here we participate in a community of practice with others with whom we share the values of our workplace. We do our part to run a profitable enterprise, to compete in an ever-changing global business climate. Armed with cellphones, Palm Pilots, and laptops, we work as efficiently as we can to get the most productivity out of the best hours of our day. We race in and out of meetings, on and off airplanes, dialing in for messages and joining others on conference calls.

And then there is our contemplative life, what we do spiritually to support ourselves and, in turn, our families. Here is our inner identity. Having put aside the trappings of our working life, we go into the world of silence ''unarmed'' in an attempt to still the racing thoughts we have stirred up during the day. Here we come to terms with our deepest values, and with whatever higher power we understand there to be. Here we may also participate with some community of spiritual practice. But our objectives are differ-

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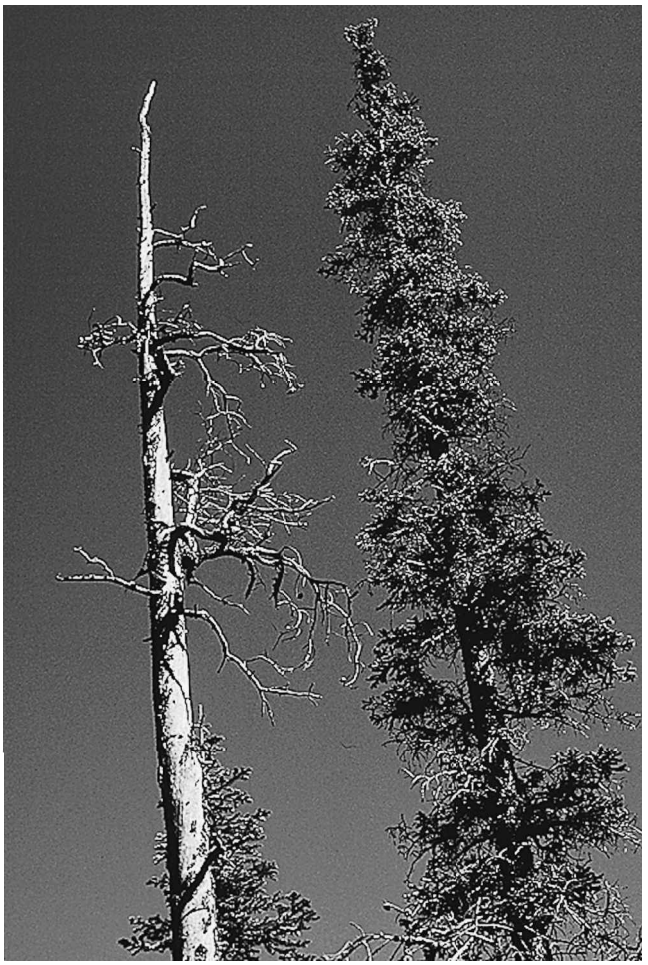
ent. Why do these worlds feel so irreconcilable? It is as if a certain ''split screen'' effect has been created, with two separate story lines.

In the framework of social construction, we seem to have socially constructed one story of the world that operates at work and another story that operates at home: ''world as business opportunity'' versus ''world as community of families or citizens.'' In the one story, we make decisions on the basis of sectarian interest for financial gain. In the other, we make decisions based on how they affect the well-being of our community. They seem to remain separate. Sometimes we may even imagine a kind of unseen balance sheet in which our good acts in the world of community may counterbalance whatever we have to do in the world of business. We may think we are balancing these two separate worlds until some event tears the fragile membrane that was keeping them separate, and we find ourselves, like Nizar Juma, caught in the dissonance of these two parts of ourselves.

We were preparing this issue for you during summer and fall of 2001 when, on September 11, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon shattered the status quo. This instant—as if unfolding in slow motion on a giant world screen—eclipsed business as usual, and our most basic human selves flooded to the surface. Trial lawyers announced they would not sue; journalists set aside images of despair in favor of images of compassion and generosity; CEOs went on television, tearfully explaining how they were going to support the families who had lost loved ones in the meltdown of the World Trade Center.



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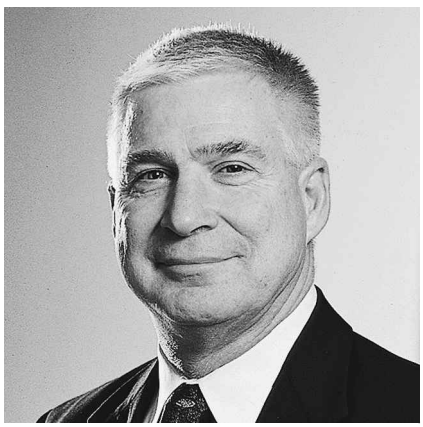
In preparing this issue, what became clear is that the logic of separate worlds for our inner and outer selves is an idea that is no longer working for many people. Many are experiencing ''Nizar's dilemma'' and the related urge for wholeness.

Living in the collected insights in this issue is the proposition that the experience of religion or spirituality belongs not in the margins of our lives, but in the heart of our daily thinking and our nine-to-five work. William James, author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* expressed this in a letter to a friend: ''The problem I have set myself is a hard one: first, to defend . . . 'experience' against 'philosophy' as being the real backbone of the world's religious life . . . and second, to make the hearer or reader believe, what I myself invincibly do believe, that, although all the special manifestations of religion may have been absurd (I mean its creeds and theories), yet the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function.''

FEATURE

Creating High-Performing Organizations: A Conversation with Roger Saillant

Karen Ayas



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Roger Saillant is the sort of gifted practitioner who, in my view, has always been the heart and soul of the SoL community. First of all, he has been very successful from the standpoint of business results. Over the years, he developed within Ford a reputation as the type of person who could be tossed into the most difficult of assignments—like a faltering manufacturing facility in Northern Ireland established by the English or a startup facility in Chihuahua, Mexico, tasked to produce a new product with a new process with which virtually none of the 3,000 workers had any prior experience. In these and many other assignments, Roger has helped people build high-performing organizations that have lasted beyond his limited tenure.

Arie de Geus once said that researchers write about what they think, while practitioners think about what they have lived. As you will see, Roger does a good deal of both. A PhD in chemistry, he has been thinking for most of his life about the chemical imbalances building in the earth's oceans and terrestrial ecosystems. Finding himself today as the CEO of Plug Power, a fuel cell manufacturer, seems only fitting for someone who has been thinking so long about hydrogen as a transition fuel toward building a truly solar economy. But his passion for chemistry is matched by passion for the wonder of how people can truly work together.

Six months after this interview, speaking at the SoL Research Greenhouse in the fall of 2001, Roger summarized his managerial career with the simple insight that there are two worlds at play in any organization: a technical world of aims, tasks, and problems, and an emotional world of relationships, aspirations, and fears. He drew a triangle to symbolize the first, saying, ''This is where management happens.'' He drew a circle to represent the second and said, ''This is where leadership happens.'' The essence of his craft, he explained, lies in weaving the two. (A recording of Roger's talk, in video and audio, is available on the SoL website, www.SoLonline.org, under the ''Research Greenhouse'' section.)

Roger opened this talk by confessing that he might have difficulty ''getting through'' some parts of the evening. I had asked him to share some stories from his career, and he knew that recounting some of what he had experienced working with people around the world would be emotional. Several times during the evening he stopped to collect himself, and many of us listening were deeply moved.

One of those moments came when he talked about Elfego Torres, a man whose father had been a silver miner. The night before they were scheduled to hold their first public tour of the new plant for investors, government dignitaries,

and Ford executives, it was pouring rain. Roger woke up in the middle of the night and realized that they were in trouble. Because he knew that the new roof was not finished and it leaked. Rushing down to the plant at three in the morning, he found someone had beaten him inside. There was Elfego, with buckets in all the right places, catching every leak. ''I knew then that transfer of full responsibility had happened in the plant, and that it would produce beyond what anyone expected,'' said Roger.

At the outset of Roger's presentation, he said that the essence of what he does, in Mexico, Thailand, Ireland, Hungary, the US, or China, lies in creating the conditions where ''people can be who they really are.'' As many of us talked about his presentation afterward, these simple words seemed to summarize pretty much all that we have learned, and must continually keep relearning, at the heart of this work.—**Peter Senge**

Karen Ayas (KA): Can you share some of your background with me?

Roger Saillant (RS): I was educated as a scientist, a chemist. But I was raised as a farmer. And I was a foster child. So I've lived in a number of places, but I've spent a good chunk of my life on one particular farm in Pennsylvania, which I think was highly instrumental in my development. In fact, I was raised as a farmer in a situation where we had no truck, no car, and we used horses. So I had a chance to get to know nineteenth-century American farming, everything from outdoor plumbing to rural electrification.

KA: What made you want to be a chemist?

RS: If you're raised as a farmer, you're interested in natural systems. There is a lot of chemistry going on in agriculture. And I liked science; it seemed easy to figure out. A lot of things about chemistry were intuitive to me, and I liked math too. I guess we like those things we can know without knowing why we know them.

I went to undergraduate school at Bowdoin College in Maine, where I was an English major for two years. In my sophomore year, I took an organic chemistry course, and there was a new faculty member, Dana Mayo, who had been a postdoc at MIT and was really fired up about his subject. He woke me up with his enthusiasm. That was probably my first real experience with someone completely excited about learning. So I became a chemistry major and went to Indiana University. I did my postdoctoral work at UCLA and then went on to Ford Motor Company.

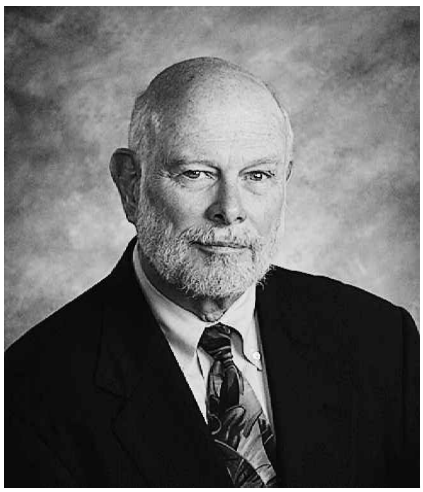
KA: How long were you with Ford and Visteon?

RS: Thirty years. I spent about 20 of my 30 years at Ford and Visteon doing things that led to creating high-performing organizations. That's really what I'm interested in.

KA: In hindsight, what would you say was instrumental to your success?

RS: I was anchored in ideals and values, and I tried to bring them into practice by engaging people, both socially and technically. Socially, by trying to get at their emotional truth, their values, and their beliefs. Technically, by trying to get at the learning organization principles and disciplines.

It was clear to me that you can't create high-performing organizations mechanically. It is a holistic process, and, for the process to be generative, people have to get involved with their hearts and souls. It has to be a soulful kind of thing that emerges and is driven by deeper beliefs. I don't want to make it sound too mystical, but I think that there has to be a predisposition to want to work with principles that are more fundamental than we are—those principles that



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Commentary by André L. Delbecq

When lecturing on transformational leadership, I usually set forth the following propositions dealing with the two twin pillars of leadership: vision and engaging followers (I took these directly from my PowerPoint slides; I am sure others have similar slides).

- A directional vision flows from life integration:
  - Building on a high investment in earlier competence building
  - Enduring hardship
  - Expanding experience through a variety of career moves
  - Confronting the status quo
  - Assuming risk across a variety of increasingly complex efforts
- Assimilating prior formative experiences through careful reflection, resulting in the integration of self and organizational mission (purpose):
  - Beyond mere career ambition or search for power
  - A leader engages and sustains actions of followers
  - Making assumptions visible
  - Evolving intellectual strategy jointly with stakeholders
  - Enabling conversations of both heart and head
  - Empowering diffuse leadership
  - Dealing with problems without undue anxiety

There is a problem with such an exposition, of course. In the abstract, it sounds like modern "angelism." It's true that such propositions capture a rich body of research from the past quarter century. But whether your audience is composed of 28-year-old MBAs or 50-year-old executives, their eyes glaze.

are interconnected among us all. Each of us carries a part of them so that, when we come together, something valuable can form. When we're apart, everything is disconnected and jumbled. If you establish a rhythm across a certain group of people, a connectedness begins to emerge.

That's very, very powerful. People understand it; they feel it. And they get an emotional glow from it. When that happens, the group isn't afraid of creative tension. They're drawn to it; they understand it. And they're part of it.

KA: I have also witnessed this and find it fascinating. Would you consider this a miracle of sorts, or is this something you have experienced over and over again? Simply put, do you think it's replicable?

RS: First, I think lots of things that are almost like miracles are replicable. And, second, I have been happily involved in this experience a number of times in my career. Third, I expect to reach that kind of state with my current leadership team at Plug Power. I don't know when it will happen, but my intention is to work until it does.

KA: How do you intend to do that? How do you succeed in bringing people into an emotional space where they're connected and driven by a goal larger than themselves?

RS: An awful lot is tried and true—just questioning and listening to each other, engaging in conversation, trying to get into a real dialogue, and maybe getting people just to talk at first. Then you eventually begin to talk about things that matter.

I don't think you could ever do this without talking about things that really matter. The only way I know to do that is by asking good questions. For example, Göran Carstedt [of the Global SoL Network] has a good question and one that's not often asked: ''How do you create an organization worthy of people's full commitment?''

Most of the time, you have to start by asking yourself good questions: ''What is it that I really want to do with my life? What do I value? What do I really believe in? What causes me to resonate, or get in harmony, with some truth that's bigger than I?''

Think in the extreme: What causes people to stand up for a cause and say, ''I'm willing to die to make this happen''? What causes people to say they are willing to sacrifice a great deal in order to move something forward?

One thing Peter [Senge] does really well is to hear a good question. So when he reframes that question, it causes a group to reflect collectively on something worthy of their reflection. I don't know how to ask questions as good as the ones Peter asks. He is a good learner and teacher and has an open curiosity. I always admire his ability to frame a good question.

KA: What do you think drives good questions?

RS: Being able to see patterns or suspecting patterns or inner connections. It's like looking at a complicated math problem and just getting a feel for the answer, only in this case, it is seeing the problem or question clearly.

I once took a very advanced math class in graduate school. I don't think I really knew what was going on in the course, but I got the highest score on the final exam. To this day, I don't know how I did it. To me, that's bad. It was, in some ways, insightful, creative, wild, and out of control. It is not repeatable, and it is not teachable. Although it's entertaining to say that I got the best grade, it's very unsatisfying to me because I could never do it again. It's like having a dream of being able to play perfect Rachmaninoff, and knowing that, sitting down at the piano, I can't do it. Then it becomes a nightmare.

KA: So what are some of the typical processes you would initiate for a real dialogue to happen?

RS: The first thing I do is get the leadership team together for two or three days and introduce a different language. We begin to talk, and I begin to talk. I want to establish a common vocabulary, which, in many cases, is a new vocabulary for most. For example, the use of terms like personal mastery, systems thinking, and creative tension, and the use of symbols like the learning circle, the ''cush,'' and the check-in are all ways of thinking and doing that influence the outcome.

You have to be careful because people don't necessarily start out with a high regard for each other, nor do they end up with a deep understanding and respect for dissimilarities. For example, you can start with Myers Briggs Type Indicator® [a test for psychological or personality type]. That's just one mechanism that allows people to see that they are not better or worse, but just different. It provides the basis for some communication. Who you are and what you do are somehow related. You are accountable for both—for being who you are and for doing what you do.

At Plug Power, I want to create a shared vision. So I have already taken the leadership team offsite for three days, and we have started to work on the Plug Power story with questions like: ''Where are we? Where are we going? Why are we going there? How are we going to get there?'' In that process, by understanding where we really are and where we really want to go, we can reach a state of creative tension. Then we get more serious: ''What are we going to do to resolve this tension?''

Then we examine the vision again: ''Where do we really want to go?'' Let's say that we would like Plug Power to become one of the 100 most admired companies. To me, this means that people will have to tell the truth, belong to a community, have a shared inspirational vision, and be provided with an environment where they can learn and grow.

KA: What happens next? How do you keep the vision alive?

RS: We meet off-site for one day once a month. We'll do that twice, and then we'll meet off-site for three days. So every quarter, we'll be off-site for three days, but every month we'll meet off-site for a day. That builds a cadence, a rhythm, like we're going to church. I don't want to equate the two, but I look at church as a place where people reflect on their values, where they reflect and learn. There's a story and a sense of community. By doing the process over and over again, you begin to build a community. So that's what I am doing explicitly to have Plug Power emerge as a high-performing organization over time.

KA: And the way to the high-performing organization is this high-performing leadership team that is extremely well connected and feels unified?

RS: Right. My expectation is that the team members will begin to teach their staffs through good communication and practice and good questions. The organization then begins to have a culture where people expect, deserve, and benefit from a very nourishing environment.

KA: I can understand how eventually the quality of the conversation begins to improve, and you build trust in the leadership team. But does this always cascade into the organization?

RS: It depends a lot on the leadership team. For example, Plug Power is an organization of about 365 people. They're relatively young and predominantly technical, which makes it a little bit harder.

One thing that I do is to start teaching the learning organization principles, from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*.[1] This underscores the importance of the

What fleshes out such propositions are stories.

The power of Howard Gardner's *Leading Minds* is its juxtaposition of mini-biographies with good theory (1995). But his stories are not about business leaders, so most of us struggle to provide verbally a summary of our own personal encounters with transformational business leaders. Terse, lucid biographies of business leaders are badly needed.

Voila! The conversation with Roger Saillant richly contributes. Here the formative roots of a leader are described: the melding of natural science in farming and the introduction to physical science through a mentor. Thirty years of prior preparatory experience at Ford and Visteon are shown as the prologue to the current leadership challenge: students lured by the idolatry of "now" will be forced to understand that leadership moments build on a long, preparatory history.

The balance of a leader providing "directional vision," yet being patient in facilitating stakeholder participation through diagnostic, ontological questioning is brightly illumined. The sense of vocation (calling) to a mission with a noble purpose (environmental protection) clearly comes through. The fragility of outcome is admitted with neither romanticized predeterminism nor absence of courage.

What best aids students of leadership to reflect on their own life journey and unfolding career? A good story or a good theory? Both, of course, and Roger Saillant has contributed a wonderful personal exposition to complement our theories.

Reference

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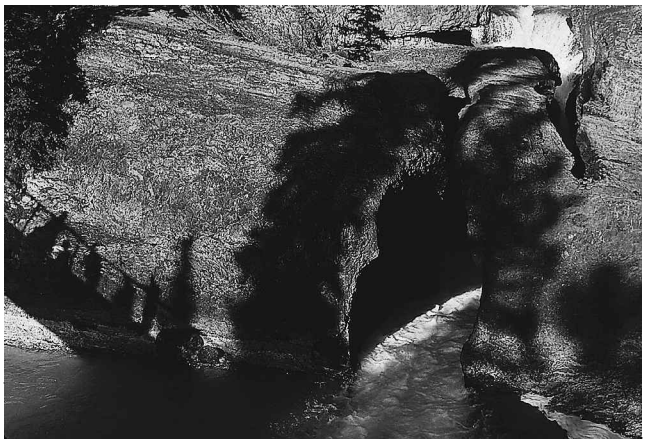

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tools and symbols and creates a new language. We need to do that because right now, there are many different languages at Plug Power, and there needs to be one language that everyone understands.

KA: How many people are on your leadership team at Plug Power?

RS: About 14.

KA: Has your method worked with even larger groups?

RS: Yes, I've worked with much bigger groups. It just takes time.

KA: So, over the years, you have worked with many different leadership groups and the process you have just described always works?

RS: It has always worked. I've been doing it explicitly with leadership groups since about 1985. It's tough to talk about what the groups have accomplished because, in a lot of ways, it's also self-serving. But I consider myself lucky to have been part of so many successful teams and communities.

KA: Has any external measurement or assessment ever been your concern? For instance, the fact that as a public company, you are under the Wall Street analysts' scrutiny every quarter.

RS: Profits, quality, reliability, value, satisfaction—to me, these are all outcomes of getting all the other stuff right. Although we are still unprofitable and depend on investors, this is not what we want. Our shared vision is to deliver reliable, safe products as quickly as we can to the customer—a reliable product, with a performance that satisfies the customer, at an affordable price, and on time. Our vision is to create value for which the customer is willing to pay. That implies that your price is right, your quality and reliability are right, and your performance is right. That's what happens when you have a high-performing business.

I don't like the idea of a situation in which someone has given me something for nothing. So it's biblical, like farming; you reap what you sow. I'll be able to satisfy the Wall Street analysts quickly by sticking to a system that allows people to do their best in fulfilling the shared vision.

One thing about Ford and Visteon was that, after a while, the senior leadership got used to me. One boss in particular, Bob Womac, stood out as a strong supporter later in my career. But when new bosses arrived, they would be very controlling and rigorous toward me. They couldn't understand that I wasn't traditionally rigorous back, although my results were always better than anybody ever expected. None of my bosses ever asked, ''How did you do this?'' They liked the results and trusted me and that was all I needed, just to be empowered to ''farm'' the system.

KA: What are some lessons learned that you would bring from an old, giant institution like Ford to a small, young start-up like Plug Power, which in many ways represents the opposite extreme?

RS: I don't know if I can differentiate between a large company and a small company. For me, it is not so much about size; it's just simply being able to engage people, regardless of the circumstances. Within a large corporation, there are always small communities. And within even a small company, there are small communities. In both cases, you have to be willing to be patient, and you have to really listen. In both cases, you need to show enough seriousness

so that it isn't just entertainment. This is part of our life's work, and we need to show respect for what we're doing. We need to honor the effort, which is not something that should be treated casually. It is serious work.

I'm in a position of being tribal leader, and I have a natural drive. I'm willing to do whatever I can to make whatever tribe I'm leading successful. If the tribe happened to be really big, I'd still be doing that. And if it's really small, I'd still be doing that. That's what I do.

The intermingling of business goals and personal goals, such that high performance emerges, does not happen by accident. If you want to accomplish that high performance over and over again and not simply stumble on it by accident, it involves serious work.

There are many people who manage to create very successful, high-performing organizations. Some may not know explicitly what they're doing, but they're able to do it. Sometimes people do it without really having the real deep insight of what's happening to them. They're happy, but they may not be fully aware. I would much rather have people who are happy because they are fully aware and awake.

KA: What would you say is the key to creating that kind of awareness?

RS: Providing a mirror so that people can understand how to develop themselves. I try to be vulnerable so that people can see me as a human being and, at the same time, as a professional. So they understand what personal mastery is and that being a master is better than being a novice. Although, in many ways, against real standards, we're all just novices.

I try to make myself vulnerable. I am inflexible about certain things, but I always try to be graceful in learning about other things. That allows other people to do the same. I just want to live completely and show the joy and satisfaction that comes with living completely. I don't have much time to honor being a victim. There are ample opportunities for us all to be victims. I fight it and try to instill that philosophy in those around me.

People need to understand what fundamentally resonates with them, what makes them happy, and what takes tension away from their thinking, their bodies, their minds, or their souls. What takes it away? I feel like I'm helping people perform self-exorcism to get rid of the things that tangle them up and pull them down. I want them to be able to find their natural place.

People need to understand what fundamentally resonates with them, what makes them happy, and what takes tension away from their thinking, their bodies, their minds, or their souls.

KA: How about developing leaders in the organization? Is that something you pay particular attention to?

RS: I'm always trying to identify people who can lead—those who have the drive, the intelligence, the ethics, and the interpersonal skills to lead. I look for people who can tell the truth, who are open to learning, who have a subjective quality. An organization has to be such that if the leader leaves, it continues to grow and new leaders emerge. It's like a forest. There is the canopy, and the trees that provide the canopy. If a tree falls, then another tree emerges.

When I leave an organization, the emotional part of me wants people to miss me, of course. What I really want people to say is, ''His time has passed, and now we're ready to keep the work going. This is not his work, it's our work.'' That may not be very respectful of me, but it probably is the highest achievement. The organization feels like it can accomplish something on its own, without the need for outside interference. That's very defining. The organization can sustain itself and then can go beyond merely sustaining itself to a generative state. It gives itself confidence and creates a certain boldness so that nothing can stop it.

KA: So looking back at your career, can you see places where this has happened? Can you point to certain groups or communities?

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RS: What we did in Mexico and in Hungary was similar. In both those countries, we built new organizations by bringing people, mostly unknown to each other, together, and built a common corporate culture that resulted in very high performance. High performance usually happened in places where we've been able to focus during several years. One of my biggest problems was that I'd never been able to stay with organizations as long as I'd like. Ford and Visteon have moved me around the world to different organizations. But I plan to stay with Plug Power until it reaches that generative state.

KA: So what has typically happened when you leave an organization?

RS: Other forces take over. It's difficult to build an organization that continues to renew itself as an institution in finding and selecting leaders, in carrying on or exceeding the old performance expectations.

For a while, everything comes together, and it's very alive and fully functioning, like Athens in the golden era. And then it disappears. All of Greece and all of humanity benefited from the Athens experience. My belief is that, even when organizations become re-assimilated and the individuals in the organization have changed substantially, the ambient behavior may be far less than the high-performing group's but still well above the previous performance of the organization. Performance most likely improves.

There is a reason for this. It's why the NY Yankees or the Chicago Bulls aren't always the world champions. Or as Arnold Toynbee would say, there is the rise and the fall of different civilizations. That's just the way it is. Performance is too dynamic to be fixed; there are the ebbs and flows. However, holistically, all mankind improves. I think that our small advances cause business in general to move forward.

KA: And that's what helps lead you into a next cycle of growth?

RS: Absolutely.

KA: How long have you typically stayed with a major assignment?

RS: I was in my last assignment for two years. Before that, a year in one, a year in another, and a year and a half in another. My longest assignment was almost three years in Mexico.

KA: So in each of these assignments, you've started from scratch, initiated change, helped people develop themselves, and then moved on. Is a year enough time to do the work you do?

RS: No, but that's what I had as my opportunity. One of my hobbies is raising bees. Sometimes a hive will die. That's just the way it is. When bees start to build their hive, they don't know if something is going to take them over, but they just go about building. That's the way I am when I move into an organization. I don't know how long I'm going to be there. I'll start at the beginning, wherever that is. And I go until my work is interrupted.

KA: I am wondering what made you move to Plug Power?

RS: A coincidence of many factors made it necessary for me to move to Plug Power. They called me, and I thought, ''This is an unbelievable opportunity. I'll do it.''

KA: Was that because it was an organization that would help you in your quest for environmental sustainability and to serve humanity?

RS: Yes, that was why I did it. I've had many chances to leave Ford and Visteon before. Coming to Plug Power was meant to be; it's my mission. It's like everything else that I have ever done has led me to this moment. I can now work on a subject and in an enterprise where the outcome could actually affect the way the world works with energy. I know that I am working on something bigger than I. I'm explicitly doing work that will make the human condition better in the long run for our environment and socially. That is important to me.

I'm explicitly doing work that will make the human condition better in the long run for our environment and socially.

KA: What do you think will be the impact of Plug Power?

RS: Changing the way the world thinks about energy. It may not be the most important issue, but it's one of the important issues.

KA: What Plug Power produces would be something that would change all people's lives?

RS: Correct. My idea is that Plug Power will produce fuel cells. At the outset, they'll be based on methane/propane/carbon-based fuels and maybe convert those more efficiently to electricity, so people will be able to shift toward very clean energy. They'll become accustomed to that practice.

KA: What would be the next leap?

RS: For me, it is to make sure that we're building fuel cells that enable a hydrogen economy to emerge, because the only sustainable energy source is sunlight. We will have solar cells that produce hydrogen and electricity during the day, and at night, the hydrogen will be stored so that fuel cells can use that energy. Or we will store excess wind as hydrogen and release it in calm periods through fuel cells to generate electricity. Even wind is the result of solar heating.

KA: Do you believe we can get there?

RS: Oh yes, my belief is that the faster we get there, the better off we'll be, but there is no doubt in my mind that we'll get there. The Proteus project is one of the Society for Organizational Learning projects on sustainability. The project's objective is to examine how to initiate the transformation of communities based on today's economic and social norms to one based on triple bottom-line (economic, social, and environmental) considerations. One aspect of this would be energy conservation and the use of hydrogen as a fuel.

It doesn't really matter whether sustainability happens in 5 years or in 50 years, we must be on that path and move as quickly as possible. This project is so big that it won't be done in my lifetime. Yet it has to be worked on. Some of the cathedrals in Europe took centuries to build. How many generations knew that they were doing the right thing in building those churches, until they were done?

I think more and more people will be on the path, because the time requires it. The time is now.

KA: Why do you say that?

RS: The globe is shrinking. If you imagine the world as a great big lake, it's like the temperature has been dropping, and ice crystals are forming on the lake's surface. All of a sudden, when the moment is right, the lake freezes. In a lot of ways, I think that is what's happening to humanity.

The Internet, television, communication, and transportation are all making us more and more connected. We can now come together to crystallize. The temperature parallel is that resources are becoming more limited on a per capita basis. In other words, if everyone lives in the same ways as Westerners do, we won't be able to go on. Something different has to happen, and crystallization to me is just this change of state. It suddenly goes from being a fluid to a solid.

The change of state is coming. We can't continue the same practices. They're insufficient to provide for everyone what was once provided for a few. So the temperature is changing, and a change of state is required. The people who feel this pressure are acting.

We can't continue the same practices. They're insufficient to provide for everyone what was once provided for a few.

KA: I have one last question. What do you see as some of the major challenges as you're looking into the future? What keeps you up at night?

RS: Well, I wonder how long I am going to live. How do I keep the job going so that Plug Power does, in fact, have an impact. Failure now could mean that this company doesn't exist. The problem is that there can be forces so enormous that I can't see what they are. I don't know what I don't know. What I don't know may hurt me. That's my biggest fear.

I think what fuels me is good questions. And will I be able to learn fast enough? Will I be able to continue to ask good enough questions to keep moving along? Or will I run out of ammunition? In all, I just feel like an awful amateur. It's pretty scary.

Note

1. Senge, P., et al. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1994).

The Natural Emergence of Deep Learning

FEATURE

Stella Eugene Humphries and
Kathleen Forrest Otterman

A constant breeze can mold rocks;
A sudden storm breaks branches.

—Chinese proverb

A midwest US power-generation company was in the midst of an intensive, stressful organizational transition invoked by deregulation, budget cuts, new union-management partnerships, and a recent history of class-action lawsuits. Corporate headquarters had implemented many well-intentioned strategic, tactical, and behavioral change programs. A newly appointed executive manager invited us as consultants to work with a small group of 12 to 15 power plant managers and engineers.

In the power-generation unit, plant managers were being asked to streamline and consolidate operations in order to become more flexible and efficient in a deregulated environment. The operation of power plants as independent units was to be phased out, replaced by management of the whole plant system as a portfolio; that is, outage planning, maintenance, deployment of resources, and so on were to be coordinated and optimized.

For the plant managers, this organization implied a major personal adjustment. Behaviors learned in a long-standing command-and-control management environment were now inappropriate. (One individual gave some perspective on the prevailing norms and behaviors; see the sidebar.) By contrast, new management objectives implied increased self-responsibility and adeptness at participative management, cooperative interaction, and peer decision making.

To support and enable this shift, the executive manager invited us to assist him and the plant managers in developing a ''learning team.'' As a former engineer in the plants, he was highly regarded; he had a good sense of the potential of his senior staff to take on more responsibility for operational decisions, but did not want to mandate this change. His expectations for the process of becoming a learning team were fluid, and how our services might best be used was not yet clear. We offered him a number of more or less conventional approaches to organizational learning, that is, creating shared vision, introducing basic skills for productive conversations, introducing systems thinking concepts, and so on. However, we could not get a commitment of time for such approaches. We also shared a feeling that just another headquarters' training program would be ill received in the current climate.

During this period of intense change, people had developed a tacit resistance to many previous corporate programs for change. A program driven from the top down had become automatically suspect, and people in the plants had little patience or energy for anything that did not practically serve the work at hand. Unless something made genuine sense and added value, it was business as usual, with a veneer of compliance, such as adopting the language of change or submitting appropriately checked boxes on evaluation sheets.

Under these high stress, somewhat ambiguous circumstances, we decided to begin by observing the regular monthly information meetings to get a sense of the individuals, the group dynamics, and the issues of concern. Our intention was to tailor subsequently

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Adapting to command and control

"In controlling systems, you are never allowed to think a thought. You are told that 'you're stupid,' 'that's crazy,' or 'where did you get an idea like that?' So you learn to adapt to that system. Years into a career, you learn to stop thinking for yourself. You are never allowed to feel any feelings, except fear. You shouldn't get angry; you shouldn't have compassion, kindness, or empathy. You are never allowed to comfort or show remorse or failure. What you learn is apathy.

"You always have to obey someone outside of yourself. You are never allowed to have inner judgment.

"You are never allowed to disagree; you aren't allowed to be different. Consequently, if you do not have anyone telling you what to do, you will become lost and confused because your whole life has been lived from the outside.

"You are not allowed to imagine. Without the power to imagine, you cannot look at new possibilities, and without it, you are a rigid conformist. Human imagination is the power that has forged new frontiers and given the world innovation, advancement, and progress. Without this power, you gradually become hopeless, since hope involves seeing new possibilities." —Power plant employee

a more targeted approach for developing a learning program. Despite our attempts to get agreement on a plan, we arrived at our first meeting without a clear agenda. The executive manager asked us that same morning to focus our observations only on him, not the plant management group as anticipated. In particular, he wanted our perceptions of his style and effectiveness. At the afternoon break, he decided we should give our feedback live and unedited in front of the group.

Despite the need to be fast on our feet to coordinate our feedback, this turned out to be a brilliant entry into the group. The executive manager's willingness to be vulnerable and to be critiqued in front of his staff without knowing what we would say was the first, critical turning point (see the figure). The room was pin-drop silent with attention. Clearly, this was a countercultural, courageous decision that opened a door. The group met the executive manager's departure from expected behavior to create an authentic moment of exchange with admiration, which they then voiced. Some issues we raised in our feedback (for example, lack of closure on pending decisions) had been undiscussibles in the old command-and-control culture. Following our feedback, we asked the plant managers to add their comments. We were surprised at their willingness to risk raising some difficult issues so quickly. This was a strong signal that communication channels were now freer. Several people immediately asked us to coach them in subsequent meetings. Our entry into the system was strong and established our credibility. It also opened the way for working with the whole group.

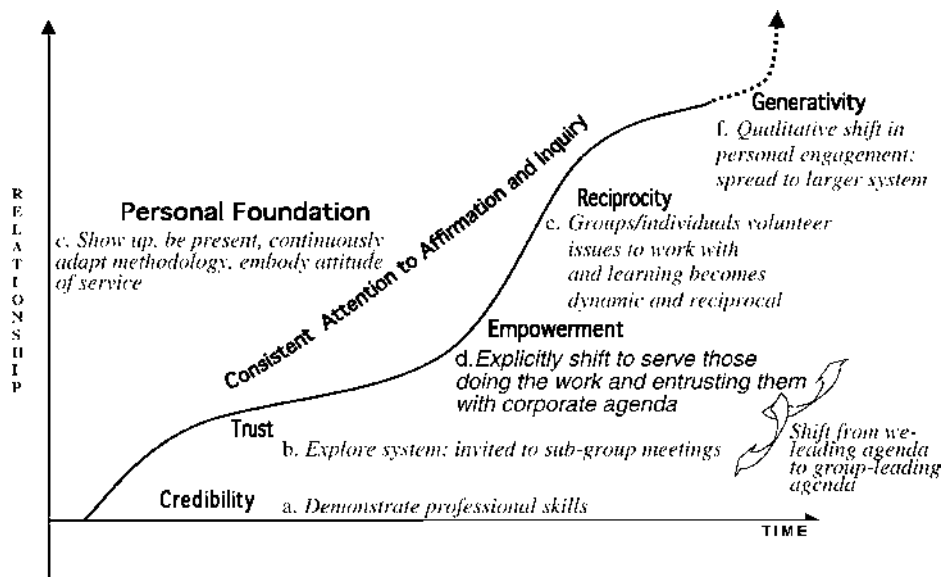


Figure 1 Observed phases of deepening and expansion of learning with relationship and time.

For about two to three months, we attended the monthly meeting, continuously strategizing a way to bring to the table some methods and tools of organizational learning. We instituted a ''check-in'' at the beginning of each meeting and a reflection or feedback period at the end. The group adopted the check-ins, and these were well received. We noticed they helped to set a more open, less formal tone and gave space for people to air concerns. Except for the initial meeting, the reflective period at the end always ran over the scheduled time. Although it was clear the group was eager to learn from our comments, the reflective period never materialized during the allocated time, despite being on the agenda. However, people were willing to stay afterward, and many eagerly listened and engaged with us, but reflection on the margins was not a satisfactory arrangement for us. We continued to give our feedback to the executive manager, but now in private. We gave comments to individuals on an ad hoc basis at the end of each meeting.

We decided that attending the monthly meetings was inadequate for giving us a sense of the whole system. We needed to understand better the daily pressures, the central issues, the core concerns, the decision-making processes, and the distribution of power, that is, the deeper structure of how things worked. We arranged to visit one or two plants each month. Soon we were invited to participate in informal meetings among smaller groups of managers and began to work more intensively with a few individuals who were particularly receptive. This marked a step up in the level of trust we had established in the group. In hindsight, the invitation to attend the smaller meetings was a second major turning point. We were developing a relationship with the plant managers independent of the executive, a relationship that arose from trust and, by implication, from value.

We continued to try to understand the whole system. We were puzzled when we found out that major decisions were not made during the formal meetings. Decision making turned out to be a diffuse process spread over many meetings, formal and informal, in ways we never fully grasped. Moreover, there seemed to be an inherently contradictory structural relationship between portfolio management and an operational group in the head office that determined each plant's power output based on demand, overall supply, and market price.

If plant managers were to become a learning team, responsible for optimally managing the portfolio, we wanted to know what forces were at play to support self-responsibility and which forces, perhaps unintentionally, maintained the authoritarian structure. In other words, was the goal unattainable as stated? Were the messages mixed? Was anyone aware of the contradictions? We could not and did not want to be aligned with an agenda the plants did not ''own.'' We were, however, prepared and committed to help people carry out their responsibilities in meaningful ways.

Instead of acting as agents for the organization to institute its change agenda, we became collaborators with people who were responsible for making those changes.

We began to focus more on helping individuals and small groups as they did their work. We continued to ask them questions about what it would take to manage a portfolio, but we ceased trying to make it happen. We made a subtle but pivotal internal shift. Instead of acting as agents for the organization to institute its change agenda, we became collaborators with people who were responsible for making those changes. We decided we were there to serve the people and not the agenda directly. This subtle difference is most critical, as it governs how we related, what observations we made, and how we intervened. We were no longer imposing change but offering our particular knowledge and experience, as well as our de facto ''outsider'' perspective, to serve the people who were mandated and responsible for meeting the corporate agenda. Our realization is consistent with Schein's advice: the main attribute of a consultant is to try to be helpful and to ensure that the client, not the consultant, ''owns the problem'' (Schein, 1999).

We thus rediscovered that the authority we internalize and on which we act makes the critical difference in our work and its outcome. In this case, imposing change as agents for an external authority was significantly different from co-creating a safe relational space for reciprocal learning, a space free of the ultimately counterproductive effort of trying to change others.

Thus, the complex, stressful environment that allowed almost no formal input on

Deep changes from connection to the human spirit

"We are surrounded by acronyms, corporate programs, policies, budgets, mission statements, yearly reviews, and lots of numbers. We measure everything and set targets after targets. Our leaders speak of earnings, growth targets, Wall Street analysts, strategies, stock value, and so on. There is talk of people and diversity, and there are programs and value statements. But the overt, underlying purpose of all actions is improving the numbers. Each year is a new struggle to achieve the numbers. And each year, the numbers aren't good enough, so we try harder to achieve better numbers. Of course, there is no life in numbers or income or cash flow statements or most anything measurable.

"I used to notice when 'life' existed, when a team I was on was successful or just 'in the groove.' Now I notice when 'life' doesn't exist, when a meeting gets bogged down in minutia or if I get frustrated with myself or those around me. I'm more aware when I am losing myself in what matters least (results, expectations, numbers), and I can more easily work through it in a way I could not before. I can reconnect with my soul and with a higher purpose the work serves. I now see the work as service to the community.

"My intuition or inner beliefs have always been there, and they peek out once in a while. Deep in my soul, I have known better. I have known that each of us is priceless and that our interactions have a higher purpose than creating things and dollars and returns on investment. But now, this resonates every minute of my day. What has awoken my awareness is another human being or, better put, a connection with another human being—soul to soul. In particular, I was connected by what seems like destiny, by someone who sees, affirms, and validates my deep self, someone who reminds me of that inner voice and inner knowledge beneath the surface.

"As I have found deeper connections with others and am more willing to listen to my own sense of higher purpose, the numbers and results in my work get better. Project results are better than expected. The teams I work on get results. We, in turn, energize those around us. Thus, the value of the connection with someone who calls on me to be true not only resonates within me but spreads to all the human beings I connect with. We energize each other, and our energy spreads. And as it does, the numbers and results follow."—Power plant employee

learning called on us to go more and more deeply into considering the ways in which we could leverage our capacity to help. The two of us began to ask ourselves what exactly we were trying to do. In making real-time interventions as a duo, we had questions of when, how, and by what criteria. We became very aware, sometimes painfully, of just how important our personal inner states were in what we saw, how we reacted, and what we consequently did. Our visits became a crucible for our own inner work: to strive to work from the authentic part of ourselves and be true to our value of service, rather than to strive to ''look good.'' Each time we visited a plant, we would reflect on our intentions for the visit. Were we falling into the trap of trying to ''look'' like skilled professionals by doing what was expected and visible, for example, organizing a training session? Consistently and relentlessly, we winnowed out our personal needs for permission, approval, and protection from those in formal authority. Each time, we arrived with intentions that were as untainted as possible for us.

Our modus operandi evolved into being open to the moment. We were thus forced to work intuitively, without knowing the answers. As we soul-searched, we continued to show up, give feedback, and inquire into work practices so as to deepen our own understanding. These inquiries gave the group a different perspective and allowed them to explore alternatives to their usual ways of working. Our relationship with the plant managers continued to grow. They began to bring their dilemmas and challenges to the smaller meetings. For example, one asked how to bring a particular agenda item to the monthly meeting and be heard by the group. Another asked our view on some unintended consequences of incentives. Still another wanted personal coaching to prepare for a key financial and strategic presentation to senior management.

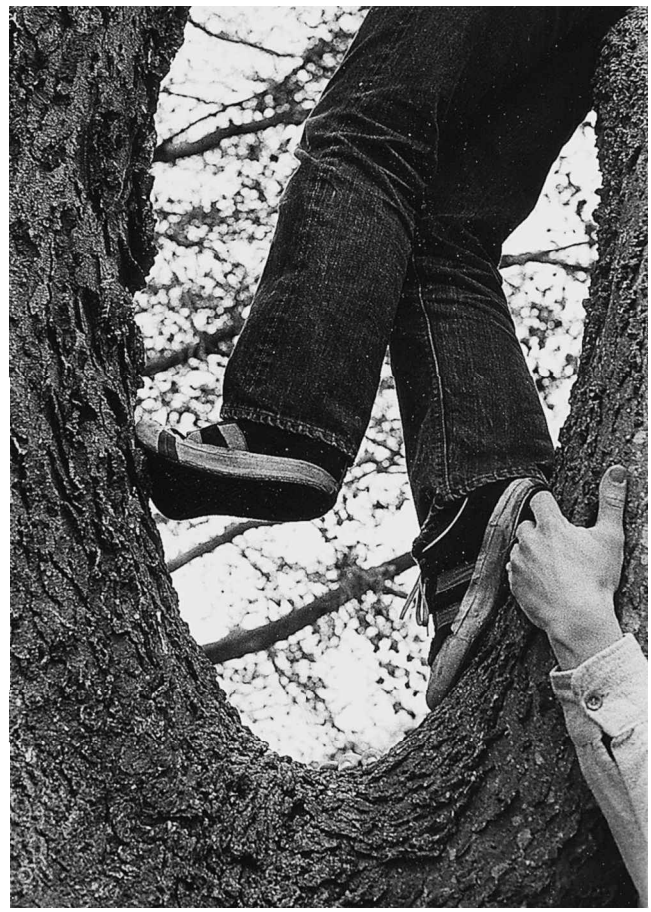
As we came to know them, we would notice when someone was unusually quiet on an issue about which he felt strongly. In private, we would ask him how we could help him to speak up. We noticed when people took a risk, and we commented on their courage. We noticed when people were tense or argumentative. When we learned of a particularly painful management decision, we asked the executive manager why there wasn't more transparency in how and why the decision was made. We connected a person in one plant with someone in another and discovered that this led to highly productive synergy for the organization. Or we noticed when someone supported another in an incognito way. We tried to make such moments of humanness more visible, and thus

we nurtured what we have come to recognize as the human soul.

We never felt we were teaching people anything they did not know; we were simply a mirror for what they already knew deeply was right. By acknowledging this and by validating them, we gave them courage to act on their own convictions. We just kept reinforcing their best efforts, in different ways, again and again, one moment at a time, and one person at a time. (See the sidebar for a testimonial from one of the engineers.)

This marked a third turning point and phase in our work. We had become a learning system of peers. As consultants, we had a different role to play in the system, but our learning and their learning was intertwined. We became genuine helpers and thinking partners.

We began to notice subtle, intangible shifts in behavior, attitude, and capacity. A suggestion of ours would be taken up here, another there. The conversations at the monthly meetings became more open, and people were more willing to listen and had more energy. We could not be sure what to attribute to our influence, to the natural flow of events, or to the influence of other factors. But we knew we had established a generative system of reciprocal learning, which in its tenor, pace, and quality of relationship was vastly different from expert-client, agenda-led learning. The authenticity of what was said and the range of issues that surfaced were incomparably more diverse, meaningful, and immediately relevant to their work. By working in this way, people reached a point at which the foundation of trust and momentum enabled them to act qualitatively differently in situations in which we were not directly engaged. In other words, the changes shifted from being incremental and local to being vastly different in quality and systemic.



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As a tangible indicator of our added value, the plant managers continued to invite us to meetings where some of the real work, which they did not easily talk about in the formal meetings, took place. One time, they explicitly asked us to participate in a meeting that had been closed to everyone except the narrow plant management team. These demands began to outstrip our allocated time of two days per month.

After two years, observers in the company began to ask us what we did to get plant managers to spend time with us. In response, we explored this and found that a pattern was beginning to emerge (see the figure). As the relationships deepened, a new phase of the journey became visible. Our technical knowledge at the start established *credibility,* but we sense that it was secondary to our efforts to ensure that we served with integrity, that is, our *personal foundation* was critical. Our experience here and elsewhere leads us to believe that the nature and fabric of the relationships we established, specifically the psychosocial container of safety and *trust,* allowed learning to occur. People became *empowered* through consistent affirmation of what was working well and inquiry into what was unclear or incongruent. A learning system of reciprocal learning gradually emerged. At this stage, *reciprocity,* we experienced the beginnings of flow and ease.

As we learn to connect more authentically as human beings . . . we begin to tap into a powerful domain of human consciousness.

For a few individuals, the vastly different stage of *generativity* was just emerging when we ended our work. From our work here and elsewhere, we recognized that this stage is invoked when every part of the person is engaged, not just the professional part. At this stage, the frame for decision making and personal motivation widens to include service to humanity and a deep engagement with what is right.

We had been exploring such universal questions from the start and, after establishing

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trust, learned that several others were also exploring deeper questions, albeit independently. However, the questions of meaning, integrity, and right action now had a place in the collective, and we saw some individuals begin to have a renewed sense of ingenuity and courage. Although this phase had just begun, it became clear that as we learn to connect more authentically as human beings, and as the technical roles of consultant, manager, or engineer are subsumed into a larger, deeper frame for interaction, we begin to tap into a powerful domain of human consciousness.

Conclusion

We discovered the power of learning shaped by moment-to-moment co-creation of possibility as human beings engaged to find meaning and direction while working in difficult, uncharted, and intense territory. We made no spectacular interventions that resulted in demonstrable cause-effect relationships, nor can we directly link our work to shareholder value. But we do know that a combination of circumstances, training, and our innate, personal response patterns led us to evolve an unobtrusive, natural enhancement of the human element, which included tangible, visible workplace results. We did this not by focusing on results, but rather on helping people in an appreciative, affirming way to become more aware of *how* they do their work in an everyday environment and to trust their own judgment and capacity.

The main driving forces that determined our behavior were the various challenges that relentlessly arose from the field of interaction. In other words, we were so positioned and the system was under such duress that there was neither the psychological space nor time to lead with the learning agenda. Rather, we had to learn to track the dynamics consistently and respond holistically to whatever challenge and opportunity a situation naturally offered.

Our work in the company ended at our request, so we did not continue, beyond this first pass, at what was likely to become a self-reinforcing, cyclic system of learning and building capacity. What we uncovered was a distinct pattern of incremental increase in capacity with systematic and identifiable phases that, at one point, became nonlinear and generative. What is most compelling is that the process was relatively easy to implement and unobtrusive in the workplace flow. It did not require large amounts of time, just our regular, consistent showing up and being present. Most of our effort went into paying attention to the quality of our intentions, that is, reducing the influence of our own needs in what we had to offer and remaining congruent with the higher purpose of service. It

is well known in spiritual tradition and it is our experience that paying close attention to the purity of intentions is paramount, because intentions inexorably determine the underlying quality of actions and thus determine ultimate results.

Acknowledgments

We thank the entire plant management team for being open to such a research project. Special thanks also to Gary Carl, Jim Evans, Ben Kiehl, Melanie McCoy, and Mark Vander Heuvel for their persistence and courage. Our approach is deeply influenced by the teachings and practices of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University and the work of Angeles Arrien, David Cooperrider, Edgar Schein, Peter Senge.

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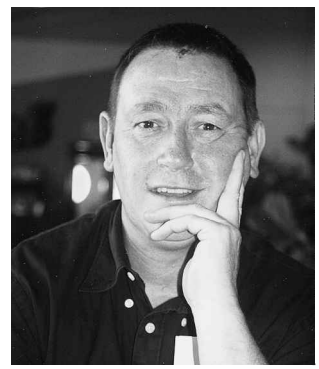
Commentary

by Francis H.J. Crome



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The authors have tapped into a fundamentally different way of operating as consultants. Or perhaps more accurately, they have had the courage to do what good consultants deep down want to do, that is, to act from who they are and not what they know.

Their words have rekindled for me the excitement of my own journey. I am a strategic ecological consultant and was asked to join a real estate project in Australia. This was not an old project with entrenched old problems but a new project with entrenched old political problems. The company wanted to develop a very large block of land, but government and community forces had no intention of letting that happen. The executive manager therefore made a decision to institute an entirely open process and involve the community fully in making decisions about the land. What emerged was a remarkable process.

As a consultant, I was expected to have full command of my technical subject, but my assigned task was to step into the unknown and bring together hundreds of people in a process to find a solution that transcended anything an individual or manager could have devised. During a two-year period, the company and the community formed a relationship, and change occurred. The project was wallpapered with GANTT charts, and we suffered occasional lapses back to, "We must take charge and drive this thing or we are doomed." However, the project team was united in the belief that our priority was people. The company now has an asset of increased value in its portfolio, and the process continues.

The change was not a result of any management or change techniques pulled from a consultant's toolbox, but from the application of some simple principles—to act with complete honesty; to not worry about the fact you don't know "how" to do it; to have faith that if you treat people like human beings and share and discover data with them, they can make wise decisions; to hold steadfastly to the faith that "all is good" and that success is guaranteed; and to act from your deepest spiritual place.

The authors tell of a change process where they were unable to use learned textbook techniques. They were in a messy situation in which their only resources were their own internal reserves of courage, faith, love, and perseverance. In situations like this, the most effective guide is our humanity and spirit. By operating from "who I am" rather than "this is what I do," they stimulated change; they didn't drive it or force it, but they provided sustenance. They "were forced to work intuitively without knowing the answers" and "were simply a mirror for what they [plant personnel] already knew deeply was right." This considerable achievement was at the heart of where I tried to be in my own project. What the authors do not stress is the courage required to do this—to simply be there as oneself and admit to not knowing what to do next. You have to abandon reliance on what you know and trust who you are. When we identify ourselves as being "experts who know," we become hopelessly attached to our knowledge and are unable to allow our real skills to emerge. We do not allow our powers of intuition, even prescience, to develop, and we choke off our powers to nurture. It is not a matter of abandoning our knowledge. It's a matter of

transforming expert knowledge from a shield into a known, trusted companion and servant who no longer defines us.

The events Humphries and Otterman describe form a sequence of gradual, deepening involvement of consultants in an organization or project during a sufficiently long time. The authors' inability to distinguish between their influence and the natural flow of events is quite profound. My experience was similar; at times, I had a sense of a natural flow to events, but my efforts to change the timing of that flow were futile. Allowing time for the process they describe is critical.

The inability to define and quantify exactly what a consultant has done is, however, a visceral challenge. How do the authors and I say what we did or achieved in our activities, when we ourselves don't really know? Can a consultant who describes his or her skills as "I just help" survive? In the end, it doesn't matter that we cannot define the precise things we do. The important thing is that we attempt to operate from a real and spiritual place.

One aspect of the journey is particularly enlightening. The authors did not present themselves as experts with answers, but fellow travelers learning along with plant personnel. This was an empowering process for the plant personnel as well as the consultants. Questioning folks and listening with total interest acknowledges people's own specialties, expertise, and existence. It is important to find out from the hundreds of stakeholders what they know and think. My own process of involvement and exploration was a wonderfully humbling experience.

However, there is a major part of the corporate system that is always unavailable to managers and consultants—the shareholders. The authors were forced to ponder whether their work had improved shareholder value. We do not treat shareholders as vital parts of the system. Beliefs about shareholders, contempt for them, anger with them, and fear of them are profound influences on organizations. To take a whole systems approach, shareholders have to be included. Perhaps the authors have opened a way to approaching this seemingly intractable problem. The regard, love, and compassion that they showed should be extended to faceless shareholders, so the whole system can change.

What Humphries and Otterman did requires the primacy of spirit in their lives. The power of spirit is profound; I draw your attention to the impact of the words in the title of the sidebar: "Deep changes from connection to the human spirit."

A Mid-Life Reflection

FEATURE

Bennett Bruce

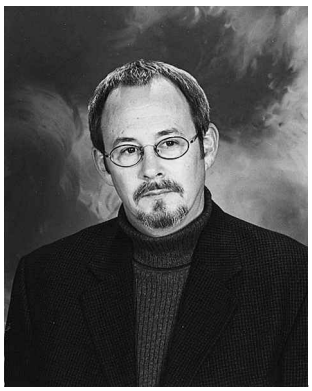
During the past decade, many books and articles have been published on organizational learning and leadership styles, many of which describe leadership in terms of service or stewardship in lieu of traditional control models. In my personal struggle with the concepts of service, stewardship, and servant leadership, I have recognized that leaders need to be more empathic, but I have had a difficult time aligning these theories with my own experiences. I don't have the complete answer, but, during the past decade, I have seen a correlation between leadership styles and the stages of life, especially the adult stages described by C.G. Jung.

I began working for a manufacturing firm while still in high school, more than 27 years ago. I am still working in manufacturing. I started with no college education and very few of life's experiences, but quickly found a niche in the machining department. I still remember my excitement when I was promoted to setup man for the automatic turning equipment. I always sought the most technically difficult jobs because I thought technical expertise would get me noticed. I am still amazed at just how much I wanted to be recognized for doing a good job. I continued to take the more difficult jobs and advanced to the position of lead man and, eventually, supervisor, all when I was in my early twenties. During this period, I decided to go to college for some type of technical degree. I had watched young men come into the company with their college education and immediately ascend to management ranks. In a few months, they were admitted into the same circle of influence that I had tried to impress for several years with hard work and street smarts.

I am not going to elaborate on every detail of my 27-year journey, but I need to relate a few more biographical details to set the stage properly. I attended college at night for almost 11 years. During that time, I finally made it to the salary ranks and started hobnobbing with the executives. I thought I had finally been admitted into the magical inner circle. I soon realized that it still was not enough; I yearned for more. Unfortunately, I did not have a clear understanding of what I needed. So not only did I become proficient technically, I became fairly adept at company politics. Once the company recognized my political savvy, I quickly advanced through various middle management positions, until I thought it was finally time to put myself on the open market.

I learned to play the headhunter's game and got a management position at a much larger company. The company recognized me as an expert in managing shop-floor activities and gave me my own business unit to manage. By then, in my early thirties, I had become quite cynical about business in general, believed it was a ''dog eat dog'' world, and was fairly ruthless in my daily decision making. Although I was rewarded for this leadership style, and upper management thought I was aggressive, I never enjoyed being ruthless. Whenever I tried to be more understanding and empathetic, I was chastised for getting soft or too laid back. One boss told me, ''It isn't personal; it's business.'' This particular company wanted to see me kicking butt and taking names. So I tried to rationalize my actions, kind of like ''all is fair in love and war.'' I left the company after two years and took a job as a senior manufacturing engineer at Harley-Davidson. Although this was a step down in power and authority, it felt good.

During my first few years at Harley, I was recognized for my technical expertise and spent most of my time at my drawing board, at my computer, or on the floor working with the operators. My work life was good for a while, but life in general was becoming increasingly difficult. I had a nagging sensation that something was missing. I compen-



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sated by trying new things, such as scuba diving, snow skiing, and weight lifting. I even dabbled in Eastern philosophy. Throughout my adult life, I had been an obsessive reader, but, during this period, my reading preferences changed drastically. I started rereading Skinner's *Walden II,* Nietzche's *The Birth of Tragedy,* Scott's *Ivanhoe,* Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur,* and Thoreau's *On Walden Pond* and *Civil Disobedience,* all books I had read when I was younger. Each one touched me in a familiar but strange way. I was also reading many books on New Age spiritualism, but they would pique my interest only to leave me feeling ridiculous halfway through.

In 1993, I was promoted to engineering manager with responsibility for the machining, fabrication, and plating operations, and had a staff of eight engineers. Many of the doubts and concerns that nagged me during my two years as a production manager started to resurface. During this period, I attended the core course offered by MIT's Organizational Learning Center or OLC (now the Society for Organizational Learning or SoL) and soon after became the liaison officer for Harley-Davidson. The core course introduced me to organizational learning and its associated disciplines such as systems thinking, mental models, dialogue, and so on. At the time, organizational learning seemed to solve my problems—problems that I still had not articulated. I immersed myself in organizational learning, reading everything on the subject. I experimented with the theories and had some success, even though I was gaining a reputation for being a little strange and maybe too unconventional.

At this time, I started to reflect on my personal style of leadership. I had not kept a journal in years, but during the OLC core course, I realized that using a journal to reflect released an inner voice that I had not heard clearly in many years.

Like many of my peers in manufacturing, I assumed that being a good manager was about accomplishing tasks through others in a fair, just manner. I had always tried to be an ethical leader, but I would also get caught up in the aggressive, competitive tactics that seemed to permeate most business environments. I blamed this aggressive environment on society and, more specifically, organizations. I arrogantly dismissed the whole concept as ''their'' problem. They did not recognize the art of mentoring. They preferred winners to collaborators. They did not have enough patience for creating shared vision. They wanted results now! I frequently referred to the illusive ''they'' when discussing the organization or society. I now realize that, during the first 20 years of my adult life, I was always referring to their problems. I believed that my dilemma was to figure out how to help them see their problems, and of course, I also wanted to be recognized for this valuable service.

As I approached 40, my convenient little universe started to collapse or, more accurately, implode. I did not understand why I was having trouble dealing with life in my usual manner, so I blamed ''them'' even more. They must be getting worse instead of better. What can I do to make them see their true problem? In retrospect, it was almost comical the way I referred to ''they'' and ''them'' as separate from myself. Since then, the most powerful change in my life has been the word ''I.''

I had always tried to be an ethical leader, but I would also get caught up in the aggressive, competitive tactics.

Many of you may be saying, ''Hey, you are just going through a mid-life crisis.'' I agree, but what the heck is a mid-life crisis anyway? And why did all this confusion start so early? I was barely in my thirties when this mysterious malady started disrupting my dreams. Isn't this supposed to happen when I am closer to 40?

These questions led me on an interesting journey back to college where I completely restructured my undergraduate work and obtained a bachelor's degree in transpersonal psychology with an emphasis in C.G. Jung's analytic psychology. I had already started reading Jung several years before returning to school. I had studied cognitive behavioral models, but they did not lead me to the depths of the psyche that I believed I needed. The pure transpersonal work like Ken Wilber's and Stanislov Groff's felt too ''New Age.'' I do not want to dismiss their work, but it was not what I wanted at the time. I had always been fascinated with Occidental mythology and nineteenth-century philosophy and, as Jung's work drew heavily from both, I thought, ''This must be the place.'' I cannot totally explain why I choose Jung other than it felt right.

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At the same time, I was promoted to area manager. I was now responsible for 20 staff people, 350 hourly employees, and a $19 million operating budget. The circumstances surrounding my promotion were difficult. The strategic planning team had just installed and implemented a new process, which was going badly. In fact, the department had reached the point where it had completely shut down its customer, the final assembly area. The experts brought in seemed to make matters worse. People were operating from fear and started to micromanage the department. They had lost their confidence in their ability to make decisions. Some were so stressed that I worried about their health.

For the first time in my career, I agreed to take a position in order to help someone else. My first task as the new area manager was to protect the people in the department and restore their confidence. So I became a shield between them and the rest of the organization. This did not come from any theories that I had studied; it was instinctual and came from my heart. I had been with these people for more than seven years. Once they recognized that I was trying to protect them, they seemed to be more energized. My basic instruction was, ''Forget the experts; you know your job. Go do it.'' My job was to nurture, protect, and listen. Within two weeks, the process had stabilized, and within six months, the department had achieved a 97% first run and was considered a good solid supplier.

Many people have said to me, ''Yeah, the servant leadership stuff is good, but what did you guys do to fix the process?'' Most have not liked my answer. We did make changes to the process, but most were just following procedures and having the patience to see if the process would stabilize before initiating more interventions. What really improved the process was chasing off the experts before they could suggest any more changes. The employees, who had a tremendous amount of process experience, started making subtle improvements every day because they no longer worried about making mistakes. They knew I would back them up.

I had never felt so good about earning a living before, not just because of the recognition that came from turning the department around. Deep down, I knew I had enabled the staff to lift themselves above the fear of failure. I was able to achieve this because I truly cared for the people in this department.

What does this story have to do with my interest in Jung, Occidental mythology, and nineteenth-century philosophy? Prior to my experiences as area manager, my reading was a hobby. After seeing the results of my intervention and realizing that I still could not technically explain what I had done or why it made me feel so good, my reading became part of a quest. I needed to understand why I was drawn to this work and what it had to do with my mid-life crisis and my new leadership style. My association with Jung was the most obvious, due to his theories on adult development and life stages. An important aspect of Jung's work is his theory of individuation and its relationship to adult development (1960). Jung believed that men go through at least two major transitions as adults. The first occurs sometime between ages 17 and 19 and lasts until the beginning of mid-life. During this stage, young men endeavor to create their place in the world. It is a time of heroic mastery and the slaying of dragons; developing a strong ego is important and essential to the development of self in later years.

The second adult stage begins at mid-life, which, during Jung's time, was considered to be between 35 and 38 years of age. This stage involves the development of self and can create problems if an individual continues to place too much emphasis on ego pursuits. This whole transition revolves around individuation, simply, the process of continually surfacing unconscious material and integrating it into consciousness. This definition oversimplifies the theory but will suffice here. The development of self is the process of becoming whole, which can be extremely difficult because it deals with the energy of opposites (Jung, 1953).

I personally had difficulty accepting all the aspects of my own psyche, especially my darker tendencies. Civilization is, in part, based on the conscious repression of socially

unacceptable behavior. As we mature, we each repress certain aspects of our psyche. We do this in the early stages of development in order to make the transition successfully during the first adult stage. The very characteristics that can make us successful during our first transition can cause the greatest grief in the mid-life transition. A man who has been successful at heroic mastery in the form of competition and aggressive tactics may have a hard time relinquishing such a steady source of self-esteem. This makes the mid-life transition more difficult.

Moving from ego consciousness to a more integrated self is synonymous with relinquishing heroic mastery in order to be empathetic and takes tremendous courage. Not youthful bravado, true courage comes from the intentional act of being vulnerable. I associate this type of vulnerability with loving someone or something. To care openly for anything is to become vulnerable. This may sound a little mushy coming from an old operations guy, but remember, I have admitted to being in the throes of mid-life. I am trying to describe a natural process, not a mental disorder, even though the antics of some men at mid-life may indicate otherwise. The first half of adulthood, the pursuit of materialistic goals, can unfortunately be our main source of self-esteem during this period. The second transition, which occurs sometime during mid-life, is an invitation to an initiation that symbolizes a life oriented toward spirituality, service, and the nurturing of culture.

I can attest to the difficulty of this lifestyle. At the first sign of trouble, I find myself quickly reverting to my old aggressive ways: ''Let's kick some butt, take some names, and show these folks who they are dealing with.'' Just when I am starting to get high from the adrenaline rush, a nagging voice says, ''No, no, Ben, this will no longer solve your problems.'' I know the voice is right; aggression and competition did not help my department during its turnaround; they significantly added to the problem. I did not go into that department and question people's abilities, even though there was some pressure to reassess their skills. My first concern was the people. When I compared my motivations for helping the department with Jung's theory of individuation, I recognized the connection. My intervention was based on service and empathy; it was not directed by my personal career objectives. I would like to say that this has been my normal mode of operation, but that would be a lie. Although I have tried to be fair and just, my career decisions were predominantly based on my personal gain, which is not such a bad thing during the first adult stage.

True courage comes from the intentional act of being vulnerable. I associate this type of vulnerability with loving someone or something.

The problem occurs if we carry this lifestyle into the second stage of adulthood. If mature adults do not take responsibility for culture, who will? We can hardly expect the young dragon slayers to put aside their swords, especially when they have to compete with the very men who should be their mentors. Intergenerational competition has become so prevalent in modern society that young men would not trust mentoring even if it were offered. Why should they? What have we done to gain their trust? Countless middle-aged men secretly complain about being pushed aside to make room for younger, more energetic men. In traditional businesses, where competitiveness and aggression are part of the credo, why should we help these young upstarts who are covetously eyeing our jobs? Maybe because our jobs do not belong to us? Many of us erroneously see our careers as our personal identities. We should see these young upstarts as part of a natural continuum that allows us to travel a little farther in our life's journey.

If I believed that my responsibilities were to stay the same until the end of life, I could not help but become deeply depressed. A life based on aggression, competition, and materialism can be healthfully maintained only in the first adult stage. This message is represented in the legend of the Holy Grail, which serves as a wonderful template for understanding the mid-life transition. Although I have studied numerous versions of the grail legend, including Le Troyes's *Perceval* and Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, I have found that Von Eschenbach's *Parzival* is the closest representation of the unconscious vision of maturing as an ascension from youthful bravado to cultural service (1980).

In Eschenbach's version, Parzival, after spending many years searching for the grail castle, meets a dark knight, Feirefiz. Although Parzival had beaten the best knights of the time, he cannot conquer Feirefiz because Feirefiz represents the shadow aspects of himself.

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As the battle ensues between our hero and the dark knight, Parzival's sword breaks when striking Feirefiz's armor. The sword represents heroic mastery and the ego consciousness (Jung and Von Franz, 1970). That the sword breaks at this critical point when Parzival needs it most indicates the need to make a transition. Now, Feirefiz lays down his sword, believing there would be no honor in continuing the battle. The shadow thus embraced ceases to be a threat. As the two knights talk to each other, they soon realize that they share the same father and are long-lost brothers.

Heroic mastery did not provide Parzival access to the mystical grail castle; he first had to accept his enemy as a brother; then both were invited because together they represent the whole man (Campbell, 1990). This symbolizes authenticity as the rite of passage. (There are too many such instances in the grail legend to discuss here, but I must mention that, along with the shadow, the feminine aspects [the anima] are also symbolically represented and must be integrated as well.)

At the castle, Parzival meets the grail king, who is in enormous pain due to a wound that will not heal. Parzival is faced with a dilemma: Should he ask the king what ails him? His heart and compassion command him to inquire, but his social training as a knight forbids him to ask a personal, unsolicited question. When he finally follows his heart and asks the question, the king is instantly healed, along with the ''wasteland,'' which symbolizes Parzival's psyche. He then becomes the new grail king.

This story demonstrates how we cannot use heroic mastery to defeat our shadows; this will only repress the shadow deeper into our unconscious. We must face them head on from a position of empathy, not aggression. We cannot judge our dark tendencies as evil or good. All we can do is recognize them as an integral part of us and embrace them as part of the whole. As young men, we must learn to recognize and assimilate social conventions and perceptions in order to maintain some semblance of normality and success. During this process, aspects of our psyches are repressed into the subterranean vaults of our unconscious. Some of these aspects are potentially dangerous, especially when there are still dragons to be slain. During the mid-life transition, this material starts to surface and threatens the mask that we have endeavored to create. Society and organizations seem to want us to maintain these masks into mid-life, which can lead us to think that ''they'' are the problem. But there is no secret alliance; we *are* society. I now realize that I have willingly participated and even nurtured this competitive and aggressive environment. There is no one else to blame.

There was a strange dichotomy in my behavior when I was an area manager. Although my employees saw an empathic, compassionate leader, people outside the department saw a fierce warrior who would take on anyone who threatened the department or its work environment. So I cannot honestly say that I was not aggressive; in some aspects, I was probably even more aggressive, but my motivation was different.

The art is not in choosing good over evil, but in understanding the delicate balance and energy created by the opposing forces.

When I am counseling or mentoring people, I pay particular attention to where they are in their life's journey. I would never advise a young man to become passive or refrain from competitive tactics. I would be more concerned with how well he balances empathy with aggression. He still needs to be successful within the constraints set by society.

If each young man or woman were taught how to balance his or her life, I believe we would see subtle improvements in our culture. The art is not in choosing good over evil, but in understanding the delicate balance and energy created by the opposing forces. Forcing the views of our generation on the next will only confuse the process. When we mentor young people, it is not their fear of change but our own that invalidates the relationship. I try to help them see the political traps and perceptions that could form, depending on their actions. I do not counsel or engage them in political games. My re-

sponsibility is to help them articulate their own values so they can determine the true cost of their actions.

In conclusion, my point here is not to explain the process of mentoring or a new theory on leadership. We sorely underestimate the dynamics of adult development, especially the stages of life. I have used Jung's theories in this article, but there are many other theorists on the adult stages of life. I am suggesting that organizations cannot continue to ignore the adult development process. Diversity training teaches us about age discrimination, but it typically does not explain the needs or the benefits associated with each of life's stages. For those approaching mid-life, there are spiritual, ethical, moral, and psychological reasons for being more empathetic.

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Commentary

by Bill Torbert

I am happy that Ben Bruce has written this story. I've wanted to know more about the inside of Ben, more about what was propelling and coordinating this man with whom I've been convening at SoL meetings for several years. It was during our conference calls that Ben truly charmed me. I could tell from his comments that he had a decade-long, critical, and totally participative commitment to swirling inquiry into every conversational encounter. But the miracle was that he combined this with a sense of first-time delight. What path had Ben taken, I wondered, to live in the middle of corporate America and in this atmosphere of ongoing inquiry at the same time?

In this essay, he tells us about his transforming path, taking a Jungian perspective. From the perspective of developmental action-logics (how people make meaning of themselves and the world; see Rooke and Torbert, 1999; Fisher, Rooke, and Torbert, 2001), Ben first mastered a *technician/expert* action-logic of manufacturing (that is, he became a craft master). Next, he mastered the *achiever/manager* art of political coordination, alternating between unilateral and mutuality-enhancing power, to get results within existing strategic parameters. But then he felt an even deeper dissatisfaction, a thirst for integrating spiritual and intellectual inquiry with passionate, embodied action. This dissatisfaction led him, over the years, toward a *strategist/leader* action-logic. The strategist action-logic is explicitly reflective (his OLC courses and journal keeping) and unconventional (his reputation "for being a little strange and maybe too unconventional"). It not only implements existing strategies, but collaboratively creates new strategies and frames (his subtle trust and process-improving turnaround to servant leadership as area manager). Indeed, Ben began to appreciate the paradox of "vulnerable power" and to conjoin other opposites such as compas-

sionate lover and fierce warrior, as is characteristic of persons exploring the moment-to-moment alchemy of a *magician/witch/clown* action-logic. As Parzival, the king, the nation, and nature itself all learned simultaneously, a timely inquiry can itself be the very action through which the emergent future enters the eternal now in a way that can transform even the determined past.

Ben's story wonderfully illuminates his inner world and offers an equivalent to the stages of the cross or to the developmental action-logics for envisioning the lifetime trajectory that our own first-person research practice can take, if we seek a kind of inquiry that interweaves first-, second-, and third-person research and practice in real-time situations. Does Ben's essay resonate with questions and experiences of your own? Can you imagine (or do you already experience) such questions at the very center of your life or as the very source and fountain of your own work?

Neither corporate managers nor university researchers today typically make conscious, disciplined attempts at interweaving their research and their practice in any particular arena, much less an attempt at interweaving the subjective, intersubjective, and objective arenas of their lives altogether. This is a challenge for all of us individually, for politics, and for scientific inquiry in the coming age. I thank Ben for playing a leadership role in objectifying his intersubjective and subjective research and practice.

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Commentary

by C. Sherry Immediato

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Some months ago, when a group of us requested ideas about how to increase the voice of the practitioner in *Reflections*, Ben told me that he would help—not by talking about the problem—but by offering his own raspy drawl. Over the years, Ben has brought heart and soul, along with a good dose of true grit, to help realize the potential of the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL). In sharing his reflections, he does the same for us now. It is with gratitude and respect that I offer these thoughts.

While we all have our own way of describing SoL's purpose, our constitution states it in these intriguing terms:

> The purpose of SoL is to discover, integrate, and implement theories and practices for the interdependent development of people and their institutions.

As I see it, Ben's reflection is one example of pursing this mission: he helps us build our community by sharing his story, he shares models of individual development that speak to his experience, and he challenges us to move beyond organizational obliviousness to the implications of the evolving self.

The Power of Story

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to speak with a handful of SoL members specializing in information infrastructure and asked them about how we build our capacity for networking as organizations and as a community. One chief information officer surprised me by speaking almost exclusively of story as the basic infrastructure of our human network. Stories clearly help us know one another and therefore build relationships. However, particularly in the wonderful article Ben has chosen to share, we all have the opportunity to see ourselves in a new light. Ben's clarity prompts self-reflection: What motivated me when I was younger? What motivates me now? What is my personal style of leadership and how has it changed? And what's the difference between what I believe about these things and what the data actually support?

People often report that one of the most compelling reasons they remain in SoL is because of the network of people whose stories are now entwined. While there is a natural way this happens, perhaps we can create more opportunities to welcome new stories by listening deeply to those voices conspicuous by their absence.

Models of Individual Development

How do we understand our story and learn to become its author? While there are many ways to answer this question, it is clear that some theory can be enormously helpful in guiding the inquiry.

What I find as important in Ben's reflection is the clear need for practice that promotes self-awareness, making conscious development more possible. Some of these include explicit growth opportunities, like SoL's Core Competencies Course, keeping a journal, rereading the books of our youth, and intentionally venturing into unfamiliar territory, whether it is intellectual, physical, emotional, or spiritual. Ben points out that he could have some confidence in his choices because even if somewhat uncomfortable, the right ones were life affirming, energizing, and deeply satisfying.

The path of individual development is clearly an interior journey, and yet it is also one we don't do alone. As Ben describes, much of his own development shows up in qualitative changes in his relationships. Is part of the practice of individual development more explicit interaction with others also interested in conscious learning? As mentioned above, one simple practice is sharing our stories with each other. As a generation and nation with a tendency to go "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2000), I see a great need to develop our own understanding of appropriate communities of practice—what in Buddhism is known as the *sangha.* As more of us find our place in these communities, and make some commitment to them in addition to our own development, I believe that we will have a new understanding of the possibilities for collective development. It is certainly a learning edge for me.

Organizational Implications

I think Ben's reflections make one obvious point: our organizations are an important part of the environment in which our personal development happens. Some of these environments support growth and exploration, while others stifle it. I found Ben's insights on the relationships between the older and younger employees to be particularly interesting. I have been paying much more attention to how we involve the next generation in SoL, while also inviting our elders to share their vast knowledge and experience with us. Ben's comments have caused me to think more about the dynamics among the generations due to their own development needs.

The larger issue of the need for organizational attention to adult development also suggests that we may need to think about organizational development differently as well. In his early work, Chris Argyris suggested that many policies, practices, and structures served to discourage individuals from developing needed and natural maturity. While work such as Argyris's helped launch the field of organizational development, I find it sobering to return to propositions he stated years ago (Argyris, 1957):

1. There is a lack of congruence between the needs of the healthy individual and demands of the formal organization.
2. The results of this disturbance are frustration, failure, short-time perspective, and conflict.
3. The nature of the formal principles of organization cause the subordinate at any given level to experience competition, rivalry, intersubordinate hostility, and to develop a focus toward the parts rather than the whole.

There is still ample evidence to support these propositions. Some of the work that I have tracked over much of this time has to do with recognizing that organizations also have their own development cycle, while simultaneously needing to accommodate and support individuals across the spectrum of adult development. It is my belief that we will be much more successful in our efforts to bring about change in organizations when we learn to work with the natural cycles of change already in process. It is my hope that SoL can support organizations in their own conscious development.

Finally, while I share an interest in many of the references Ben has cited, I'll add a few of my own.

For developing community by witnessing each other's stories, and as a practice of spiritual discipline, I have greatly enjoyed the work of M. Scott Peck as both a reader and participant. I would particularly recommend *A World Waiting to Be Born* (Peck, 1993), and the work of the Foundation for Community Encouragement ⟨www.fce.org⟩.

For developing a greater appreciation of our own process of development, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* by Daniel Levinson was my initiation into the universality of our experience (Levinson,

1978). Now, I am intrigued by Robert Kegan's work on adult development and learning, particularly *In Over Our Heads* (Kegan, 1995).

Finally, after years of resistance, I have become a fan of Ken Wilber's efforts to address explicitly issues of the relationship between individual and collective development *and* between our subjective experience and objective reality (or very loosely, science and religion). These ideas are laid out quickly in *A Theory of Everything* (Wilber, 2000). As someone who has long advocated for intelligence tempered by wisdom, I am delighted to have something of a roadmap to guide capacity development in these areas.

Just as good relationships often become more mysterious and enchanting over time, I find that I am more enamored than ever with the interdependent development of people and their institutions, and I am grateful to Ben for sharing his personal experience with this inquiry. It is our story, and I hope it will become part of our shared practice.

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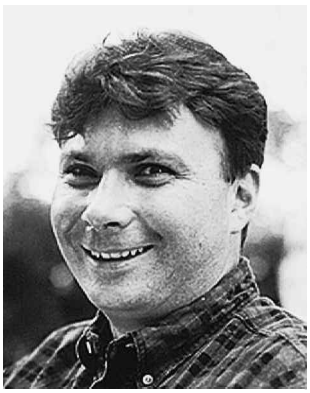
VIEW

My First Job

Stephen C. Buckley



Stephen C. Buckley
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After I graduated from college in 1986, I moved to Boston and went looking for a job where I could put my useless degree in English literature to work. I eventually found one, working downtown for a large bank as an ''Investor Communications Specialist.'' My job was to write letters and reports to investors on the status of various real estate limited partnerships that the bank managed. I also answered phone calls from people who wanted to know just how their investments were doing.

In the late 1980s, the real estate market had crashed. Most of the partnerships' properties were in the southeast and southwest United States, where the effects of the crash had been by far the worst. The values of buildings and homes had declined so steeply that many were now worth much less than the mortgages on them. Any equity was gone, which meant that all our investors' money was gone too. But, of course, you couldn't tell them that.

I soon realized that my main job at the bank was to lie. I would write glowing commentaries to accompany quarterly and annual reports to investors, testifying to the bank's continuing optimism about its holdings. I would make up stories about properties—about their excellent facilities, location, and management. So thick was the smoke I blew that, unless you were a very savvy investor, you would never realize how hopeless the situation actually was.

I worked at the bank for about a year. I was pleased with the money they paid me. They were pleased with the way I could use language to conceal the truth.

One day, I received a phone call from an investor whom I had spoken with several times before. He was an elderly gentleman who called every few months, ostensibly to check on the status of his partnership, but I knew he just wanted someone to talk to. He was lonesome. He had an old-time New England accent that reminded me of my grandfather. He talked mostly about the past, the way things used to be when he was a young man, and how expensive everything had become. He also had a sharp sense of humor, and I came to enjoy genuinely our periodic talks. He wanted to know ''what'' I was, in the way it seems only older people feel it is important to know what ethnicity you are before they know how to deal with you. The fact that we were both of Irish descent made him both more trusting and nostalgic. That was fine with me.

We talked that day for almost an hour—too long as far as the bank was concerned. We were instructed to keep our calls short, offer no information other than what was specifically asked for, and certainly not to tell them anything personal. I broke all those rules. This was dangerous because the bank recorded all our phone conversations.There was an audible ''beep'' on the line every 30 seconds to remind you of this.

I soon realized that my main job at the bank was to lie.

At the end of our conversation, he again brought up the subject of his investment. He asked me, point blank, if his investment was safe. I answered with a convincing chuckle that, of course, it was. He believed me, and he said so. I lied.

That night I had trouble sleeping. I kept thinking about the old man I had talked to that day. Conflicted, I alternately felt guilty for having lied to him and angry with myself for having allowed that old fart to get inside my head.

The following day, I asked to talk with my boss. We went into his office and closed the door. I asked why, if none of these properties made any money, we didn't just sell

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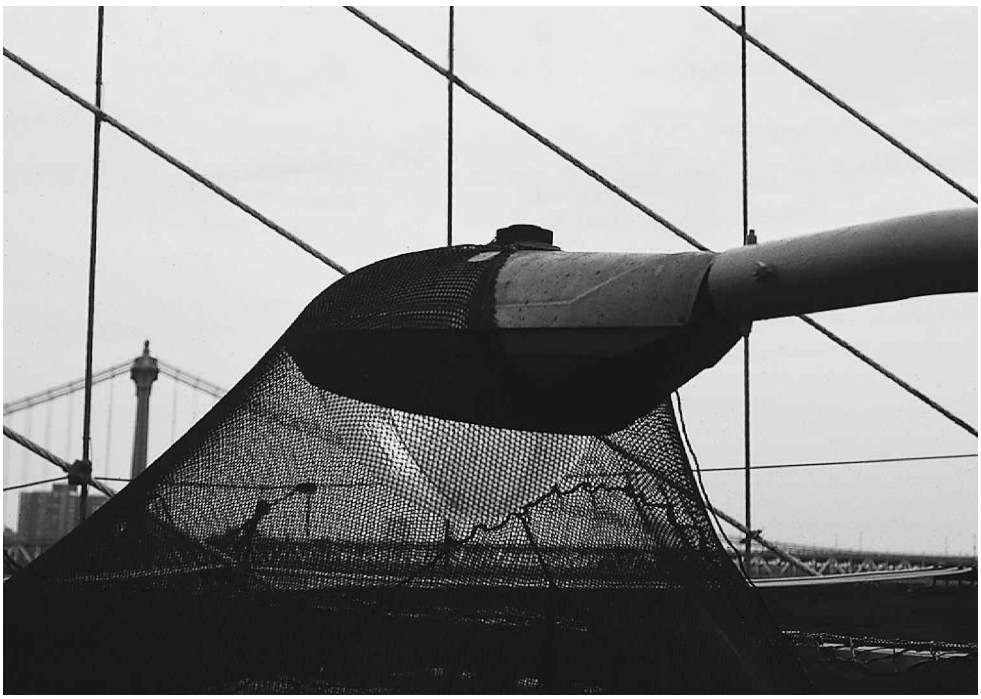

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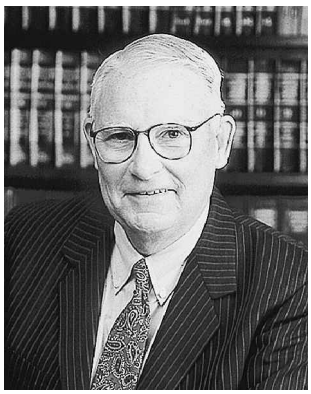
them and give the investors back the cash. He laughed at me in the way someone laughs at a little child who has said something outrageously funny. Then he carefully explained how the partnerships made plenty of money, first in the 10% commission investors paid when they bought their shares, then in the placement and acquisition fees when the properties were purchased, and lastly in the annual asset management fees that paid for, among other things, my precious salary. He told me how, if we sold the properties, the investors would get nothing, and the bank would probably be sued. He admitted the best possible scenario would be if the properties came back in value enough to cover their mortgages. But, even if that happened, it was pretty unlikely that any of the investors would ever see a dime of their money, ever again. Therefore, the best thing to do was just to hold on as long as we could, string the investors along with peppy optimistic reports, and hope that things got better. This was just business, he told me. Business.

There's something about facing yourself in the mirror every morning with a razor in your hand that makes it especially important to like what you see. The next morning I put the razor down. I didn't shave. I didn't shower. I didn't put on the tie. I didn't even call in. And I didn't go back there, ever again.

FEATURE

An Epoch Change in Our Paradigms

Bill O'Brien



Bill O'Brien
Retired CEO
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Hanover Insurance
June 15, 1989
To Mr. Roy Anderson:

You exaggerate my achievement and capacities. Nevertheless, I enjoy it. I deeply appreciate your letter of June 2. Your thoughts provide me with a helpful context in my search for the meaning of this event in my life and where I should head from here.

I fully concur with your statement, ''Nothing happens by accident—and everything happens for a purpose.'' God gives each of us life. He gives us a mission (to serve) on this earth. For many (certainly for me), that mission centers on family, serving society, and following ''the way'' He prescribed. When we complete our mission, we are called back and judged. A good effort is rewarded with an afterlife with God. It is really not that complex.

What cancer (or facing mortality) does is cause us to nourish our interior life and examine our external mission. At least, that is what it has done for me. It was you who once told me that differences in people's interior lives are far greater than their external differences. I've mulled over that insight many times.

Let me take a side trip. I was leaving my office to go home on the second day after I returned from my surgery. Halfway down the center staircase, Kathy Kane stopped me. Kathy has been with Hanover for somewhat under 15 years and has been put in charge of a number of critical assignments. She always does an outstanding job. She said to me, ''Bill, I want you to think of the positive part of having cancer. I had cancer 10 years ago (which I knew). There have been a lot of positive benefits to it. I am a much more aware person because of the experience. I see more. I appreciate more. I am a different person.'' It was a very inspiring talk that Kathy gave me. It reinforced feelings in me that I was searching for ideas and words to express.

I, of course, have devoted considerable thought to my mission in life. I know I received a strong message. I sense it is more renewal to a higher level than dramatic change.

My professional contributions have been limited to:

- Understanding and articulating the destructive consequences of hierarchical corporate governance.
- Developing and practicing governing ideas that engage the commitment of our people and produce better service for customers and stronger financial results for owners.
- Establishing a learning environment that distinguishes the mechanical, linear, and convergent from the natural, philosophical, and divergent. Through this process, learning has become a living force in the company.

The next steps in my mission focus on:

- Articulating leadership practices that better fit our governing ideas, that is, leading in a mature, vision-driven, value-guided organization versus a power- or politics-driven one.
- Better shaping our structure to fit our philosophy, that is, keeping only the minimally needed hierarchy.

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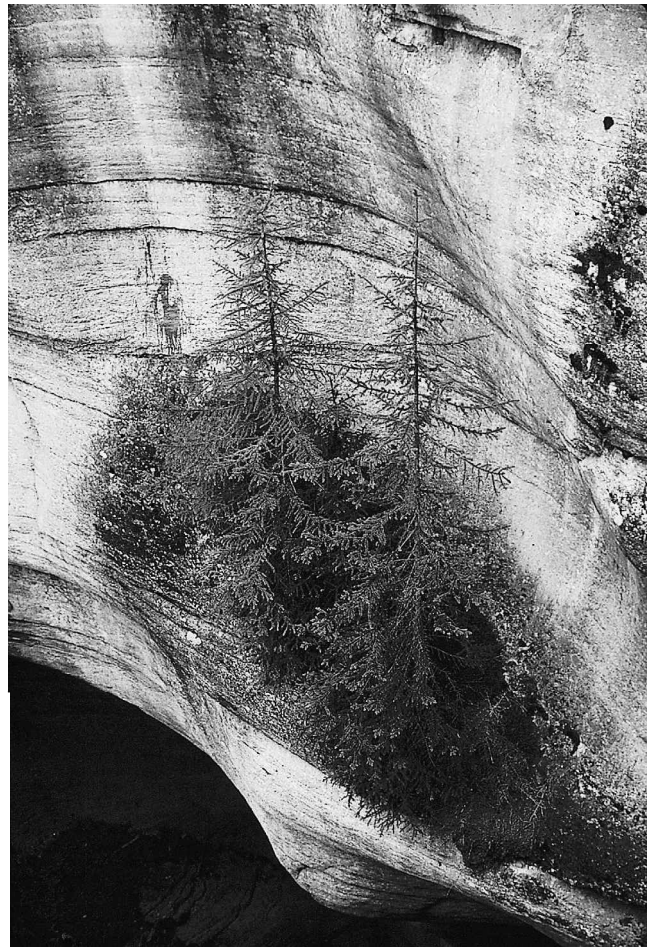
As you know, at the essence of what we are doing at Hanover is wedding individual fulfillment with societal service and economic success. Put differently, we want to design a company with the enabling conditions so people can use their jobs to reach the fourth and fifth steps on Maslow's ladder (his hierarchy of needs).

I believe the governing ideas and practices of Hanover Insurance Companies have wider application than to one company or industry. Many friends such as yourself have encouraged me in this view and suggested activities to introduce the philosophy to a larger audience.

My innate appetite for philosophy and business has been leveraged by two fortunate conditions. First has been access to some unusual people, such as Jack Adam (my predecessor at Hanover), John Beckett, Peter Senge, Charles Hampden-Turner, Chris Argyris, yourself, and others who are original thinkers. Many have been authors: E.F. Schumacher, M. Scott Peck, John Gardner, Teilhard de Chardin, Douglas McGregor, and Willis Harmon, to name a few.

The second condition is the fortunate circumstance to head a company to which I apply my learning. I appreciate the value of this unique arrangement more as I meet with my colleagues from academia or even those who are one rung from the top of some of the world's most renowned companies. It would be frustrating for me to think through issues and not have a vehicle through which I apply what I learn. I believe you and my friends from the academic community will identify with that observation.



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In rebuttal, you might be inclined to say, ''If you spread your wings, so to speak, you would get the satisfaction of seeing your ideas and experience helping more people and having a larger handprint on the world.'' But if I were to follow that path, I would no longer be a practicing thinker who sells his ideas. And there is nothing wrong with the latter. It is just not me right now. My uniqueness is that I am one of the few spokespersons for vision-driven, value-guided institutional governance who actually does what he talks about. While admittedly my audiences outside Hanover are limited, they see and appreciate the connection between thinking and doing. It is the source of my authenticity.

Hanover and its people are special. It is one of the best kept secrets in the business world. I believe I can lead the organization to new levels of capabilities. Further, I believe the people of Hanover can take me to new levels of understanding and learning more effectively than any other situation I can envision. Looked at from another vantage point, I find it unattractive working in surroundings where politics and linear thinking dominate and where it would be necessary to treat conditions we in Hanover overcame many years ago.

Again, let me digress. You and I frequently discussed our shared belief that epoch change is taking place throughout the world. Ordinary change, as we have known it in recent history, has been born out of technological advances or liberating social customs. Epoch transitions are born out of fundamental changes in how people see things.

Today's dominant reality is largely based on the scientific paradigm: theories from Descartes, Newton, Einstein, and succeeding generations of renowned scientists. The scientific paradigm began in the sixteenth century. It followed a paradigm that was based on religion, spirits, and the arts.

Paradigm shifts in dominant emphasis are accompanied by a degree of change that is traumatic to individuals who perceive their world coming apart at the seams. History teaches us that shifts from one technology to another, such as farming to industrial to computer, strain the stress tolerance of many people.

We have not had a major shift in our paradigms for more than four centuries. Are

we in the beginning phase of such a shift? Would not a serious shift in our fundamental paradigms be accompanied by severe turbulence in society? What might that upcoming change in society's way of seeing the world center on? What are the implications?

We will look back on the decade of the eighties as the initial phase of an epoch change in our paradigms. The dominance of scientific materialism has already begun to wane. For those who hang tenaciously to a single, compartmentalized paradigm, the society shift will be turbulent. But for those who explore harmonizing the spiritual with the scientific, a healthy national interest with global concerns, and the rational with the intuitive, and distinguish the divergent from convergent issues, the next decade will be an exciting chapter in the ascent of mankind.

Holistic thinking and systemic understanding is complementing reductionism and the atomistic view in many quarters: the universities, public-policy think tanks, authors, and Hanover. The genie is out of the bottle.

Science and religion will remove the wall that exists between them. At a deeper level, we will begin to understand the connection between matter and spirit. The scientific method will be extended beyond its current limitation, that is, to validate only that which can be observed, counted, or measured. Both science and religion will point to a higher order to whom man and mankind is responsible.

Unwittingly, the scientific revolution has fostered polarization. A ''we versus them'' mentality, a government driven by the clash of special interests at the expense of the common good, and large business organizations in which departments put their self-interests ahead of the whole enterprise are so commonplace today that we hardly consider it a disruption of right order. We accept it as normal.

Science and religion will remove the wall that exists between them.

These aberrations in our society are an unintended consequence from three centuries of emphasizing the scientific without the appropriate balance or integration with spiritual consideration and knowledge of the humanities.

Again, epoch change is caused by changes in people's paradigms. Such a change is under way. It has two dimensions. The first is unity, that is, unifying the scientific and spiritual (religious) with the spiritual at the center. Second, I believe the species is reaching a stage in its evolution where the common man will understand paradigms and possess the capacity to examine and change his own and others with some degree of sophistication. The ordinary person will master paradigms instead of becoming prisoners of them.

The era of interest in paradigms will result in new theories of new governance and leadership in corporations, universities, charitable institutions, and government. It will, I believe, be for the betterment of men and mankind, just as democracy abetted freedom and capitalism has raised standards of living.

Further, I don't believe the remedies to our ailing systems will emerge from the top, from reformers, from master planers, from generalists or special-interest advocates. Our American system of little people, guided by the changing paradigms, will make a breakthrough here and there that eventually will comprise an epoch change.

Today, there is an imbalance of theoreticians in relation to practitioners of these advanced experiments. My calling as I interpret it is to continue to combine practice and theory. My conceptualization of issues depends on the learning (and frustration) from my practice.

Roy, as I said at the beginning, your letter not only raised my spirits but served as a context for me to think through issues that are quite pertinent in my life at this time. Thanks for taking the time to let me have your support and wisdom.

William J. O'Brien

Afterword

Before sending this article to press, Reflections *asked Bill O'Brien to reflect on his observations during the 13 years since he wrote his letter to Roy Anderson.*

Reflections: Not long after you wrote this letter, you left Hanover Insurance. What you came to understand from those who remained was that the subsequent leadership ignored many of the previous values you had introduced. In fact, they took the ''Blue Books,'' in

which the values of Hanover were articulated, out of circulation. What are your reflections on this decision by the subsequent leadership?

O'Brien: Leadership is always about a tension between principle and power. It can never be an ''either/or.'' It is always a mixture of the two. In the decade of the nineties, we find two visible examples of the assertion of principles by those in power in the world political arena.

One was Gorbachev and his principle of *perestroika,* which was to free the people of the Soviet Union from the oppression of communism. He thought he could do this and remain communistic. He could, with his personal power, have wreaked havoc on the world. Instead, he chose to focus on perestroika.

The other example was de Klerk. Certainly, in the beginning, he could have oppressed Mandela and the African National Congress, but instead he stuck to his principles about ending apartheid in the face of much skepticism. In corporations, leaders are motivated by an obsession with keeping control and power, but there is a higher order than power, which is principle.

Governance, whether involving a nation or corporation, that is driven by leadership's appetite for power and control oppresses by stifling initiative. Governance with noble aspirations in service of the common good that seeks to help all its people—not just an elite few—in pursuit of their highest destiny is uplifting. Thus, there are some battles in life where it is more important to be on the right side than it is to win.

Reflections: How has the environment for values-based leadership changed in the 13 years since you wrote this letter?

O'Brien: When I wrote this letter, I felt that we were in the midst of an epoch change, which I characterized as a change in the paradigms in which people believed. I compared epoch change with normal changes, those happening because of technology and liberalizing social policies. I think we are still in a period of epoch change.

One observation I made then was the need for unity between science and religion. I see a lot of evidence in the past ten years that this movement is underway. When you look at the *New York Times* bestseller list, something like 40% of the books are in some way religious. M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled* was on the list for 13 consecutive years.[1] These kinds of things fall in the ''boiled frog'' category, so gradual that we barely notice them.

Fortune magazine had a cover story on ''God & Business.''[2] Ten years ago, that never would have happened. In fact, roughly 10 years ago, *Fortune* sent a reporter to a conference held by the Organizational Learning Center [now the Society for Organizational Learning] at MIT. He was on the verge of writing it up as a ''New Age gathering'' until he talked with a number of us and saw it for what it was.

In another related article, Jim Collins wrote about Level 5 Leadership.[3] He describes a guy from Kimberly Clark, a spiritual guy, humble with a sense of stewardship about the future, who characterizes the spiritual dimension of leadership. Fifteen years ago, someone with those qualities would have been seen as flaky, not tough, and would have been weeded out.

Looking on down the road, I believe we have to grow leaders who are skilled at both the technical side and the spiritual side. Collins talks about leaders who have integrated business and technical proficiency with spiritual formation. I think these dimensions have to be integrated in a single person. You don't hire a human resources person to bring in the spiritual dimension.

I see the CEO as an orchestra leader who brings people in. There are a lot of people who talk about the spiritual side, but when they actually lead the music, they just beat the drums for profits, for the numbers, too strongly. When you're leading an organization, you have to bring in the human, strategy, and customer sides. When you blow any one of these horns all day long, that's what people presume you want.

In rereading my letter, I think that the central direction I pointed to is still accurate. There is a lot of evidence that science and religion are coming together. The reality of the world is that we need both faith and reason to know the truth. There are certain things

we can't know by faith and other things we can't know by reason. There's no such thing as a Christian approach to chemistry. In the same way, you can't get at the questions of ''Who am I? Where am I going? Is there life after I die?'' or at issues such as raising children or being married by reason. Those things require a window of faith. Together, faith and reason get at the full truth of the world.

Notes

1. Peck, M.S. *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).
2. July 9, 2001.
3. Collins, J. ''Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve.'' *Harvard Business Review* 79 (January-February 2001): 42-48.

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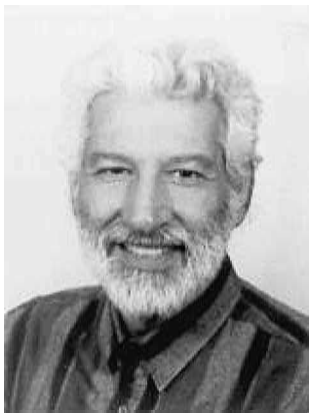
The Spiritual Entrepreneur

VIEW

Alfredo Sfeir-Younis

Alfredo Sfeir-Younis is an environmental economist and the World Bank's Special Representative to the United Nations and to the World Trade Organization. This article is the result of an interview Reflections *conducted with him in January 2001, in Santiago, Chile.*



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Recently, at a conference in Mexico, I was listening to someone speak about the need for business to shift from ''business entrepreneurship'' to ''social entrepreneurship,'' a move that asks businesses to raise some of the larger questions about the impact of their enterprises on their workers and communities. As I listened to the speech, I found myself feeling that this move was too timid for our times, that it didn't ask enough of our business leaders or give enough to the world. When it came my turn to address the group, I was compelled to make a stronger appeal: that business leaders must move not merely to ''social entrepreneurship,'' but to ''spiritual entrepreneurship.'' In these challenging times, we must consider both the outer and inner conditions that are shaping people's lives.

In most societies, we look at business organizations as the prime means of creating wealth, and through that wealth, enabling the development of our societies. And when we think of wealth, we think of material wealth. So, if I am looking to hire someone to run my business, I will, of course, look for a ''business entrepreneur,'' someone who understands the values of the material world, someone who has experience in accounting, finance, distribution, and marketing. This is the person I will hire to create wealth for me.

However, today, we find we cannot operate in a social vacuum. The ecological urgencies of our times and the public outcry in response have made it impossible to separate the best interest of business from the best interest of society. We have come to understand that our workers must feel fairly treated and our communities must feel they benefit by the presence of the business in the community, or the business cannot function. This has given rise to the call for the ''social entrepreneur.'' The social entrepreneur extends the questions he or she raises about the business: not merely what will create the most wealth for the owners, but also what will support the well-being of the workers and what will benefit the community and larger living sytems in which our business is embedded? In other words, ''What is our responsibility?'' These additional questions necessitate a shift in the values that inform business decisions. Social entrepreneurs will find themselves making some decisions that do not result in the greatest wealth in the near term. However, when considered as part of a system for creating wealth—a system that includes the workers and the community—their decisions will bring greater stability to the enterprise and its community, which in turn will generate more long-term wealth for the business, its workers, and the community. So, while the questions are different, they are the same genre of questions.

The social entrepreneur is, in many ways, a small step from the business entrepreneur. Both make decisions based on the external criteria. The primary difference is that the social entrepreneur has extended the timeline for this wealth creation, realizing that, by considering the well-being of the worker, the environment, and the community, the business is in a better position to create wealth over time. The social entrepreneur has added the question, ''What is our responsibility?''

The move from social entrepreneur to what I call a ''spiritual entrepreneur'' is not simply an extension of the continuum. It is a fundamental shift in the way to see the work of a business. A spiritual entrepreneur understands that business is not simply a material category. Business represents the collective energy of those with capital, those with ideas,

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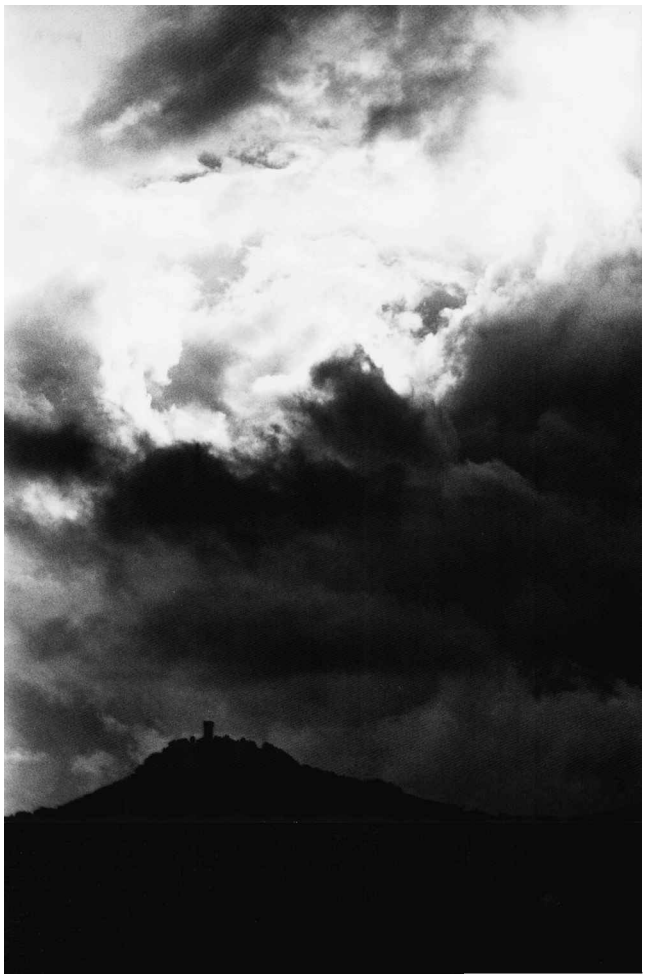

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those with specialized skills, a host community, and so on. When all those participating in the collective enterprise are fully aware, that is, when they are living in the most positive, generative consciousness possible, then the enterprise will be creating the greatest value in all currencies.

Another way to think about this is that business has a soul. In the same way that each of us has an animating energy often called a soul and a physical body through which this soul acts, a business has body and soul. A business has factories, physical facilities, and a collective of people who are generating ideas and coordinating their ways of creating together. This ''soul'' of business carries the imprint of all the people who are collaborating in the enterprise: the workers, the stockholders, the owners, and the management. The quality of awareness of those who imprint the business will affect everything the business does.

A spiritual entrepreneur doesn't approach the business with an overriding question about how to create the most wealth. Rather, he or she attends to the inner well-being of the enterprise. A spiritual entrepreneur approaches the business with the highest personal quality of awareness and asks the question, ''How can I encourage everyone connected with this enterprise to work from the highest possible level of awareness?'' This simple shift in focus in turn transforms every aspect of the business. Quality is not merely a material consideration of a product without mistakes; it is an ''extra-material'' idea that asks for the most imaginative, well-designed, enjoyable, and sustainable product possible. Ethics is not a book of principles to which one retreats in the event of a lawsuit or recall; it is integral to the standard practices of every aspect of the business, how we deal with all the living beings on which business has an impact. The fundamental principle of the spiritual enterprise is self-realization, an understanding of the ''true self.''

Of course, by improving the inner quality of the enterprise, one expands the capacity of the business for innovation, imagination, collaboration, partnership, and wealth creation. The difference is that these are the fortunate outcomes of a renewed awareness, not the motivation for making decisions. The business entrepreneur who is operating from the elevated vantage point of the true, whole, or essential self will also naturally make decisions based on what is most beneficial for everyone involved—those working in the business, living in the community supporting the business, financing the business, and using the products created by the business, and the larger natural environment. In other words, enhancing the inner quality of the enterprise is the essential step toward creating a sustainable sense of social and environmental responsibility, because the adverse effects of business on communities and the environment stem first and foremost from lack of awareness and lack of inner development. Without a commitment to inner well-being and enhanced awareness, there is no foundation for a broader responsibility of business.

The fundamental principle of the spiritual enterprise is self-realization, an understanding of the ''true self.''

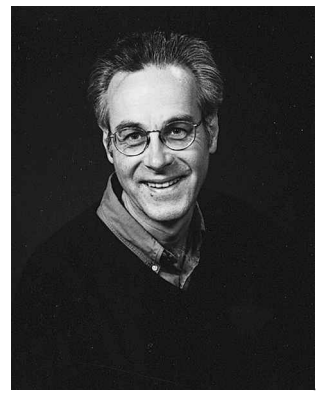
What makes this shift to spiritual entrepreneurship so critical is that it removes our reliance on outside measures to guide our business decisions. We would no longer be asking if we should or shouldn't stage a product recall, to what degree we need to restrict a certain kind of emission, or whether the degree to which we were polluting the surrounding waters is within acceptable guidelines. There may still be nuances to our decision making because of differences in cultural mores—for example, about child labor—

however, these would be vastly reduced and the response to ethical crises would be consistently based on the highest intentions.

In closing, let me reiterate that I am calling for not simply an extension of the kinds of questions even the most enlightened entrepreneurs are currently asking. I call for questions and for a quality of leadership of a different order of magnitude. When we make this shift—and I think it is inevitable that we must ultimately make this shift—business will find itself playing a new, invigorated role. Businesses will not simply support the world by allowing people to create wealth; they will be direct agents of world benefit. Businesses will be collectives of human energy and imagination working actively and intentionally for world benefit.

Commentary

by Andrew Ferguson



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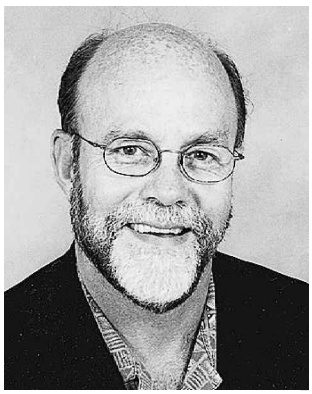
In October 2000, at a meeting that I chaired with David Cooperrider and Peter Senge on the creation of a World Institute of Spirit in Business, Peter raised the question: "What is a spiritual leader?" Religious leader? New Age spiritual teacher? CEO of a church, mosque, or synagogue? Or perhaps it's any of us who choose to do the daily inner work, entering the path of spiritual journey, which leads to our own growth and transformation. Upon reflection, Peter's question helps to answer the question that Alfredo Sfeir-Younis so eloquently raises. The next generation of business leaders need to be spiritual leaders. We can no longer afford the costs of the "outer" at work and the "inner" on Sabbath. Imagine how quickly that reintegration of business and spiritual leader will turn the whole paradigm of how we think about being executives and running businesses magically on its head. And it could be that simple.

Sfeir-Younis articulates beautifully the imperative for business leadership to move beyond the material and the "outer," and integrate the essential work of the "inner" and the spiritual. Today's science and psychology teach us that the creation of inner contentment and compassion is the true path to happiness. Through the practices of building compassion, of demonstrating daily the power of our connectedness, business leaders are transforming their lives and their businesses. The sooner that those of us in business acknowledge the profound shift that Sfeir-Younis outlines, the more quickly we'll become more effective as leaders and happy as individuals. And the more quickly business will begin producing products and services that produce long-term health, wealth, and sustainability. This tangible reconnecting of our interconnectness to all of life is the secret to business leadership for the future.

FEATURE

Community Building in Business

Philip H. Mirvis



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A group of 50 or so managers and sales staff meet in a workshop to build community in their business. The session begins with a reading of the ''Rabbi's Gift,'' an apocryphal story of a twelfth-century monastery restored to prominence by good deeds after a wise old rabbi advises the monks that one of their number, unknown to them, is the ''messiah.'' Then the workshop participants reflect silently. What follows are comments about the relevance of this parable for Carlisle Motors, a multilocation auto dealership in west Florida where, one salesman asserts, salvation can also be found in showrooms, repair bays, the billing office, even the used car lot—wherever coworkers step up and heed the rabbi's message.

Hold the Hallelujahs. There is more to this workshop than scripture and revivalism. At this point, the participants are engaged in what M. Scott Peck, author of several books on community and spirituality, calls ''pseudo-community'' (Peck, 1987, 1993). The participants are being proper and polite, trying their best to figure out the rules, and taking steps to ensure that what happens somehow relates to their jobs and company. Next comes a period of chaos. What's our agenda? Who's in charge? What are we supposed to be doing? At this point, in the prototypical encounter group, power struggles begin, conflicts over ordained authority versus self-management erupt, and the group enters a ''storming'' phase. Facilitators usually help people to work through these conflicts by, say, ''holding up a mirror'' so that they can examine their group dynamics. At this program, by contrast, they are urged instead to ''empty'' themselves—of their current thoughts and feelings, as well as their most profound pleasures and pains—to make room for the ''inner light.''

Later, as the group cycles deeper into chaos, comes the injunction to wait until you are ''moved to speak'' and, importantly, to speak when you are so moved. Slowly, and gradually, personal stories emerge. Tales are told by alcoholics, abused spouses, workaholics, spouse abusers, children who loved parents who did everything but love them—all amidst weeping. This sort of sharing is normally found in ''recovery'' groups in which empathy, understanding, and ultimately connection emerge from relating to another's life story and sharing your own. In such gatherings, however, people generally share a common addiction or affliction. Here the sources of hurt, rejection, or disappointment in one's self seem many and varied. What do these businesspeople have in common? Only what Peck calls a universal ''fear of disarming ourselves.''

The rationale for talking personally and witnessing one another do so is based on the notion that people progress toward community not by ''working'' issues or getting organized—a phase of group development called ''norming''—but rather by letting go of everything that gets in the way of being fully present. This entails personal vulnerability and surrender of formal roles, agendas, and all the accoutrements of keeping up appearances. In so doing, individuals begin to open up to others in their circle and comprehend their own lives and circumstances afresh. The potential for community is born as people start then to see themselves in another person and another in themselves.

Toward Common Unity

Based on an amalgam of practices from Quakerism, 12-step programs, human relations training, and psychotherapy, this workshop is premised on the notion that people come

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together when they inquire into their *differences*, discover what they have in *common*, and then consciously embrace *unity*. The workshop is led by facilitators from the Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE), a network formed to teach principles of community in workshops and to consult with organizations—religious, civic, and commercial—that want to operate along these lines. The host at Carlisle is Scott Wilkerson, then CEO, who attended a public workshop offered by FCE, experienced a deep sense of community with strangers, and wanted to transfer it back to his home organization.

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Meanwhile, back in the workshop, the Carlisle group takes stock of its discussion, chews over the differences between healthy versus unhealthy pain, and ponders what constitutes legitimate suffering in a broken world. Participants begin to exchange puns and laugh. This marks a new phase of group consciousness wherein members attend to their collective dynamics and begin to share responsibility for the group as a whole. They look less to the facilitators as role models or targets for disaffection. They also reach out to the silent who might want to speak, and let the talkative know when the group can gain most from their silence.

Eventually, the conversation returns to the rabbi's story, not explicitly, but subtly, as managers talk about not only what they want to accomplish in their work and personal lives, but especially who they want to be. Salespeople, in turn, conclude that there is a better way to sell cars based, they say, on principles of love and respect for customers and for themselves. The sense of community matures when a group inquires deeply into its purpose. Ultimately, there is the question of higher purpose. In Peck's model, a higher level of group consciousness emerges as a group opens itself to the spirit and operates in harmony with the ''unseen order of things.'' Now specialists who facilitate groups or practice organization development might call this alignment. But, aligned toward what? Strategy, vision, values—these are their usual referent points. What does it mean to be aligned with the spirit?

Answers to this most fundamental question are offered in workplace dialogues, at retreats and conferences, in business school classrooms, and even in corporate boardrooms. As a member of FCE and facilitator of many groups, I had my first taste of this spiritualizing trend in the late 1980s in workshops with people in business, government, and nonprofits. In 1997, I put together my thoughts on ''soul work'' in organizations (Mirvis, 1997) and noted the emergence of academic conferences and business books on the subject, including *Leading with Soul* (Bolman and Deal, 1995), *Spirit at Work* (Conger et al., 1994), and *Jesus, CEO* (Jones, 1995). Since then, many more books like these have been published, and spirituality and business have been cover stories in *BusinessWeek* (Conlin, 1999) and in *Fortune* (Gunther, 2001).

Strategy, vision, values . . . are the usual referent points. What does it mean to be aligned with the spirit?

On the practice end, many more companies like Carlisle Motors are taking spiritual development seriously. More than 500 employees of the car dealership went through community-building workshops, and the enterprise has been transformed by the experience. There have been measured improvements in morale, internal communication, conflict resolution, and the like—gains that result from effective human relations training. With reference to the spiritual and communal bent of the work, the company adopted a ''fair and simple'' approach to doing business that features one low price for vehicles, no hidden dealer charges, and a three-day exchange guarantee, offered by sales personnel now working on salary rather than commission. Carlisle's ''Principles of Community'' are posted at each facility. Below the pledge to ''Relate with Love and Respect'' is the call to ''Be Open to Spirit.''

Why Spirituality? Why Now?

Five Reasons We Search

Breakdown of institutions. Poverty, violence, divisiveness of every sort, greed, racism, escapism, and a host of other maladies afflict modern society. Big business and government are marked by dog-eat-dog competition and bureaucratic dry rot. And, post–9/11 polls aside, most Americans mistrust business and government leaders. The rise of cynicism and its fallout in the US and much of Europe are well documented. Meanwhile, traditional community-making institutions—churches, schools, neighborhoods, families, volunteer organizations, and local workplaces—no longer provide the safety, support, or continuity that people say they want and need.

Loss of authority. No one believes that "father knows best"—witness role models like cartoon character Homer Simpson; nor are many TV moms, such as Roseanne, credible authority figures. The golden rule, the American Dream, the value of "union made," the notion that "people are our most important asset," and almost every other slogan or credo don't stand up to scrutiny or postmodern deconstruction. Look closer and the seeming foundations of science, the supposed benefits of technology, and the shared ideals of progress are all cast into doubt. More of us are credentialed as experts in something or other, and yet nobody trusts experts anymore.

Disconnection from one another. From the studies of Robert Bellah and colleagues, we know that rugged individualism still marks the American character (Bellah et al., 1991). Robert Putnam finds that 40 million of us spend free time "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2000). Both civic engagement and social interaction are declining and for good reason: *The Cynical Americans* reports that a majority believe that they cannot count on other people and therefore have to "look out for themselves" (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989). Faith Popcorn tells us that "egonomic" purchases, hi-tech "cocooning," and now personal "armoring" are upside market trends.

Crises and calamities. When the new millennium was on the horizon and Y2K fears were rampant, angels began to appear on television and at the movies, and sales of soothing volumes like *The Celestine Prophecy* (Redfield, 1994) soared. Since then, assorted natural disasters, teen shootings in schools, and now terrorist attacks in New York and Washington have added to the sense of fear and vulnerability. A turn to mysticism and prayer is fitting: one in every three Americans has had a mystical experience in his or her lifetime, and 60% say they have "absolute trust in God."

Aging baby boomers. Boomers are reaching what one pundit calls "the contemplative afternoon of life"; many want their children to have something to believe in. One-third of the boomers who dropped out of organized religion have returned to the fold. Never prone to tradition, boomers have also gravitated to New Age mediums—music and mandalas that purport to provide more direct transcendental experiences. They are not alone in their search for the sacred: a Gallup poll finds that 78% of Americans feel a need today to experience personal growth—versus 20% about a decade ago!

Five Paths We Follow

West meets East. Historian Arnold Toynbee contends that the most important intellectual development in the West in the twentieth century has not been Marxism or Freudianism but,

What's Different about Community Building?

As much as community building follows a universal progression and rhythm akin to other mediums of human development, it also favors some unique practices and emphasizes the power of spirit in development itself. For instance, drawing from the tenets of humanistic psychology in the 1950s and 1960s, many team builders and group trainers stress the importance of dealing directly with ''here and now'' behavior and regard interpersonal feedback as key to the ''helping'' relationship. Indeed, to heighten self-awareness in training programs, people are encouraged to share their reactions to others' behavior and, in some circles, to offer interpretations. By contrast, participants in community-building workshops are urged to reflect and be aware of how they filter and make judgments, all to empty themselves of what gets in the way of truly hearing another person. The idea, as expressed by William Isaacs in reference to dialogue groups, is that by ''observing the observer'' and ''listening to your listening,'' self-awareness of thoughts, feelings, and experiences, past and present, seep gently into consciousness.

In turn, the notion of offering Rogerian-type counseling in a group—to help people see themselves more clearly through questioning or clarifying—is discouraged. In community-building lingo, this equates to ''fixing''—a worthy aspiration that has to be

rather, contact with the Buddha. Meditation, yoga, Zen gardening, the martial arts, and a general appreciation of yin and yang as ways of understanding and forms of expression have transformed Western ways of knowing and being. The increased emigration of Asians to the US, along with globalization of mass media, education, and travel have sped this transformation along.

Rediscovering ancient ways. The 2000 US census recorded a tenfold increase since 1980 in those who identified themselves as "Native Americans." With a newfound respect for ancient wisdom, many people today meet and talk in circles, enact the rituals, and study the lore of indigenous peoples around the world. Modern tastes in music—both listening to and performing—and in body decoration, literature, dance, art, jewelry, and the like reveal a reverence for the timeless truths and ways of past people.

The "natural" world. Deep ecology is another means of spiritual expression. A look at earth from space led Edgar Mitchell to found the Institute for Noetic Sciences. Psychologist Roger Sperry, physicist Donald Boem, engineer Willis Harman, and countless other respected scientists have imputed consciousness to atoms, direction to chemical reactions, and purpose to natural systems. Thought leaders are showing wondrous connections between mind and matter, the natural and spiritual. Every day, people are eating organically grown, all natural foods, practicing holistic health care, and joining prayer with medicine to find "miracle" cures of their illnesses.

Communing with others. Women are howling with wolves, and men are reading the poetry of Robert Bly. Twelve-step groups have formed to address nearly every addiction and ailment. And the Internet has opened the way to global virtual communities that join people with common interests and quests. There are costs and benefits to the growing sense of tribalism found among identity groups based on gender, race, or ethnicity, and among the religious as well. Born-again Christians now make up 50% of Kansans. Fundamentalist Jews and Muslims predominate in other parts of the world.

Spirituality at work. The workplace is the new spiritual frontier. Articles and books, cover stories in *Business Week* and *Fortune* magazines, and various conferences, training programs, and MBA courses all address and amplify the trend. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, management gurus Peter Senge and Margaret Wheatley, and business leaders Tom Chappell and William Pollard, among many others, have stressed the convergence between managerial and spiritual practices. And polls find that nearly half of America's workers talk about their religious faith at work on any given day. How many do so as part of an in-house dialogue group, as members of a professional or community group, or in a training and development program is, at this point, undetermined.

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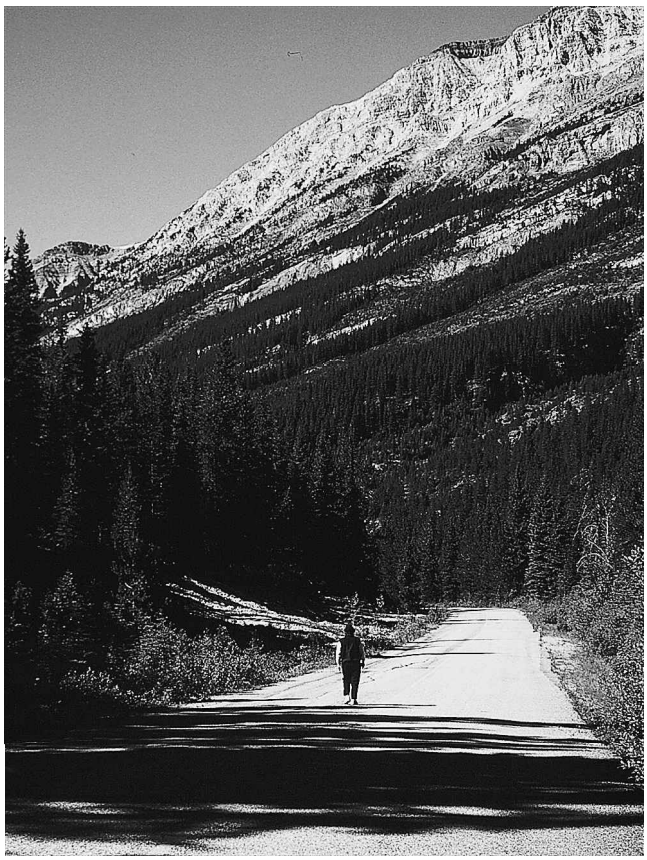
emptied in order to experience oneself and others more fully. On this point, it is worth noting that community building in no way equates with group therapy. Rather, the focus in workshops is on collective dynamics, and interpretive comments, if offered at all, are aimed at the group as a whole. The group serves as a container to hold differences and conflicts for ongoing exploration. This keeps hot conversation cooled sufficiently so that people can see the whole of the group's mind. This facilitates development of group consciousness by counteracting tendencies toward ''splitting'' in group dynamics, whereby people identify with the ''good part'' of their group and reject the ''bad part.''

Behind this view is a model of what some call the ''quantum universe.'' From the study of particle physics, it is believed that observation of a particle influences the quantum field around it—meaning literally that observing affects the observed. David Bohm, the physicist whose theories stimulated development of the dialogue process, generalized the point to human communication and gatherings. By simultaneously self-scanning and inquiring with a group, in his view, people create a connective field between observer and observed. By ''holding'' this field, in turn, a group can contain both energy and matter, and investigate more fully what it is producing. And in uncovering this tacit infrastructure, some theorists believe, lies the possibility of creating new collective dynamics.

Here is where community-building principles apply. At the start of a workshop, aspirations are set to welcome and affirm diversity, deal with difficult issues, bridge differ-



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ences with integrity, and relate with love and respect. In this sense, community building advances by the *positive values = positive action* equation that guides groups involved in appreciative inquiries. At the same time, facilitators are admonished that they cannot lead a group to community. They, and anyone else present can, however, share their own thoughts, call the group into silence, or merely slow the discussion down. Bohm likens the resulting state to ''superconductivity'' in a group, where the electrons or, in this case, the elements of the conversation, move as a whole rather than as separate parts.

It is plausible to think of this heightened group consciousness in community-building workshops in the psychodynamic terms of bisociation: people reclaiming ''split off'' ideas, feelings, and subgroups, and reconstituting the group as a whole. But what of the spiritual connection with the ''the unseen order of things''? Testimonials abound about the creative breakthroughs that groups experience in Outward Bound programs, when engaged in theatrics or the arts, in meditation and therapy, and in other mediums where the experience of wholeness translates into creative insight or action or both. Some label these ''flow'' experiences and attribute them to the harmonious coevolution of mental and material forces.

Several variants of the ''new science'' speak to this dynamic. The order to be found in chaos, for instance, revolves around an aptly named ''strange attractor''; Margaret Wheatley, among others, suggests that its human equivalent is *meaning*. Theories of transpersonal psychology are, so to speak, on the same wave length. To others, such notions of an implicate order come from the field of inquiry known as spiritual science where, it is presumed, mind and matter coevolve and interpenetrate.

As novel and scientific sounding as these ideas might seem, they can be found in ancient Buddhist tracts and other tenets of Eastern thought and in many indigenous people's ways of understanding the world. They have also reached the West over the centuries in novels, poetry, and the arts in the words of mystics and deeds of heretics. In testimony to its timelessness, it is customary to say that this kind of knowledge is inspired or revealed, rather than invented or discovered. Perhaps the source is a muse, or a spirit, or some other unseen force?

What community-building forums offer, in the same way as meditation and mindfulness, tribal kivas, and Quaker meetings, is a universal medium for accessing spiritual knowledge and becoming our better selves.

Spirit in Organization

However we characterize the experience of community and its spiritual dimensions, it is plain enough that vast numbers of people, from all walks of life, are searching for new relationships, attachments, and something more in their individual and collective lives (see the sidebar). This takes many forms in organizations.

Leading from Within

It wasn't too long ago that situational leadership was in vogue, and executives were advised to make their leadership style contingent on the situation. By comparison, the emphasis today is on universal practices such as Robert Greenleaf's notion of servant leadership or Stephen Covey's principle-centered approach. These speak to the need for leaders to develop inner sources of inspiration and to outwardly embody our ideals. Self-development tools such as personality-type measurements and 360-degree feedback can

play a part in this. But leaders are also turning to simpler, more timeless techniques: prayer, meditation, journaling, and spiritual retreats—methods traditionally classified under ''care for the soul.''

Company as Community

The distinction between corporation and community blurs in firms like the Body Shop, Ben & Jerry's, and other such companies with a conscience that strive to both do good and do well. During the past several years, research has documented that firms can be successful putting social responsibility and environmental sustainability alongside the profit motive.

The idea of ''civics'' is stimulating business, government, and citizens to work together to address problems. For example, the Henry's Fork Watershed Council in northeastern Idaho brings commercial, communal, and environmental interests together to confront conflicts and allocate water among stakeholders in the region. The council was formed in the mid-1990s when tons of silt spilled into the Snake River, threatening fly fishing and putting farmers, businesses, townsfolk, and recreational users at odds. Meeting in a communal circle, members talked about preserving their way of life and expressed fear of one another. They then adopted community-building principles—pertaining to mutual respect and pointing to common goals—and worked their differences through to the point of resolution. Now, 10 years later, council meetings begin in a circle where members ''check in'' with personal stories and issues, and former adversaries work together in subgroups to sort through options and arrive at consensus decisions.

What workers want most is a feeling of love and care in their workplaces and some linkage between what they do on their jobs and their larger purpose in life.

Meaning in Work

Research by Michael Learner suggests that making work more intellectually engaging won't meet people's ''meaning'' needs. Indeed, studies find that what workers want most is a feeling of love and care in their workplaces and some linkage between what they do on their jobs and their larger purpose in life. There are a growing number of firms whose vision and purpose speak to these communal aspirations and who give employees time, resources, and technical assistance to provide service to their local community.

Ford Motor Co., for instance, has its executives meet with counterparts in area nonprofits to talk about their respective lives, work, aspirations, and disappointments. One set of exchanges, between Ford and leaders, staff, and board members of Homes for Black Children, an adoption agency in inner-city Detroit, led to a series of cross-sector dialogues and several partnership projects in the company and in the community.

God in Company

The line between principle and piety is trickier when a company's vision speaks directly to faith in God. Compare Cummins Engine longtime chairman J. Irwin Miller, who is a proponent of ''ethical culture,'' with C. William Pollard, chairman of ServiceMaster, whose corporate objectives begin with the aspiration, ''To honor God in all we do.'' The appeal of godliness is summed up as follows: ''We have all been created in God's image, and the results of our leadership will be measured beyond the workplace. The story will be told in the changed lives of people.'' Lest this seem exclusionary, Pollard stresses the importance of pluralism in his company and has a top leadership team composed of Christians, Muslims, and Jews (Pollard, 2000).

As to the broader point, it can be argued that those who unite on the basis of like minds, a similar heritage or faith, or even a common enemy cannot be judged a community, because ''true'' community is born of inclusiveness and comes into being as a group transcends differences. John Gardner terms this phenomena, ''wholeness incorporating diversity'' (Gardner, 1995).

Caveats and Cautions

There are many factors to consider when contemplating community building in business. For instance, some employees regard personal conversations of the sort found in community-building workshops to be invasive of people's privacy and feel a subtle coercion to reveal something about their own private lives. Furthermore, loose talk about spirituality, soul, and other things sacred strikes some as inappropriate in a secular setting. It is crucial, therefore, to secure people's informed consent before subjecting them to this kind of experience and to ensure that they can opt out without prejudice or harm. It is also worth noting that all manner of corporate consultants, helpers, and healers are peddling their own variant of spiritual enrichment. The upshot? Buyer beware.

There is also potential danger when community feeling takes hold in a business. The consciousness raising described can also be called indoctrination. For instance, pundits went so far as to describe the heavy-handed socialization given employees at People Express as ''Kool-Aid management,'' likening its demise to Reverend Jim Jones's cult in Guyana, which ended in enforced mass suicide. There are documented cases of companies that proselytize employees with specific religious doctrine and cases of corporate programs wherein employees, exposed to New Age ideas about consciousness and the cosmos, felt their own brand of faith compromised.

At the same time, human resources specialists, whether incorporating workforce diversity or reaching out to employees, stress the importance of engaging the ''whole'' person at work. The idea of seeing a system as a whole is taking hold in corporate plants, offices, and boardrooms. *Accordingly, to the extent that we acknowledge people as spiritual beings, it seems to me that the drive to create wholeness must take account of people's spiritual lives and collective potential.*

Can we consider seriously the idea of businesses organizing along the lines of an unseen order or, in words of theologian H. Richard Niebuhr, of ''universal community . . . whose boundaries cannot be drawn in space, or time . . . short of a whole in which we live and move and have our being?'' (1963). In his deeper reflections, Gregory Bateson posits that social systems are gifted with wisdom. Some who go deep within themselves believe that we humans have tacit knowledge of universal community and can cocreate a new order in our collective lives in line with it. Willis Harman and John Hormann outline the utopian aspiration for business (1990). Many others in business today are embracing it.

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Courage to Be Authentic

VIEW

Wendy Y.N. Luhabe

Wendy Y.N. Luhabe is one of South Africa's most accomplished entrepreneurs and businesswomen. She has launched several companies, including Bridging the Gap, a human resources consulting firm, and Women Investment Portfolio Holdings, now listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. She serves on numerous corporate and foundation boards, including as chairman of Alliance Capital and Vodacom Group, South Africa's leading communications company. In 1999, she was honored as one of the 50 Leading Women Entrepreneurs in the World.

But beyond Wendy's accomplishments, what stands out for me is Wendy the person. For a black South African, returning home in 1988 in the middle of a promising business career was hardly the comfortable course of action. Apartheid was still firmly in place. Her possibilities were uncertain, as was her safety. But, as she says, the pull of her life purpose was stronger than the draw of security and professional advancement.

When I first visited South Africa in the late1980s, I was immediately confronted by the extraordinary vitality and purposefulness embodied in many like Wendy. Gradually, I came to see South Africa as the world in microcosm: the north and south, the ''developed'' and ''undeveloped'' world, the extraordinary natural beauty and the crushing weight of poverty—a people poised between the weight of their history and traditions and the possibility of creating something truly new. Simple ideals of living in service to the world held an immediate meaningfulness foreign to most of us. Simple declarations to live life fully, which might seem almost like platitudes for us, were declarations of revolutionary intent. Being ''a force of nature,'' as Wendy liked to say, put one on a collision course with the status quo. There is a big difference between inheriting democracy and being engaged in a life-and-death struggle to give birth to one.

But what most surprised and built up in me through many trips to South Africa in these years was extraordinary grace and joyfulness. In the middle of this struggle, again and again I encountered quiet souls. Wendy was one of these. Eventually I came to appreciate the source of this centeredness. Ubuntu, *a word that appears in all the languages spoken in South Africa, expresses the essence of African humanism, a deep respect for one's humanity and that of others. As Wendy says simply, ''We regard other human beings as sacred.'' Imagine a world grounded in this profound awareness, not as a lofty ideal but as a direct experience. If you can, you can also imagine the purposefulness and commitment of people like Wendy, people engaged in giving birth to a world, not just a nation.*

—Peter Senge

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I am convinced that the reason I lived and worked on the east coast of the US from 1986 to 1988 had nothing to do with advancing my career and profession, although I did achieve this to a large measure. But the experience did introduce me to spirituality, living life from within and from inner knowing—simply put, living an authentic life.

When I returned to South Africa in December 1988, I knew that I wanted to become a catalyst, helping people to live their lives from a spiritual perspective. To achieve this, I founded a company, Bridging the Gap, to provide human resources services, particularly in recruitment and organizational development. I intended this business to have a social agenda. Around that same time, I came across a poem by Dawna Markova (see the sidebar). It had such an impact on me that I vowed I would not die an unlived life, and I've lived true to this commitment. I put the quote on beautiful postcards with autumn leaves that I placed in black boxes with white black-eyed beans. I gave this to every person that

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I Will Not Die an Unlived Life

I will not die an unlived life.
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible;
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance,
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom,
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.

Markova, D. *I Will Not Die an Unlived Life* (Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 2000). Reprinted with permission of the author.

Epistle Dedicatory Letter to Arthur Bingham Walkley

. . . This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

George Bernard Shaw
Man and Superman

I trained or placed. They could plant the seeds and, as they witnessed the seeds' growth, they would be reminded of their responsibility for their own growth. George Bernard Shaw's dedicatory letter in *Man and Superman* also had a huge impact on me (see the sidebar).

Imagine if all of us lived authentic lives and the remarkable quality of life we would experience, the quality of organizations. Life would be miraculous and truly magnificent. We would effortlessly grow and serve humanity with deep compassion. The source of human life couldn't possibly have planned a mediocre and meaningless life for us, certainly not to the degree that I witness everywhere. The purpose of life is to live it to its fullest, and to serve the world and make it a better place. Our living should leave behind evidence that our potential was realized and that our lives achieved meaning.

I decided that my contribution would be to people seeking employment—I would help them believe in themselves—and to corporations that were looking for people to employ. I would help them commit to the success of these new recruits. One can argue that this contribution should come earlier in life, that it should be part of our homes as we grow up, our neighborhoods, our churches, and our schools. But society is full of pessimists and skeptics. One rarely meets people who believe in themselves. Society and all its institutions should be designed to help us live and practice the values that we all learned in kindergarten—to be fair, to trust, to be honest, to support us in living our lives effectively and with integrity. The reality is that those who teach us these values do not practice them, so we grow up accepting society's double standards and abuse by those with power and authority. Maybe because we do not have enough courage and confidence, we give our power away, we are seduced into submission and surrender, and we live in fear of rejection and loss. The end result is that we participate in a mutual dance called ''In Denial.'' One group pretends that it is not exploiting others, that it is misunderstood. Those who feel exploited abdicate their personal responsibility and give up their power and dignity to others for many reasons—to stay married, to keep their employment, to feel loved, and to maintain friendships and other dysfunctional relationships.

Where should we intervene to ensure that our experiences throughout life reinforce personal responsibility, empowerment, personal growth, and commitment to being authentic? At one level, there is what I call an institutional leadership crisis. At another level, there is what I call global helplessness and fear of crime, AIDS, poverty, global warming, and so on. When should we be preparing the human race to feel secure, mature, and courageous enough to be honest, to live with integrity, to be compassionate, to live with passion, to find meaning, and to make a difference? Who should do this? The answer is all of us. We should disengage from autopilot living and engage more proactively in our lives. These times demand us to live more consciously, with greater awareness and with deep passion, to add life to our years and not just years to our lives. We need to:

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- Slow the pace of our lives, create more silent moments, and manage better our significant life transitions.
- Question and reflect more, and resist the temptation to comply when our compliance adds no value. We need to redefine the rules when they no longer support our well-being.
- Participate in our relationships with greater awareness, learn to make decisions and choices, live our lives first for ourselves, not just for our parents or society.
- Discard values and traditions whose time has passed.
- Leave our jobs or relationships much richer than we found them.
- Subscribe and commit to life instead of dying a little each day.
- Celebrate the miracle of life, remember our life purpose, and pay more attention to what happens in our lives.

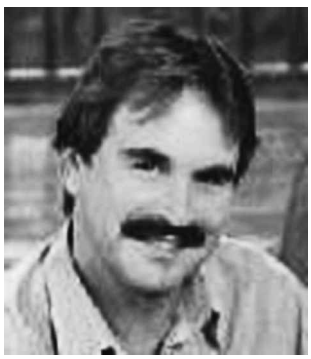
In this tapestry lives the mystery of the universe and the essence of our magnificence. When we remember our sole purpose, we will become one human race and heal fragmentation and dysfunction. Spirituality inspires and supports us to reclaim our power, allowing us to ''be,'' instead of ''do.'' Perhaps in the twenty-first century, we will be more successful at creating a human community that lives from within, not just from without. Both are necessary to overcome fragmentation, injustice, and inequity.

Society must live by one standard that serves and nurtures our humanity, removes fear, and replaces it with love for oneself and therefore love for others. To achieve this authenticity, we must understand more deeply the responsibility and privilege of parents who bring children into the world and prepare them for life. We must learn how to be better parents because that is likely to affect how we lead and manage in the workplace.

FEATURE

An Exploration of the Spiritual Heart of Human Science Inquiry

David Cooperrider and Frank J. Barrett



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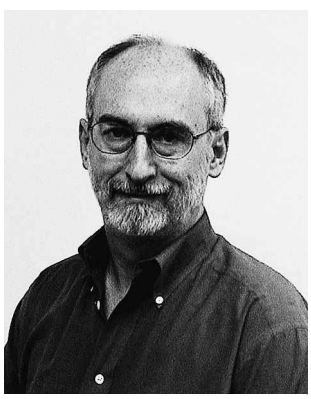

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> The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion, which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed out candle.
>
> —Albert Einstein

What is the role of spiritual experience in human science research? What is the relationship between experiencing a sense of the sacred and our capacity to inquire, to ask questions, to wonder, to be surprised, to be open, and to learn? What do we mean by ''spirit of inquiry,'' and, in these words, do we really mean to take the word *spirit* seriously? If so, in what ways? What happens, for example, in an interview when the interviewer approaches his or her work with a sense of sacred vocation or, better yet, a genuine feeling of gratitude to be meeting with another human being as a precious soul, not just in some faceless or bureaucratic role? Will the relationship and dialogue be affected? How about the data? And, later, what about the writing itself?

Why is the language of spiritual experience something we generally restrict to religious people or mystics, but then in so many autobiographical footnotes of scientists like Einstein, we find quotes that rival the articulations of the Sufi poet Rumi and words that resonate, in concert, with the compassionate heart of His Holiness the Dalai Lama?

We began to wonder: If our aim as social scientists is not to map and reflect the world objectively, then what is the purpose of our work? Is it possible that through our assumptions, our topics, and our choice of questions, we largely create the world we later discover? Do we live—every one of us—in worlds that our inquiries create? Do human systems grow, construct themselves, or evolve in the direction of what they most persistently and genuinely ask questions about? If so, what should be the questions?

Likewise, we began to reflect on client organizations with whom we were working. Would the people at Roadway Express, one of the largest trucking companies in the US, be talking about reconceptualizing their entire organization based on McGregor's Theory Y if he, and Abe Maslow alongside him, had not dared in scholarship and articulated in speculative ways a new vision, an anticipatory theory, of what was possible? Why, in a world that is so vitally shaped through mental models, assumptions, idea systems, language, cultural constructions, our discourses—in short, the very ''stuff'' of theory—is there so little generative theory like McGregor's and Maslow's? More important, what can we do in our own work to rekindle the passion, excitement, inspiration, courage, and spirit required of a scholarship of transformation capable of breaking the barriers of accepted convention?

Our assumption is this: that the most defining and important feature of our field, the heart of our field, is what Schein and Bennis many years ago first talked about as the ''spirit of inquiry'' (1965). What this means to us today, and in what ways we can cultivate it, is what this reflection is about. We draw upon stories from our work with a special action-research approach we have called *appreciative inquiry* (Cooperrider, Barrett, and

Srivastva, 1995). It involves lessons from our experience and grows from the simple question: When have we felt truly alive in inquiry, and are there ways to actively cultivate more of ''it'' in our work and lives, and with what benefits?

Love the Questions Themselves

Here is a story to illustrate what we have learned about cultivating a spirit of inquiry.

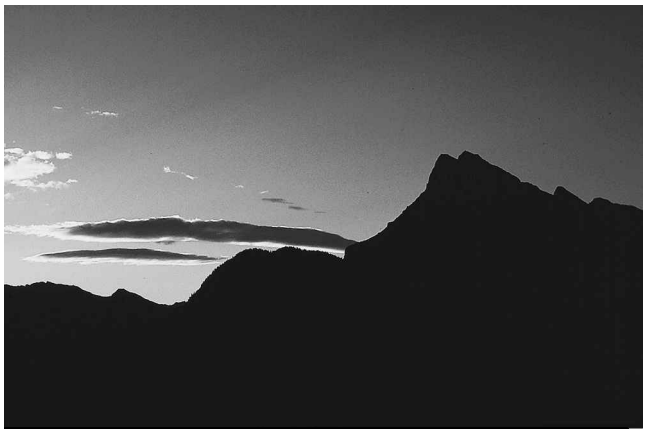
Park Plaza was a flea-bitten, one-star hotel that was taken over and challenged to transform itself. The mandate to the managers of this low-cost, high-turnover, poorly managed hotel was frightening: the new parent company wanted a rapid turnaround in service from one star to four star, an externally determined rating. They immediately invested $15 million into transforming the physical setting to marble floors, exotic furniture, new rooms, and the like. But they did nothing on the human side. So a year later, nothing had really changed. We were asked to do action research that would engage everyone in a collaborative diagnosis and creation of an action plan that would help the hotel reach four-star status. In the meantime, people feared they would fail and be fired; there is always the possibility of wholesale housecleaning in any takeover of this kind.

When have we felt truly alive in inquiry, and are there ways to actively cultivate more of ''it'' in our work and lives, and with what benefits?

While the story is very involved (see Barrett and Cooperrider, 1990), there was one moment of powerful learning. We proposed, in the organization-assessment phase, that we let go of all diagnostic, problem-oriented analysis—literally put a moratorium on all deficit analysis of low morale, turf issues, gaps in communications, mistrust, and bureaucratic breakdowns. But the general manager would not accept it when, for example, we said that the deficit-based assumptions would make the organization change come to a slow crawl, that is, if we treated and defined the system as ''a problem to be solved.'' What might happen, we suggested, if we engaged everyone in an inquiry with an alternative metaphor? The CEO almost laughed when we suggested that ''organizations are centers of infinite relational capacity, alive with infinite imagination, open, indeterminate, and, ultimately—in terms of the future—*a mystery.*'' One of the ''issues,'' for example, was the horrendous lack of responsiveness to guests and a culture of not caring. So we proposed an experiment.

We would ask one group of employees to do an organization diagnosis. In the prep workshop, we gave them classic analytic models, and they created problem-finding questions: *What are the largest barriers to your work? What are the causes of breakdowns in responsiveness to guests?* The other group would have a workshop on appreciative inquiry. We asked them to ''try on'' a half-full *assumption:* that the capacity for caring was in fact everywhere in the system, and there were moments of revolutionary responsiveness to guests in which people went way beyond job descriptions to go the extra mile and serve with passion. The core question in interviews, which the employees created, was something like this:

> Revolutionary Caring for Guests: The mark of our hotel, when we have been really good and beyond even our most common best, has been when we have responded to and exceeded our guests' expectations. Our assumption is that you too have been part of those times—perhaps once or many times. We want to know your story and then your vision of our future.
>
> A. Can you share with me a story about when you were part of a successful, even revolutionary, moment of responsiveness to a guest, when you and others met and exceeded needs on both sides? Describe the situation in detail. What made it feel radically different? Who was involved? How did you interact differently? What were the outcomes and benefits you experienced?
> B. Now with that story told, let's assume that tonight, after work, you fall asleep and do not wake up for 10 years. But, while you are asleep, a miracle happens and our entire hotel, as an organization, becomes the kind of organization you would most like to see. Many positive changes have happened. So now you wake up, it is 1999, and you come to the hotel. What do you see happening now that is different, new, or better?



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When the two workshops were completed, we asked the groups to do separate interviews with different people in the hotel. We did not mention, however, how the two groups differed. They did *not* share the different questions. Each group was to do 30 interviews each and prepare a thematic report of the findings. They would come together, for the first time, to share their organizational assessment in two weeks.

So far, so good, until the day of the reports. The appreciative group was the first group that volunteered to share. Each person was visibly excited and had a role in the session. Their energy was infectious. They had discovered that every employee they talked to wanted to participate in building a four-star vision and that there was one story after another of exceptional responsiveness to guests. In addition, the images of the future were compelling and inspired. The group shared wonderful quotes from the people they interviewed. The problem-finders sat motionless and then made a tough charge: ''*Where did you find all this? Certainly not here at this hotel, with all its breakdowns? We did not hear anything like what you are saying. Why are you fabricating?*''

Now the tables turned. We said, ''Hold on, let's give the other group a chance to report.'' So the second group presented (or one person presented, while the others sat back) a listing of about 50 serious problems, such as negative supervision, interdepartmental friction, and statistics on rock-bottom customer satisfaction. The scenario they had heard and painted of the future was dismal, loaded with a vocabulary of threat. Some people felt that housecleaning should indeed take place. There were anonymous quotes saying the hotel should close. The first group questioned the authenticity of the data: ''These are not the things we heard in the interviews.'' Both groups were now confused.

We then asked everyone to exchange interview guides and to read the questions. This set the stage for one of the best conversations about social construction of reality we have ever had: language and reality, the impact of analysis on our feelings of motivation and fear, the impact of human inquiry on the development of relationships, the idea of culture and narrative, notions of reflexivity and the ''enlightenment'' effect of inquiry, and the relationship between inquiry and change.

Our pragmatic question was this: In relation to helping propel good change, which data set do you think would honestly bring us together to create the future we want? The story ends dramatically. The hotel embarked on a four-year process of appreciative inquiry, and a doctoral dissertation traced the whole system transformation and showed how discourse precedes changes in structures, systems, policies, and even *awareness.* A short time later, the hotel received the coveted four-star status, without layoffs, and the Academy of Management gave our theory piece written about it an award for the best paper of the year (Barrett and Cooperrider, 1990).

Two major learnings deserve more research. The first is the proposition that we live in worlds that our questions create. The questions we ask structure what we find; what we find becomes the basis for our conversation and dialogue; and this all becomes the ground from which we imagine, make sense, narrate, theorize, speculate, and construct our future together. Questions do more than gather information. Inquiry intervenes: it focuses attention and directs energy; it provides a container delimiting or expanding what is there to see; it affects rapport and relationships; it sets agendas, lifting up what is deemed important; and it ignites conversational universes based on the symbiotic relationship that exists in the *two* key elements of language, namely, the intrinsic relationship between questions and statements (Goldberg, 1997). Consider the difference. One supervisor begins the weekly meeting by saying: *Why do we still have these problems? Why do you blow it so often? What resistances do you think we will face?* Another says: *Okay, group. Let's start. What possibilities exist that we haven't yet thought about? What's the smallest change that could have the biggest benefit? Is there any other way to think about this?*

The omnipresence of questions, and their inherent potential to evoke whole new worlds of possibilities, suggests a second insight that is even more central here. What we have found, in our own lives, is that *we too* move—emotionally, theoretically, relationally, spiritually—in the direction of what we ask questions about. Inquiry intervenes, and it works both ways; it intervenes ''in here'' as well as ''out there.'' In other words, the questions we ask have a double import.

Appreciating the Miracle and Mystery of Life

The way we conceive of the social world is of consequence to the kind of world we ''discover'' and, through our reconstructions, even helps to create it. Managers or action researchers, like scientists in other areas, tend to approach their work from a framework of taken-for-granted assumptions and vocabularies: what we are doing, what we are looking for, why we are doing the inquiry, ways of talking, specialized vocabularies, and so on.

There is one metaphor that dominates the arena of applied inquiry—whether talking about medicine, action research, community assessment, organizational analysis, or management as inquiry. Indeed, in many ways, it is not even thought about as a metaphor at all, but reality. It is that our institutions are ''problems to be solved.'' It is not that our organizations have some problems, but they are a problem—therefore inquiry equals problem solving; to do good inquiry means to solve ''real problems.''

Organizing was not a problem to be solved, we hypothesized. No organization was created as a problem to be solved. Organizations were created as *solutions,* not problems. Would a solution metaphor change our inquiry? After short experimentation, we realized that we were embedded in the same vocabulary of problem solving, locked in a universe of understanding in which the world is defined a priori in deficit-based ways. ''Solution,'' we realized, still implies a problematic something.

What would happen to our inquiry, we asked, if we shifted the story we tell ourselves about ourselves: organizations are not problems to be solved but rather are centers of human relatedness *alive* with infinite capacity and filled with ''more than what is knowable'' in terms of creative, relational possibility. The *miracle and mystery of inter-being* could perhaps be a metaphor that would, almost by definition, be an inexhaustible starting point for raising an endless array of questions of human and global significance.

New understanding emerges when we begin our inquiry from a different starting point, one in which we welcome the unknown. It means throwing away old certainties and entering mystery. Such are the pragmatics of inquiry.

Organizations are not problems to be solved but rather are centers of human relatedness alive *with infinite capacity.*

Since our earliest work with appreciative inquiry, we have come increasingly to understand that we are in the midst of inquiry when, in fact, we experience a sense of awe, when we are capable of appreciating, even in the smallest way, the miracle of life on this planet. *Inquiry is the experience of mystery that changes our life.*

Appreciative inquiry involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential—linking people, as it were, to the ''positive core'' of their past, present, and future capacities, including those available in their nested set of relations from the local to the universal. One thing is evident and clear as we reflect on the most important things we have learned: human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about, and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated.

We conclude with another story to illustrate this.

Early in the 1990s, on his first trip to Jerusalem, His Holiness the Dalai Lama proposed: ''If the leadership of the world's religions could simply get to know one another . . . the world could be a different, a better place.'' So several meetings were scheduled in various places, from Washington, DC, to Jerusalem; the most recent was at the Carter Center in Atlanta (see Cooperrider, 1990). The purpose of the meetings was to create a secure, private, small, and relatively unstructured forum where leaders could have con-

Questions from Dialogue Interviews

1. A story from your life journey.
One could say a key task in life is to discover and define our life's purpose and then accomplish it to the best of our ability.

- Can you share a story of a moment or a period of time when clarity about life's purpose emerged for you—for example, a moment when you were called, when there was an important awakening or teaching, when there was a special experience or event, or when you received some guiding vision?
- Beyond this story, what do you sense you are supposed to do before your life is over?

2. Insights from important interfaith encounters, exploring the personal meeting and friendship between people of different religions.
We have all been changed both in outlook and in our lives because of encounters with people from other spiritual traditions or religions. In your work as a leader, you might have had one, two, or perhaps many encounters with people of other traditions that stand out as particularly significant.

- Can you share a story of one experience that stands out in your memory—for example, an encounter outside the normal "safety zone" where you were surprised or humbled, or where there was an experience of healing and hope, or where there was a genuine experience of compassion, joy, love, or friendship?
- Whether it was difficult or easy, what did you come to respect most, not just about that person, but about their particular religion or practice?

3. Qualities that would make meetings like this significant and effective.
You probably already know, based on years of experience, the kinds of things that would make a meeting among leaders of the world's religions worthwhile, meaningful, and successful.

- What qualities of relating would help make it work?
- What qualities or gifts do you and/or your religious tradition bring to this kind of meeting?
- *What would make meetings like this worthwhile to you?* (This question was also discussed when we returned to the whole group.)

4. World events and trends during the past 100 years.
Taking steps to create an enduring dialogue among leaders of religions does not happen in a vacuum. Think about the five most important historical events that have occurred during the past 100 years—global or local events and trends that give *you* a sense of urgency, readiness, or calling for the work here.

- What trends or challenges do you see as most significant? Examples?

5. The emerging story of relationships among religions.
The *1996 Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* lists more than 15,000 global problems and documents, for example, that half of the armed conflicts in the world in early 1993 were not between nation-states but between groups from different religions. Against the background of many world problems and conflicts, there is also a hopeful story that offers a glimmer of what is possible when we find ways to promote peace rather than war, cooperation rather than prejudice, and sustainability rather than environmental degradation and human oppression.

The century since that historic gathering in Chicago in 1993—the Parliament of World Religions—has seen a vast widening of interfaith dialogue, interreligious prayer and meditation, pilgrimages, joint action, and study in world religions. Indeed, it appears there is a worldwide urge for an enduring, daily

versations with one another, know one another in mutually respectful ways, and reflect on the hard issues of the world without binding any institution to another. Appreciative inquiry was selected as the action-research model for data gathering, bringing people together, and creating together. The hope was that representatives of the different religious groups could get to know one another—in some cases, groups had not spoken in 400 years.

By any measure, the meetings were successful. A major contributor to this success was, we believe, the questions posed in the opening appreciative inquiry interviews. After His Holiness the Dalai Lama shared his vision, we went in pairs into the interviews—across religious traditions and beliefs—and later engaged in dialogue with the whole group. (See the sidebar for the questions that structured the opening dialogue interviews.)

From the opening interviews through the whole group dialogue that followed, the new insight for us was the ''surprise of friendship'' that emerged in and through the sincere and deep appreciative interchange—the sharing of stories and the search for understanding life's purpose and best qualities. Of particular importance was not that the

cooperation among people of the world's religions to make peace among religions and to serve, in the presence of the sacred, the flourishing of all life. As leaders in these arenas, what are we most proud about? What are we most sorry about?

- Think about the most significant achievements, milestones, developments, and infrastructures that have happened locally or globally in your lifetime. What developments are you most proud of?
- Conversely, as you look at events or trends in the world, and the current responses of religious leaders, including yourself, what are you most sorry about or, more important, what should we be doing more of or differently?

6. Your vision of a better world and the special tasks and significance of the world's religions in the new century.

Dag Hammarskjöld, former UN Secretary General, said: "I see no hope for permanent world peace. We have tried and failed miserably. Unless the world has a spiritual rebirth, civilization is doomed. It has been said that the next century will be a spiritual century or it will not be."

Think about the next 30 years, a generation or so, in the future. Even though the future is, in so many ways, a mystery, we want to begin to visualize the kind of world you feel we are being called to realize, a better world, the kind of world you really want. What do you see in your vision of a better world?

- Specifically what are three changes or developments in your vision? What is happening in the world a generation from now that is positive and different, and how do you know? How would you feel if these three things were realized?

7. Your vision of the relationships among the world's religions and leaders.

The assumption in the invitation to this meeting is that there needs to be, in today's complicated and interconnected world, an ongoing and sustained conversation among the religious leaders of the world. The simple hypothesis: the world will be a different place, a better place. It is easy to see the value of something like this, is it not?

Let's imagine a scale from 1 to 10—where a rating of 10 represents *the ideal kind of relationship among leaders* of the world's religions and spiritual traditions. Leaders of the religions are relating in ways people would be proud to point to—as examples or stories for the world's children.

- What does your "10" look like? The quality of relationships? Kinds of contact and communication?
- Let's assume a significant and growing number of leaders from the world's religions do choose "to get to know one another"—and it begins to succeed. A safe, confidential, ongoing, and nonbinding forum is created. How might the world benefit? How might you and your faith community or organization benefit?

8. Next steps

Again, putting yourself in the future, let's suppose that, in fact, a high-quality and enduring forum for dialogue has been successfully created. It is a safe and level playing field where leaders and their envoys can come together to talk, in confidence, about the hard issues of the world.

- As you imagine such a forum (and we can design it in any way we want, assuming resources are not a constraint), what are some things that could happen, or should happen, to make it a win-win-win for everyone—for the world, for work in our respective traditions, and for interfaith relationships?
- *What would make it significant, exciting, or high-priority and meaningful for you?*
- What are some possible places for a next meeting?

leaders came up with common values, shared vision, or joint projects and the like, because, at this stage, these would likely be impossible between, for example, people from the Vatican's Roman Catholic group and the Orthodox group. But something more important started, which one might call the positive chemistry of interaction. It was not only the surprise of beginning to know one another, but also the surprise of liking one another, the glow of new acquaintance.

When we are really in a mode of appreciative inquiry, doors into appreciable worlds are opened everywhere. Entering into those worlds—those locked-up conversations—would not have happened without the question. The feeling of wonder is the outcome. We know that we are doing inquiry when, at the end of the day, we feel more spirit.

The essence of what we are proposing is that our metaphors matter; that we might actively change them much like a sailor changes sails to concentrate the power of the wind; that inquiry *is* the experience of mystery that changes us when we enlarge our sense of the miracle of life on this planet; and that nothing is more practical for realizing

our desire to open the world to new possibilities than approaching our work in ways that cultivate our own sense of awe, love, surprise, and curiosity. Is this easy to do? Or are these qualities simply for great mystics or the birthright of people with exceptional genius, such as Abe Maslow, who said, ''Not only does science begin in wonder, it ends in wonder''?

We have found our own sense of inspiration, hope, and joy expanding with each story and precious new relationship. In other words, we can cultivate, actively, our own spirit of inquiry simply by doing more of it.

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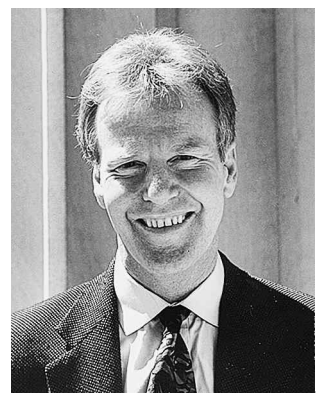
Changing How We Work Together

FEATURE

Peter M. Senge and Margaret Wheatley

Melvin McLeod (Editor, *The Shambhala Sun* [MM]): Dr. Senge, you talk to managers about the importance of "disciplines" and "personal mastery." You describe organizations as "communities of practice." There seems to be a strong element of spiritual practice in your approach.



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Peter Senge (PS): Increasingly, we're directly incorporating into our work different practices that have been around for a long time, such as various types of meditation. It started with the work on dialogue. We found that dialogue often involved silence, and so maybe we needed to actually cultivate the capacity to sit in silence. And guess what? That started to look a lot like traditional forms of meditation or contemplation.

So we've become more and more out front about this, although it's always been there. Though we had been doing the work described in *The Fifth Discipline* for 10 or 15 years before the book was published, we hadn't used the word "discipline." It was only in the writing of the book that it finally hit me that what we were talking about was discipline, in the very same spirit in which the word has been used in the creative arts or in spiritual traditions for thousands of years. That people might have a potential or a talent, but they can't cultivate it without discipline.

You know, organizations are embodiments of the human desire to affiliate and be together, and that desire brings us face to face with complex, multiple dimensions of our existence. I often say that leadership is deeply personal and inherently collective. That's a paradox that effective leaders have to embrace. It does depend on them. It does depend on their convictions, their clarity, their personal commitment to their own cultivation. And on the other hand, it doesn't depend on them. It's an inherently collective phenomenon.

You might say that organizations are one way for us to practice what it means to live as a collective being, not just as an individual being. That's tough, but I think that's what the discipline of working together is ultimately about. There are issues and difficulties that only manifest when we put ourselves in a situation where we're vulnerable to being in a collective.

Margaret Wheatley
President
Berkana Institute
Principal
Kellner-Rogers & Wheatley

Margaret Wheatley (MW): I love this paradox that Peter expresses. When I was working at Gampo Abbey, a Buddhist monastery, on their organizational processes, the principle we came up with was that everything we learned on the meditation cushion, we could take into the practice of organizing together. So much of what comes out of dialogue is actually a fairly weak imitation of skills that we learn in meditation—being aware, listening, letting go, not taking things as they appear. It was very fruitful to notice that all the characteristics of a good meditator can be brought into the collective experience of trying to run an organization.

MM: If I can summarize the view that both of you seem to present in your writings, it's that change is the fundamental reality, that organizations suffer because they solidify the situation, that they can achieve harmony if they work successfully with openness and uncertainty, and that there's a path of discipline and practice by which they can do that.

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It sounds like the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, just applied to organizations instead of individuals.

MW: Well, you're not the only one who's noticed this [laughter]. I think that both Peter and I have both found there's great depth in understanding life from a Buddhist perspective.

Speaking for myself, my awareness of change and uncertainty came through my studies in biology, and just from growing older. That awareness of the continuous change called life led me to very ancient spiritual traditions, because our present Western mind-set has forgotten that life is change. Instead, it promises us relief from uncertainty and the ability to control everything. It's like a 300-year-old case of mistaken identity: we actually thought that we could take over life and remake it according to our own needs.

All the characteristics of a good meditator can be brought into the collective experience of trying to run an organization.

Once I looked past the Western cultural tradition, it was a great comfort and teaching to understand that most other cultures—not only Buddhism but all indigenous cultures—have well understood that life is a process of continuous change. Life does not organize according to our demands. There are great elemental forces of both creation and disruption we need to understand so we can work with them.

When we encounter change, we have to be able to understand our own habitual patterns and be willing to move into a different way of being. One of the dilemmas that hits us in organizations is that we might be quite willing to change, to deal with chaos and uncertainty as part of life, but there are very few organizational beliefs to support us. I don't find a lot of organizations where people at the senior level are comfortable with uncertainty. This is where the old Western mind-set still comes in. We still want the people who lead us to save us from uncertainty. It's not only the leaders themselves who have to change, but also our idea of what we want leaders for.

PS: One of the questions that has become central to my thinking is this: "Is it meaningful at this point to consider whether there is such a thing as collective cultivation?" I use the term "cultivation" in this context to mean deep development, becoming a human being. So, can a body of people working together—even the word *organization* can limit us a little, because it's starting to sound like a thing—be committed as a collective to this cultivation?

My understanding of Buddhism points to three aspects of cultivation: a commitment to meditation practice, a commitment to study, and of course, a commitment to service, to dedicating your life to something beyond yourself. It's a very evocative question to ask what these three dimensions of cultivation would look like in a collective situation. It's not the same thing as saying, "Everybody meditate," because meditation is just one of three dimensions of personal cultivation. As I say, this has become a very meaningful question in the last year.

MM: Isn't there also an effectiveness argument here? In Buddhism, it's said that you can be skillful only when you have wisdom, which is seeing the truth that nothing is solid or permanent. Isn't that also true for the organization, that its intelligence or skill comes from seeing change, and if it sees the world as fixed and unchanging it won't be effective or successful?

PS: The only problem I have with your question is the word "seeing." You don't get to *prajna,* wisdom, just because you want it. Again, cultivation is essential. Similarly, it's not enough for organizations to want to be able to change. It's not enough to just read the right books and adopt a new belief system that says, okay, everything is changing. The real question is, when all is said and done, can you really operate that way?

So it's not simply a matter of good intentions. As it would be in any discipline-based religion or artistic field, it's a matter of hard work and knowing how to do it. Do you have the tools? Do you have the methods? Do you have teachers or mentors? All the things that help a person along any developmental path.

MW: It's a very big leap for organizations to move from the realization that they have to cope with change, to the understanding that if you're going to be in a continuously changing environment, then all of the ways in which you have learned to manage have to be examined. Do they give you the awareness and information and mindfulness that allow you to stay in the dance? Because as Peter said, organizations still don't have the tools, the analytic methods, that actually support people in this process of continuous change. As much as we say we want to change our organizations to make them more adaptive, we're still not noticing the things that would make us graceful dancers.

PS: I think this is a nontrivial point we're making, and I'll tell you why. It cuts against an awful lot of our approach in the West to learning and change. We have a tendency to think if we read it, we can do it. If we've got the idea, we've learned it. On another level, we know that's all nonsense: nobody learns to play the violin by picking it up and saying "By golly, I'm going to be a violinist." But we think people learn to manage change by going off to the two- or three-day seminar or reading a book. We're talking about real, 180-degree change—instead of trying to control everything, we're learning to align our intentions with emerging realities. This is a profound shift in our way of being. You're not going to be able to do that just by having the idea in your head that it's something that you ought to do.

MW: One of the important aspects of this practice is time—time to reflect, time to meditate. And time is something that has just disappeared.

MM: We've talked about the aspect of personal practice and the overall environment of change in which companies must operate. Let's turn to the nature of the organization itself.

PS: Organizations arise because people are working together. Organizations are living phenomena in a very real sense and they were appreciated in that spirit for a very long time. It was only a couple of hundred years ago that our view of organizations—and particularly business organizations—really began to change.

This goes back to the roots of Western science, to people like Kepler, Newton, and Descartes who conceived of the cosmos as like a giant clockwork. When we started to harness the power of machines in the early years of the industrial era, gradually we started to see more and more of life as machine-like. In fact, the "machine age" is what many people have dubbed the industrial era, because of how powerful the image of the machine has been in our lives. It leads us to see everything, including ourselves, as nothing but an elaborate set of mechanisms. This way of thinking has developed insidiously over a few hundred years, to the point where we no longer realize how captive we are to it.

Of course, this view includes seeing our organizations as machines. A company, in this sense, is literally a machine for making money. You have inputs, whether they're material resources, energy resources, or human resources, and out the other end comes money. If money doesn't come out, the machine is no good and you throw it away or try to fix it. You fix it by getting new leaders, who can drive change or control things better. In the machine-age world, "to manage" literally means "to control."

On the other hand, look at the literal meaning of the word *company*. It does not mean a machine, it means a group of people, and we still preserve that usage when we speak of "a company of men." The word *company* derives from the sharing of bread, from the French word *compagner*. It's the same root as the word *companion*. In Swedish, the oldest word for company means "nourishment for life," and the oldest symbol for company in Chinese means "life's work." So we have these much older ideas of what a company is all about: a group of people creating something together, and consequently being a kind of living force.

MM: If we view the organization in that way, what does it mean to be a leader?

MW: The leader is one who is able to work with and evoke the very powerful and positive aspects of human creativity. You don't create these energies, but you do have to support

them. You do have to have a sincere belief in the commitment and creativity of the people you're working with.

We still feel very badly about each other. In my estimation, we're quicker and quicker to take affront or to be affronted, to take umbrage, to feel insulted, to assume that other people are mal-intended, rather than well-intended. This is where we are as a culture. We're very far from each other; we're very far from believing in each other.

So I've been working with the idea that a leader is one who has more faith in people than they do in each other, or in themselves. The leader is one who courageously holds out opportunities for people to come back together, to be engaged in the meaningful work of the organization, whatever it is. The leader is one who relies on people's creativity and their desire to do something meaningful.

So the first act of a great leader . . . is an act of faith.

So the first act of a great leader, I believe, is an act of faith. It's believing that human nature is the blessing, not the problem. That's one of the principles that I work with right now—that we are the blessing, not the problem. Then if you actually make that leap of faith, you go into these organizational processes that we've spent about 10 years developing, and I feel good about a lot of them: calling the whole system together, finding ways for people to be in dialogue, noticing that people can be very committed to the work of the organization.

So I see the leader as the one who calls people together, who supports them with resources, who keeps the field clear so that they can do this work. The leader is the beacon of belief that we really are sufficient, that we really are talented enough to make this work. The leader displays that faith in people continuously.

PS: That's lovely. It reminds me of Douglas McGregor's epochal book, *The Human Side of Enterprise,* in which he says that we have a fundamental choice as our starting point: Do we believe that people are good? Do we believe people truly want to work? Do we believe people want to contribute? If this is not our conviction, then everything we do from that point on must be a kind of manipulation, to get something out of people which they otherwise would not bring forth on their own.

I think Meg has hit on something very central. These first steps set the direction of the journey. For instance, take this into a particular area, like hierarchy. There is hierarchy based on a belief in original sin, that people are fundamentally flawed, or to use Meg's phrase, that they are not sufficient. Then there are hierarchies based on the belief that people are sufficient.

There's been a tendency in recent years to make hierarchy a kind of whipping boy, to blame everything on hierarchy. But hierarchy is a set of social relations that we invoke. We create hierarchy, and the real question is what's going on in us in that creating. By and large, the hierarchies we have today, whether in schools or businesses, are hierarchies of obedience. Their fundamental modus operandi is obedience or compliance. But we do also have hierarchies of wisdom. We acknowledge elders and have for thousands of years. In this, we invoke a profoundly different type of hierarchy. There's no obedience required whatsoever; it's based on choice. If a person has lived longer or worked in a certain way to achieve something, we acknowledge that, and we say, I can learn from you. I'm more than happy to be your student.

MW: This whole quest for obedience is another one of those things that takes us in the opposite direction from life. One of the fundamental characteristics of anything living is the freedom to choose. The organism chooses whether to notice something, then it chooses whether or not to be disturbed. If the organism chooses to be disturbed, it still retains the fundamental freedom to decide how it will respond. Obedience is not a natural life process.

PS: Living systems, by their nature, resist being obedient.

MW: And, Peter, the consequence of not honoring life's intrinsic right to self-determination is that when we ask people to obey and they do obey, they become lifeless. They shut down. They disappear. They become automatons.

PS: You get the obedience but you lose the spirit.

MW: You lose the life.

MM: In that light, perhaps one could argue that the most spiritually deadening influence in our society today is the structure of the organization and the workplace.

MW: I wouldn't say that. I would say that the greatest spiritual problems are these deep convictions, perceptions, or beliefs in the Western mind-set about what is valuable in life.

MM: Yes, but isn't their most powerful manifestation in the workplace, given we spend half our waking hours there?

PS: I'll give you a way to say both. It's like what I said before about hierarchy. It's easy to blame hierarchy, it's easy to blame the organization, but we have to remember that we are the ones creating all of these. We don't have workplaces the way they are because of the laws of physics. They are nothing but the results of the habits of human behavior. And unless we start to realize that, we'll keep trying to fix it "out there." We'll keep trying to fix the form of it. We'll reorganize or try to find the right leader to follow, rather than realizing that we have the leaders we have and the organizations we have because we've asked for them and because we're causing them.

Having said that, I do think the growth in the number of large institutions over the last hundred years or so is a significant development. There have always been schools of many forms, but there weren't school systems. There have always been companies, there have been various forms of commerce for thousands of years, but we didn't have global corporations. This is a significant change in the human landscape. If we were to treat it literally as a living phenomenon, we could say that this new species of large institutions embodies and enacts this deep sensibility that Meg is talking about, or you might say, this "insensibility."

These institutions now embody on a large scale this way of being that is so out of touch with who we are and the nature of living phenomena. So I do think it's fair to say that one of the places that we might find a great degree of leverage in bringing about change is in this institutional milieu. But we have to be careful to realize we're talking about schools and nonprofit organizations, just as much as we're talking about corporations. There's no one set of culprits here. It's all institutions.

MW: I absolutely agree. What we really need to change are our fundamental organizing behaviors or habits. That's why this time is different in many ways. This is a time when very large institutions now exert an unparalleled power over individual behavior. I do feel there are more and more people trying to act out of compassion, but we still don't know we could choose a different way of organizing. So we get nongovernmental organizations all over the world starting to manifest the same kind of institutional paralysis as the large governments that they grew up in response to. It's the great challenge of our time to understand that the way we organize is increasing the problems we face.

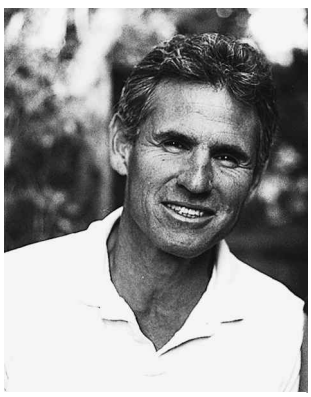
PS: People come together in organizations for, in some sense, a noble purpose, but are finding ways to constrict or even destroy life in the process. And when we really probe deeply into that way of organizing, we'll find ourselves. It's where we'll find our own fears and anxieties and beliefs played out. We won't find somebody behind the curtain who's causing it to happen.

The change must be both personal and institutional. It can't be one or the other. It's a little bit like Taoism, which basically works through the body. Taoists know that the self and the body are not the same and that distinguishing the two is a critical part of your cultivation. In a sense, we're trying to be organizational Taoists. We're saying we have this larger body we've created, called an institutional body. It could be a vehicle for cultivation, just as a physical body can be a body for cultivation, if we could start to see it that way.

VIEW

Meditation Is about Paying Attention

Jon Kabat-Zinn



Naushon Kabat-Zinn

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Professor of Medicine emeritus
University of Massachusetts Medical School
For a bibliography of the work of the Center for Mindfulness, see www.umassmed.edu/cfm.

Jon Kabat-Zinn recently retired from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, where he founded and was director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, as well as professor of medicine. In 1993, his clinic was featured in the Public Broadcasting System's series on ''Healing and the Mind,'' with Bill Moyers. He is the author of Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness *and* Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life, *and coauthor, with his wife, Myla Kabat-Zinn, of* Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting.

In the mid- to late 1960s, Kabat-Zinn was a graduate student in molecular biology at MIT. At that time, as he describes it, a steady stream of swamis, gurus, and Zen masters were passing through Cambridge. He found himself moving beyond the limits of traditional biology to understand and integrate, in his own mind at least, the epistemologies and practices of some of those spiritual teachers: ''For me, the most adventurous quest in science is ultimately the quest for self-understanding: to 'know thyself,' to understand on a multiplicity of levels, from physics and biology to heart, mind, and spirit, what it means to be fully human, and to perceive through our multiple intelligences and the various sensing systems we have for interfacing with the outside world and our own interiority, the deep interconnectedness and unity of self and environment and self and relationship with others. For the past 20 years, this adventure has had as its primary focus, in collaboration with many wonderful colleagues at UMass and around the globe, the clinical and social applications of mindfulness meditation in health and healing, and the potential transformation of medicine and other institutions through the integration of meditative and contemplative practices, perspectives, and values.''

This essay is distilled and revised from an interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn by Joseph Jaworski and C. Otto Scharmer in April 1999 in the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

The way I got involved with meditation in part involved studying with Buddhist teachers and sitting for periods of time in meditation centers. But it was quite clear from the beginning that the essence of what they were talking about wasn't particularly or exclusively Buddhist; it's universal. It has everything to do with being human and being awake, and it has everything to do with attention. None of that is the exclusive domain of Buddhism or any other *ism* for that matter.

When it comes right down to it, meditation is about paying attention. It involves purposefully refining our capacity for paying attention, ultimately to anything and everything that might be relevant to navigating in the world with your eyes and your heart open. As you practice, it tends to move from an effort that is formal and deliberate to a much larger field that is more like an effortless attending to the unfolding of life itself; a shift from ''doing something'' to simply ''being.'' In a very real way, meditation is simply the way one lives, rather than a technique one does.

Meditation training traditionally starts by intentionally simplifying the field of one's awareness, narrowing in on one aspect of experience, say, the breath. We're always

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breathing, yet we virtually never pay attention to it unless we're choking or we have a bad cold. In meditation training, you intentionally observe something that you normally take for granted and begin to take it not so much for granted. You see if you can focus your mind on one simple thing like the breath and watch what happens, not just to the breath, but in the watching itself.

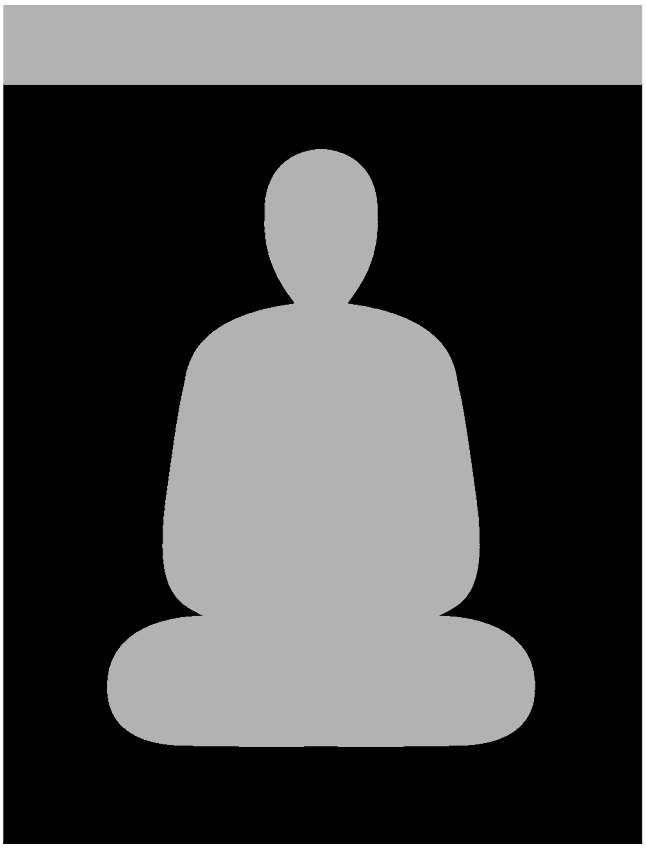
It's a very powerful means of self-exploration. Many people are unaware that it's so difficult to focus on something so simple, even with the best of intentions. So we say, ''Okay, just for fun, let's see if we can feel our breath moving in and out of our bodies and keep our minds focused on it for, say, an hour, or even for five minutes. Don't breathe deeply. Just let the breath happen. Although we could think about or focus on a million different things, let's just feature the direct, sense-based experiencing of the breath center-stage in the field of our awareness moment by moment for a period of time, and let everything else be in the wings.'' It turns out that this is surprisingly difficult to do, and that there is surprising fallout from staying with such an exercise. Blaise Pascal, the great genius mathematician and philosopher of seventeenth-century France, put it very aptly when he wrote that all of man's difficulties are caused by his inability to sit quietly in a room by himself. Doing what I just outlined quickly makes the relevance of his observation patently clear.

When you drop in on the present moment as it is, and begin to focus on one particular object in this way, whether it's the breath or anything else, there are two elements that seem to come quickly to the fore. One is that the mind has a very active life of its own. It tends to go here and there, thinking about this and that, and it's not interested for very long in just staying focused on the breath. If you are nevertheless disciplined and curious enough to sustain your attention and to let go intentionally of whatever it is that comes up in the mind that carries you off someplace else and instead gently bring it back to feeling the breath in the body over and over again, you notice after a while that a certain calmness and stability of mind begin to develop. You come to see the possibility of being less reactive and less agitated through cultivating present-moment attention in this way. This approach to meditation, which calls for maintaining your attention on one primary object and treating everything else that comes up as a distraction, develops one-pointedness and greater stability of attention, the concentrative dimension of meditation.

The other major category of meditation practice is often called insight practice. Rather than focusing on one object and treating everything else as a distraction, you invite the field of your awareness to include a constantly changing field of objects. This is the cultivation of mindfulness—moment-to-moment, nonreactive, nonjudgmental awareness. Mindfulness can be thought of as penetrative awareness, a seeing underneath the surface or through the outer form of things to their truest nature. Behind surface appearances, we can perceive unsuspected dimensions of relationship and connectivity, a sense of the interconnectedness of things, including oneself. It's not that you are seeking such an experience, or turning it into one more concept or ideal to pursue through thinking. It is much more subtle than that. You just sit, not pursuing anything, neither insights nor any other outcome. Insights tend to arise naturally under such conditions, but on their own timetable (or you might say, outside of time altogether, if you are really in the present moment), out of stillness, out of your willingness to sustain an open and spacious attention, with no agenda other than to be awake. Meditation is the one human activity, or you could say ''non-activity,'' that's not about trying to get anywhere else or make anything happen. Rather, it involves stopping, being still, and resting in the totality of your being, in a nonconceptual awareness, observing mind, body, and world unfolding, moment by moment. Mindfulness and concentration practices nourish and support each other.

Behind surface appearances, we can perceive unsuspected dimensions of relationship and connectivity, a sense of the interconnectedness of things, including oneself.

Mindfulness invites us to see through and underneath discursive thought, beyond the conceptual, by recognizing thoughts as thoughts, as what you might call ''events'' in the field of awareness. When we intentionally drop underneath our thinking, we become aware of how quickly we put our experiences into tidy and unexamined conceptual boxes,



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thinking, ''I'm in here; the world is out there,'' even thinking ''I'm meditating, I'm following the breath.'' So even meditation practice, if one is not careful, can be mostly conceptual, until you realize how easily you are generating such thoughts and getting caught in them. Awareness itself provides a way to drop underneath the whole process of thought. Then you might catch those thoughts that create a fixed ''you'' that is observing and those that are creating something other than you that is being observed. In that moment, you might find it possible to just rest in being, in observing, in breathing, in awareness, with no ''me'' doing it.

In some way, the meditation practice is saying, ''Let's see if it might not be possible to drop underneath that conventional and highly conditioned way of seeing that separates and reifies a subject and an object. Let's not go with any impulse to fix anything or solve anything for the moment, even if what we think of as 'problems' arise, but instead just dwell in observing whatever arises as it actually is.'' When our patients do this kind of practice, their relationship to their pain, to take just one example, can change dramatically because they are embracing it for a change, not as ''pain'' but as bare sensation, allowing it to be met exactly as it is, in awareness, even if it has a strong element of unpleasantness. They are ''being with'' the experience of pain, so to speak, rather than caught up in thinking about it and trying to make it go away, or getting lost in all the feelings they may have about the pain and how it has influenced their life. Often, without trying to fix anything but by observing the moment-to-moment unfolding of bare sensation in the body, over time, the pain might diminish, sometimes quite dramatically. Or, they might find new ways to expand their repertoire of strategies for living with it more effectively.

More generally, if you feel you've got a problem to solve that is ''out there,'' and you don't necessarily see or want to see any possible relationship between the ''you'' who you think is trying to solve the problem—which is a huge mystery—and what the problem actually is, you may wind up not being able to see the problem accurately, in its fullness, if there is a problem at all. Therefore you may be contributing unwittingly to maintaining the undesired situation rather than allowing it to evolve, and perhaps dissolve.

It's similar to what some consultants might say about going into a new company without a whole lot of preconceptions: ''We're willing to stand inside 'not knowing' for a period of time—not knowing where the relevant information or creative solutions are going to come from, but trusting that they will emerge if we are open and present, residing inside the company or the situation with our eyes and ears open.'' One Zen master I studied with called this attitude ''don't know mind''—just being still, holding the whole in awareness, not having to have to know anything. Just being awake.

Stillness is . . . here all the time, inside and underneath our thoughts and feelings.

There are different ways of approaching formal meditation practice. When you're developing concentration, you let whatever comes up be as it is and just come back to your primary object of attention, say, your breathing. On the other hand, when you are cultivating mindfulness and something arises in the field of your awareness, you might allow it to *become* the object of your attention rather than treating it as an intrusion. It is like watching clouds, birds, or whatever, going through the sky. Your mind would be the sky (awareness itself) and then whatever comes—day, night, sun, moon, cloud, bird—is recognized by the mind for what it is, nonconceptually. We call this *discernment*. It is sensitive to the texture of things, their qualities and subtleties, a knowing that is not caught in either/or and black or white judgments. Practicing in this more spacious mode, you're not fixated on or attached to the breath or to any other object of mind. It's the awareness

itself, free of particular objects, what is sometimes called *choiceless awareness*, which is primary. You cultivate a refined willingness to be present, to be still, to reflect whatever is coming in front of you, like a mirror. A mirror is itself empty. It reflects only what comes before it. It doesn't hold on to anything, it doesn't pursue anything to fill it up.

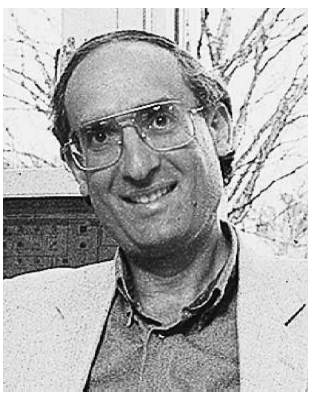
But our mind most of the time is not so empty—even though its essence is very mirrorlike. You might say that it is actually more like a lake, in that sometimes it is so calm, it reflects the sky and anything in it. At other times, the mind's surface is turbulent as it ripples or waves, stirred by circumstances and our own thoughts and emotional turbulence, sometimes by veritable storms in the mind. Then it doesn't reflect so well. But even at such times, you can learn to drop down beneath the surface of the lake of your own mind, where there is always at most a gentle undulation, or complete stillness.

So stillness is not something you make or you force to happen, or have to find somewhere else. It is here all the time, inside and underneath our thoughts and feelings. In a similar way, we might say that silence resides inside and underneath the notes in a piece of music. It can be felt, and even heard, but only if we are listening very carefully. We're so caught up in our thinking most of the time that we don't actually recognize moments of silence or value them, or know how to tap them as a source of deep balance, presence, and wisdom.

VIEW

The Intimacy of Nature

Mark P. Kriger



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There is a cathedral without ceiling or walls
With the sky continually kissing the ground
And the trees vaulting towards the heavens
With radiant light streaming through invisible windows.

Ever embraced by your being
I am bathed in a love so deep
That wherever I walk I find you
Drawing me into a deepening intimacy.

My prayers soar towards the unseen one;
My songs quickly taken up
And handed back with gestures beckoning further closeness.
You are present, even through the thick veils of my thoughts.

How could I have overlooked you?
One so faithful, despite my mindlessly turning away.
The sun of each morning washes me in newness
And the light of dusk foretells the embrace of night.

Once I thought I needed to pray to find you
But you found me long before,
Though so many times I have forgotten you
You patiently waited—then, instantly, took me in.

You were my mother before I was born.
And will be my mother after I leave this place.
Who, ever, finds a more constant lover?
Where else can I find myself so totally in another?

Only naked souls enter or leave;
This place is made for bathing.
The light within the sun of suns
Knows only one direction—everywhere!

Reflection

''The Intimacy of Nature'' came to me during a walk in the woods on the northern edge of Oslo, Norway, not far from my home. These woods, called Nordmarka, contain many trails for hiking and stretch for about 50 kilometers from north to south, yet are reachable within 15 minutes by tram from the center of the city. On Sunday, more people often go to the woods than to church.

This poem reflects an inner state that has visited me a number of times over the years. The human relationship with the natural environment, spirit, and religion are obvious. Less obvious, perhaps, but equally important is the role these kinds of reflections can play in organization theory and our understanding of managerial and organizational cognition. The theory of the universe embedded in this poem is that causality is not linear but circular. Human beings can be *love*, *lover,* and *beloved* all at the same time.

The theme of the unified attributes of subject, object, and state is voiced in the paradigms of a number of mystical traditions. The Sufis of the Middle East and central Asia,

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the Zen Buddhists of Japan, and the Taoists of ancient China have all expressed a similar view. This paradigm rejects the notion of bureaucratic institutions as valuable in their own right. It honors tacit knowledge and direct experience over the lessons of controlling teachers and the commands of autocratic managers.

When I am walking in nature, the woods become a cathedral without walls, ceiling, or windows. There is an immediate healing, which can take place as I surrender to the sights and smells of a deep forest. Look up at the clouds drifting in the sky and find an instantaneous doorway into humility and intimate feelings that are almost too personal to talk about with others. Religions and governments, as institutions, far too often become veils between the individual and such direct forms of knowing.

Acknowledgment

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VIEW

A Reflection on Transition

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Rachael Roberts

The melting snow has created a clear stream in the valley up ahead. The snow in which we are hiking would be like walking through a waist-high white bog if we were not wearing snowshoes, so it is an unexpected surprise to see ribbons of green with water, which just moments ago was ice, finding a way out of the mountains.

It is a rare Friday off from work. Yesterday, they announced another round of layoffs. Two acquaintances—who, for the past seven years since my transfer to New York, have been the ones who really knew what was going on—will be leaving. Forty-four years of experience depart at the end of the month, but also friends whom I trusted would confirm if things were getting crazy or not. Without friends like that, it often seems that we are the ones who are crazy.

The layoffs may not end with this announcement, but, almost like the swallows returning to San Juan Capistrano Mission, our company seems to think that regular paring down is the method for improvement. Improve, survive—what's the difference? Many of the survivors think, ''Why not get it over with? It's not so much fun anymore anyway.'' The soul at work seems to be gone.

I sensed a transition in coming up the mountain to the retreat center. Spring is appearing in Manhattan. The tulips have broken through the ground, like pitchforks coming from inside the earth. The crocuses have bloomed but are unappreciated by the rushing crowds, heads down into the weather. Only the weary tourists resting on benches seem to notice.

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There was no snow during the two-hour trip until our ascent. It was dramatic, even in the night, when the van headlights caught the huge piles of snow on the side of the road near the top of the mountain. We were passing through a line of the seasons, from spring back to winter.

Standing out in the sun-tinged, snow-covered valley, high in the Catskill Mountains, I have a feeling of anticipation—of winter changing into spring—and an appreciation of the moment. I can walk though areas where, in summer, the brambles and high weeds keep me from exploring. In winter snow, the terrain opens its contours and invites exploration. In summer walks through these woods, these shortcuts and areas will be overgrown and inaccessible.

The warm sun feels good as we bundle up against the cold. In a few months, we will avoid the sun, hats and cool breezes providing relief from our friend today.

We take frequent breaks to minimize exhaustion; we stand still, deep in the woods, listening to the quiet and observing the change between the seasons. It is as if we can feel the mechanism that moves eternity and hear the cycle of time ticking; the breeze from the second hand gently sweeping by caresses our face. The line separating *yin* from *yang* is gently hovering over us as we feel the influence from both.

In this quiet space, there is a glimpse of the self, the soul.

In these quiet pauses, I have a sensation of being out of time. Not without time, but beyond time. Past, present, and future all become distant. Watching from above the rest of the world, I have been taken out of time into a space of deep peace. I develop a clearer sense of what is important. In this quiet space, there is a glimpse of the self, the soul. All is well. Nothing penetrates the sensation of this quiet. Even the birds or distant village sounds are from another world.

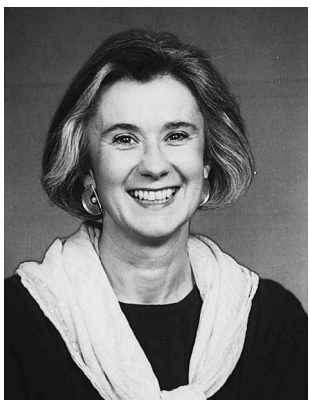
I breathe deeper to bring the feeling inside. I try to fill myself with this quality, to make my mind peaceful and concentrated. A sweet recharging is taking place. Another transition occurs. A lot is lost by listening and seeing too much what is outside in the world. There is a need to listen and experience what is deep inside, what is known but often not the basis of our actions.

The time in walking is a reminder, not of what I should do, but what I should be.

FEATURE

Spirituality as a Global Organizing Potential

Diana Whitney



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Spirituality has entered organizational discourse through the back door and is now sitting in the drawing room awaiting a proper welcome. There is much speculation as to why spirituality is emerging as a dominant organizational concern. One possible explanation is the process of social diffusion; that is, as I in my tribal paints and feathers rub shoulders with you in your wool tweed jacket, I get covered with bits and pieces of wool, and you come away smeared with earthen paint and feathers. As people of the world meet to do business, we discover that our varied ways of working are grounded in quite different worldviews. As Americans seek to understand Japanese business strategy, they find themselves drawn into a study of Japanese martial arts. As Western businesses market and sell their products in other countries, they find themselves face to face with people for whom spirituality is an integral daily practice. As we attempt to sell Levis 501 jeans, McDonald's hamburgers, and Gerber's baby foods worldwide, we get more in the trade than simply dollars. Doing business around the world has opened the door to spirituality as a business practice because for many of the world's people, there is no separation of spirituality from life and work.

Each morning, Balinese shopkeepers renew their sidewalk altars with fresh flowers and food for the spirits of life and abundance. That potential customers must walk around these altars is not seen as detrimental to business as it might be in New York City, where every inch of the floor space is at a premium and even sidewalks are filled with wares for sale. To the Balinese, it is good to remember the spirits each step along one's journey. One person who works in close relationship with spirit is Dora Pena from the San Ildefonso pueblo in New Mexico. She is a potter whose pots are in many museum collections around the world, including the White House art collection. Dora describes the way she works as an ongoing prayer. Before she gathers the clay and sand from the hills near her home, she prays and makes an offering to the spirits of the clay and sand. As she mixes water with the clay, she prays to the spirit of water; as she coils and rolls the clay into its form as a pot, she prays to invite the spirit of the pot to be present. And so her work continues, with prayers for the wood and the fire, and finally thanksgiving for the finished pot. Admirers and collectors of Dora's pots cannot help but recognize their life and spirit—each one not simply the output of someone's work, or even a form of art, but rather a living, breathing manifestation of spirit embodied in a pot.

A further explanation for spirituality as a business and organizational consideration today rests with the move from modern to postmodern. We are living at a time when both the benefits and limitations of the modern worldview are readily apparent to us. We see the miracles science has wrought, and we see what damage it has enabled us to create. Great strides in information and communication technologies, transportation, and health care have come packaged with great environmental destruction and the near loss of indigenous life styles around the world (Mander, 1991). The modern focus on objectivity and the separation of science and spirituality, taken to fullness, leaves people separate from one another, separate from nature, and separate from the divine. As a people, we simply can no longer ignore poetry and trust analysis, ignore nature and trust the sterility of the laboratory, or ignore the multiple voices we hear in the night and trust only the

Excerpted from D. Whitney. "Spirituality as an Organizing Principle." *Perspectives* 9 (1995). Reprinted with permission from the World Business Academy.

rules, laws, or policies written by some unknown people to guide their lives, not ours. Modern science in its flowering has given seed to the postmodern, and with it comes a quest for spiritual relationships, meaning, and integration.

My purpose in writing this article is to provide an introduction to spirituality as it relates to organizational development and to create an opportunity for you to welcome the spiritual into the inner rooms of your life and work as global citizens.

As an emergent concept, spirituality, as it relates to business, organizational development, and the workplace, currently engages organization scholars and practitioners in a multifaceted, postmodern discourse. Conversations range from the ordinary worlds of personal energy and enthusiasm to the sacred worlds of mystical knowing, alternative realities, and transcendence. Each of these conversations evokes within the organizational community a differing and yet somewhat overlapping set of principles and practices for addressing spirituality as a global organizing potential. For example, Tom Chappell, founder of Tom's of Maine, describes the link between spirit and business as he sees it:

> By spirit or spiritual, I mean the part of you that survives when you eliminate your flesh and bones—the part you can't point to, but can feel, the part you might describe to someone else as your essential being, your soul. Soul is what connects you to everyone and everything else. It is the sum of all the choices you make. It is where your beliefs and values reside. Soul is at the center of our relationships to others, and for me, it is at the center of the business enterprise. (Chappell, 1994)

Another proponent of spirituality in the workplace is Jack Hawley, who draws a line between spiritual and religion. In describing his book, he says: ''This is a nonreligious, squarely spiritual management book. . . . It's about the things we're all concerned about: purpose and meaning, peace (inner peace, especially), health, happiness, love, life, and death'' (Hawley, 1993). From yet another perspective, Larry Dossey writes that prayer, defined as ''communication with the transcendent,'' is positively correlated to healing (1993). He suggests that doctors incorporate prayer as part of the work of healing. His definition of prayer is closely related to the Lakota Sioux view of spirituality as one's relationship with the Creator.

Current considerations of spirituality as it relates to business, work, and organization development might loosely be clustered into four primary conversations that I have called spirit as energy, spirit as meaning, spirit as sacred, and spirit as epistemology. What follows is a brief overview of each.

Spirit as Energy

> When we get out of the glass bottles of our ego,
> and when we escape like squirrels turning in the
> cages of our personality
> and get into the forests again,
> we shall shiver with cold and fright
> but things will happen to us
> so that we don't know ourselves.
> Cool, unlying life will rush in,
> and passion will make our bodies taut with power
> we shall stamp our feet with new power
> and old things will fall down,
> we shall laugh, and institutions will curl up like burnt paper.
>
> D.H. Lawrence

For many, the notion of spirit in the workplace has to do with the energy or ''feel'' of the place. Theirs is a conversation about ''spirit as energy.'' High-technology entrepreneurial organizations are described as spirited, while large corporate hierarchies are considered sluggish and bankrupt of spirit. In this sense, spirit refers to a sense of aliveness and vibrancy, people's ability to stamp their feet with power. As the poem by D.H. Lawrence suggests, when we stamp our feet with new power, ''we shall laugh, and institutions will curl up like burnt paper.'' Consultants speaking from this perspective counsel managers

to follow the path of least resistance (Fritz, 1984), to do what they love and the money will follow (Sinetar, 1988), and to manage from their hearts as the means to personal and organizational excellence.

Organizational high performance and the capacity for organizational change are said to be derivative of spirit. As Owen (1987) put it, ''Whatever else high performance and excellence may be based on, they would seem to have something to do with the quality of Spirit . . . human Spirit, our Spirit, the Spirit of our organizations.'' Much of the early work in organizational transformation considered spirit as energy. Ackerman (1984) trained flow-state managers to ''work on the energy flow in the system, work for harmony, alter structures to free up energy.'' Post (1988) explained organizations in the language of Chinese medicine. She suggested we manage energy flows for organizational health in much the same way a Chinese medicine doctor works to open energy flows and to remove stagnation, thereby promoting health within an individual. Aikido techniques became metaphoric means and methods for dealing energetically with conflict (Crum, 1987). Both the purpose and process of organizational transformation were to free the spirit, to build organizations with vision, purpose, and values, and to remove the energetic blocks to organizational high performance.

Organizational high performance and the capacity for organizational change are said to be derivative of spirit.

Spirit as Meaning

To live content with small means,
to seek elegance rather than luxury,
and refinement rather than fashion,
to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich,
to study hard, think quietly, act frankly,
to listen to stars and birds, babes and sages, with open heart,
do all bravely,
await occasions,
hurry never—
in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious,
grow up through the common.
This is my symphony.

William Ellery Channing

Another conversation among organization scholars and practitioners considers ''spirit as meaning.'' Shared vision and common values are said to create organization meaning and to provide the impetus for organization change. Leaders at all levels of the organization are guided to inspire (to fill with spirit) rather than to motivate. Visionary leadership, as demonstrated by the likes of Lee Iacocca, is said to make the difference between successful and unsuccessful organization change. Visioning, or conversationally projecting the organization into the future, and creating alignment among organizational members about the desired future are essential organizing endeavors.

Spirit and meaning are said to reside in the stories told about the organization. Like a society or tribe's creation story, the organization's stories serve to create and recreate what is meaningful for the organization's members. Storytelling, myth making, and the celebration of the hero's journey (Barnhart and Borgman, 1991) are taught to managers as tools to deconstruct and reconstruct the organization's sense of meaning. Organization culture can be considered the grand story of the company, the story that holds it all together. The conscious creation of organization culture involves the careful delineation of the way things are to be done, by whom, and with whom. It is a process of making meaningful selected patterns of daily work life and rendering others meaningless.

Central to the spirit-as-meaning conversation is the recognition that workers in the industrialized countries, especially the United States, want more from work than a paycheck (Yankelovich, 1981). The quest for the soul in business (Bolman and Deal, 1995), artful work (Richards, 1995), and right livelihood is on. As William Channing's poem

suggests, to live content with small means, financially, does not mean to live without a sense of elegance, worth, or wealth. To let the spiritual grow through the common is a path to meaningful living.

Early conversations about spirit as meaning focused on people who found their work empty and sought meaning in spiritual practice (Occhiogrosso, 1992). As more and more people embarked upon the transformational lifestyle through the commitment to a spiritual practice of some type, the conversation widened. Now, not only do people want their own life to be full of meaning and purpose, but they also expect the same of their organizations. Awakening people want to work for organizations that care and that are consciously contributing to the planet. People want their organizations to make positive contributions to their communities and to the world, and they want work to enliven them. Empowerment (Block, 1987) has become a code word for spirit as meaning. People want to be involved creatively at work and they want their voices to be meaningful to those with whom they work. They want opportunities to express themselves and to know they are heard and are contributing to the social good. They want to be liberated (Peters, 1994) to learn and to grow while making a meaningful contribution. The exchange of labor for dollars is no longer satisfactory. Work has become a lifestyle, and people want a good life. They want to bring their whole selves—mind, body, and spirit—to work. Meaningful work engages the whole person. It is a dialogue unbounded by roles and infused with creativity; a willingness to collaborate with others; and a daily enactment of beliefs, values, and relationships within the context of our now global community.

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Spirit as Sacred

The man whose mind is rounded out to perfection
Knows full well
Truth is not cut in half
And things do not exist apart from the mind.
In the great Assembly of the Lotus all are present
Without divisions.
Grass, trees, the soil on which these grow
All have the same kinds of atoms.
Some are barely in motion
While others make haste along the path,
but they will all in time
Reach the Precious Island of Nirvana
Who can really maintain
That things inanimate lack buddhahood?

Chan-Jan

The realm of ''spirit as sacred'' is a conversation quite different from the conversations of spirit as energy or spirit as meaning. One might consider this the realm of Spirit with a capital *S,* to distinguish it from the preceding conversations about spirit with a small *s* (Hawley, 1993). In this arena, there is an implicit understanding that all life is imbued with a divine spiritual presence, a spiritual potential awaiting discovery and emergence. Taoist, Buddhist, and Native American beliefs are drawn on to exemplify the understanding that divine spirit is a quality of all beings. Humans, plants, animals, and rocks are all

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of spirit. From this perspective, spirit is not something separate from mind, body, or action but is indeed an integral quality of being. To posit spirit as separate from body or mind is to miss the point, something modern science has helped us do very well.

Conversations about spirit as sacred in the workplace would have us seeking the Dora Penas of the world. I know of few people other than my Native American relatives who live and work in relation to spirit as an integral part of all life. Among them, the examples are many: Thomas One Wolf who prays to the creator before hunting that he might be gifted with the life of a deer. Grandpa Pete Concha who reminds me to visit before traveling to the Far East for business so he can bless me and ask the spirit to keep me safe and to bring me home safe. The Pueblo women who dance, as the spirit of the corn, with gratitude before the fields are planted and after the harvest is gathered. The people and businesses most organized around the notion of spirit as sacred are the many ecologists and environmentalists around the world. They are, for our times, the voice of spirit in all of life's forms. They are the voice of biodiversity as a sacred trust. They are the voice of our human dependency on nature.

The conversations about spirit as sacred are not about trying to get spirit; it is already here. The quest of spirit as sacred is to live spiritual values as fully as possible. That is, to enact life, respecting all life as sacred; loving rather than fearing (Buscaglia, 1992); recognizing original blessing rather than original sin (Fox, 1983); cooperating rather than competing with other members of our global community; and sincerely appreciating the many gifts life has laid on our doorstep. Many organizations have entered into the realm of spirit as sacred through the development of values statements and the conscious application of declared values to decisions of strategic and global import. Two well-known examples are Ben and Jerry's and The Body Shop. Leaders of both organizations describe their success as based on the enactment of spiritually and globally attuned values. Decisions about their organizations and products are said to be based on their values. For example, Ben and Jerry's has a cap on CEO salary, and The Body Shop does not conduct animal testing of its products. In each case, these organizations, like the Balinese shopkeepers, risk the business implications of their decisions to enact their values and in so doing create the world as a better place for all life.

People . . . want to bring their whole selves—mind, body, and spirit—to work.

The value of integrity is on most companies' values lists. As such, it is a code word for honesty, authenticity, and truth telling within the organization. Discussions about the application of integrity in organizational life seldom evoke the meaning of integrated or whole. Organizations are still suffering under the modern fiction of fragmentation, functionalism, and division of labor. Spirit as sacred acknowledges the connection of all life and all energy such that actions of the part impact the whole. ''In Chinese philosophy, it is said that the slightest wave of the hand moves molecules all the way to the end of the universe'' (Anthony, 1988). As modern communication and transportation enables us to experience the world as one being, we see the reality of our connectedness. As we see the impact of local actions on global existence, we wonder if perhaps we have been connected all along and just didn't know it. Spiritual practices of peoples around the world assume this connection. It enables them to live in ways and to perform rituals and ceremonies that positively collaborate with the whole of being. I have been told that the ceremonial dances performed by the Tewa people help the sun rise each day. The belief that humans and planets are related is essential to their life and ceremonies. For many

indigenous people, there is a sacred ecology of life based on a sense of wholeness and relatedness.

For many Western business leaders, the notion of wholeness is one of the realities of globalization still to be constructed. Globalization appeared in the conversations of my clients, first as a title in a search of a job and then as a potential strategic leverage. Clients with titles such as vice president of global marketing, global vice president of human resources, and director of strategic globalization are asking questions such as: What is globalization? What are other companies doing about it? How can we take advantage of globalization? Is globalization just another business school fad, or is it real? All these questions belie an understanding of the wholeness of the world and the essential relatedness of all life, as well as the opportunity to cooperate with relatives, colleagues, and business partners worldwide to infuse the notion of globalization with meaning and spirit that will sustain life for generations to come.

With the sense of wholeness and connectedness comes a deep reverence for relationships. Spirit as sacred places relationships at the center of social organization. The Lakota Sioux draw purpose for action as well as a sense of social location from their relatives. A Lakota is credentialed not through schooling and degrees earned or by years of experience, but rather through relationships. Relationships that matter, that is, those that give form to life and social organization, may be bloodline relationships, *Hunka* or chosen relationships, as well as relationships with spirit beings and relationships given through vision. Each person's identity is in relation to the community. The community and the ongoing life of the people are enacted through relationships.

With the sense of wholeness and connectedness comes a deep reverence for relationships.

One outstanding example of a business that honored the relationships of the local people and, as a result, achieved global business success is Packard Electric, a division of General Motors. When the decision was made to open a new plant organized with work teams practicing total quality, several locations were considered. The final decision was to locate the plant in the region of Chihuahua, Mexico, where family-owned businesses are the norm. Families were hired as teams, trained in total quality principles and in skills needed to operate the plant. Six years later, the plant and the community are thriving.

Unfortunately, one challenge facing organizations today is the many scars that exist from times when relationships were not honored and people were not treated as sacred. Spirit as sacred calls for a radical relational perspective, one that not only honors all life and relationships, but also honors the multiple voices and ways of knowing of the world's people.

Spirit as Epistemology

When the animals come to us,
asking for our help,
will we know what they are saying?

When the plants speak to us
in their delicate, beautiful language,
will we be able to answer them?

When the planet herself
sings to us in our dreams,
will we be able to wake ourselves, and act?

Gary Lawless

Perhaps the greatest divide created by modern science between indigenous people and the Western world is the epistemological divide. While Western science developed methodologies and studied the world in order to control the forces of nature, indigenous people studied the world in order to cooperate with the forces of nature (Colorado, 1988). This difference is awe inspiring to me as I have come to realize essential differences in not only the ways of knowing but also the knowledge gained.

For many people to whom spirit is integral to life, there are realities other than the visible worlds of technology, living nature, and human beings. Within these realities reside spirit beings who on occasion make themselves and their views known. Examples include the nature devas who guide the care of the gardens in Findhorn, Scotland, the spirit relatives who talk to Lakota people in sweat-lodge ceremonies, and the many spirits who are channeled by psychics around the world. In all cases, the presence of spirits depends on relationships among them and some person or group of people. To come forth and communicate, spirits are invited through ritual and ceremony. For example, the Navajo sand paintings may be looked upon as symbolic representations of healing, but to the Dine people, ''The making of the sand painting is the creation of the presence of the beings. The beings are not at all separate from what the sand looks like. Once the sand painting is there, they are there'' (Kremer, 1995).

Business and organizations around the world call on holy people to bless buildings, business endeavors, and the people whose work is to serve the community. Once the blessing is made, be it by a Shinto priest, a rabbi, or a medicine man, what business or organizational leaders engage spirit daily for decision making, for team building, or for maintaining balance within the local community, as it relates to global well-being? All too often, consultants, serving as the metaphoric ministers of organizational well-being, provide assistance based upon the scientific paradigm of control over nature. The challenge of spirit as epistemology is to open to the voices of spirit and to learn the ultimate lessons in cooperation: how to co-construct global communities and organizations in balance and in harmony with spirit.

Reflections

Spirituality as it relates to work, business, and organization development is a multifaceted conversation. The question is not whether it is relevant in the social understanding and creation of global organizations, but rather in what ways. People around the globe are giving voice to spiritual beliefs and practice while their organizations are suffering the consequences of years of spiritual estrangement. As people live more fully awakened to the spiritual life, old ways of relating and forms of organizing cannot endure. Spiritual ways of working and organizing that currently exist around the world hold potential for organizational realities that blend the best of science and technology with the best of mysticism and love. Let us have faith in the magic of conversation, relational realities, and co-creation, and let us expand beyond the realms of human interaction to include all our relations. *Mitakuye oyas'in.*

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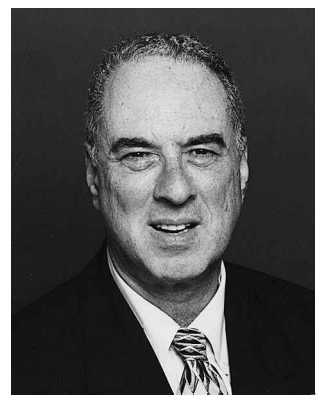
Commentary

by Ian I. Mitroff



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Diana Whitney's article is a "must read" for every manager and executive. Were its ideas to be taken seriously, the end result would be a true revolution in how we conceive of, design, and manage organizations.

A generation ago, the world of management was introduced to the then pioneering work of Abraham Maslow (1964; 1968; 1970). Maslow is rightly famous for introducing two critical concepts into psychology and management literature—the "hierarchy of needs" and self-actualization, his second and perhaps most important concept. Today, we call it *spiritual.*

As previous generations were introduced to Maslow, a giant of psychology, today's generation needs to be introduced to another, Ken Wilber. Given the importance and the prominence of Wilber's work, I was surprised to find no reference in the Whitney article to his framework (1995 and 1996). Wilber has integrated the developmental streams of Eastern and Western thought in ways that no one has. Indeed, he is *the* preeminent writer on spirituality.

Through an extensive study of a wide array of developmental theorists, psychologists, and students of world religions and spirituality, Wilber has come up with a framework to show a multitude of developmental paths of which humans are capable. These encompass not only the earliest physical and mental stages through which all humans *must* pass, but also the later, most profound spiritual stages through which human beings *may* pass if they so choose.

While countless writers have incorporated Maslow's thoughts into management, in contrast, Wilber's are still to be appreciated and are extremely relevant to management.

Fourfold Framework

A good way to comprehend some of Wilber's contributions to our understanding of human development and spirituality is by means of a simple diagram (see the figure). The horizontal line shows that what we experience and define as "human" comes either from one's deep, internal emotions, or from that which is outside or external. The vertical line shows either the individual as the central focus or the group, organization, or society of which every individual is a part. The vertical line thus corresponds to the differences between those who instinctively focus on the individual or those who focus on the "big picture" in understanding individual humans and their collective institutions.

Through an extensive study of developmental frameworks and spirituality in the East and West, Wilber has discerned at least four different spiritual orientations, represented by the four quadrants in the figure. In the West, spirituality has largely been defined as an inner-individual phenomenon. However, there is also a sense of spirituality that relates to the outer-individual. This regards the human body as proof or evidence of the hand of God or a deity. Western scientists and increasingly the Western public have so devalued the role of spirituality in everyday life—the inner life, in general—that they have come to accept the scientific definition of humans as the only valid description. Wilber refers to this fundamental devaluing of the inner life and its complete reduction to the outer life as *Flatland,* a "flat" description of humans and their inner life.

Newberg et al.'s popular book, *Why God Won't Go Away,* is a vivid testimony to this reduction (2001). Although it is openly respectful of God as a force or presence in the universe, nonetheless, it subtly reduces the experience of God to the biomechanical spiritual quadrant. In brief, the contention is that our brains are "hard-wired" for the experience of God.

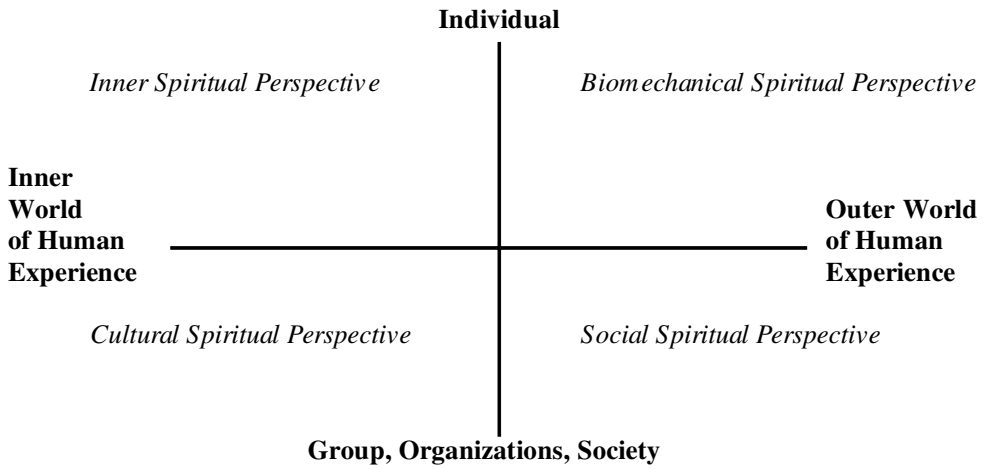

Figure 1 Wilber's fourfold framework.

The outer-group or social spiritual perspective shows nature as a manifestation or evidence of the presence of a supreme deity. Many regard the very structure of nature, and not just the individual human body, as a direct visible sign of the presence of a deity or master designer. Another interpretation is that human spirituality is manifested through institutions that we design to help alleviate human misery. For instance, Mother Teresa's founding of a spiritual order led to an institution to alleviate the plight of the poor. Thus, the outer-group quadrant not only refers to nature, but also to those human institutions or structures that we create in order to realize spirituality on earth. The inner-community or cultural spiritual perspective indicates that spirituality and especially the institutions that alleviate the plight of the poor also have an inner life. This is the culture or ideology of an organization.

Progression of Spirituality

Just as individuals exist at various levels of development, there is also a progression of various levels in each of Wilber's four quadrants. All the great religious and spiritual traditions recognize a progression from inanimate matter to animate matter, from animals to human beings, and, finally, from mind to spirit. Where Western approaches primarily confine themselves to the progression from inanimate matter to the upper states of mind, Eastern approaches start with the mind and proceed to the highest levels of spiritual attainment.

For example, the Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg has traced in detail the moral development of children. As an individual progresses throughout life, he or she moves from notions of morality founded on immediate identity, family, community, and nation to the earth and the entire human community—the highest level or stages of moral development. In the work of Kohlberg and other developmental theorists, this progression constitutes an orderly hierarchy whose various stages cannot be skipped. The vast majority of human beings have to progress through each of the stages before the others can be attained.

Wilber has identified four historically important models or progressions of spirituality (Wilber, 1995; 1996). Although he refers to them by different names, I label the four models *commonality, union, identity*, and *no-distinction*.

The commonality model is the nature mysticism found in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through nature, spirit assumes a physical form. Through the deep contemplation of nature, humans can recognize, feel, and experience for themselves the commonality that they share with all things, inanimate as well as animate.

The union model goes deeper, further, and higher. In *The Interior Castle,* St. Teresa of Avila describes in poignant detail the spiritual journey that she undertook, and presumably anyone can undertake, to the center of the human soul wherein Christ resides (1979). The ultimate end of this journey is the complete union or marriage with God.

The identity model progresses to an even more radical breakdown of the distinction between the self and others. In the identity model, one finally comes to the realization that "God and I are

One." This does *not* mean that one literally is God, but rather, that God has been within the self all the time.

Finally, the no-distinction model is characterized by the complete and total collapse of *all* distinctions. There were no distinctions from the very beginning. Indeed, there is no beginning to anything because there is no end. In other words, the universe is the timeless, spaceless, and formless nature of all reality, a Buddhist idea. According to Buddhism, the real self is not to be identified with the ego, its material possessions, or the physical self, all of which perish over time. Instead, the real self is the self that is timeless, eternal, and totally without distinctions or separateness from the rest of the universe.

The four models constitute a strict hierarchy. Each of the succeeding models contains all that precede it. For instance, the union model contains the commonality model, and so forth. Thus, each of the succeeding models is at a higher and deeper level of spirituality. These four models are ideals and should not be dismissed merely because we cannot achieve any of them in today's world.

I hope my remarks have conveyed both the importance and the necessity of understanding what Ken Wilber has to contribute to spirituality. Spirituality is important not only in our lives, but especially in the workplace (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). We need to understand the importance of spirituality, but even more, we need a framework that helps us to understand its very essence.

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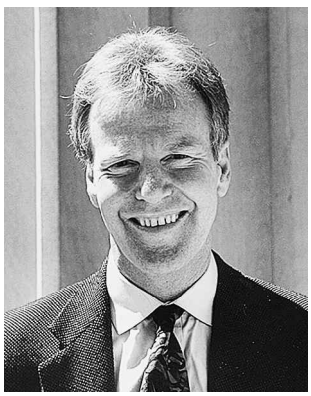
VIEW

From the Chair

Peter M. Senge



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Pitirim Sorokin was one of the founders of the modern field of sociology. He was the founding chairman of the department of sociology at Harvard. Like Toynbee, Sorokin was a cultural historian who was interested in the grand sweep of history.

Beginning in the 1930s, Sorokin developed a view that Western culture had passed through two major epochs in the last millennium. The major breakpoint was the Renaissance. Prior to the Renaissance, Western culture was dominated by what he called an ''ideational worldview.'' By this he meant a culture based on ''the ultimate principle that the true reality is the supersensory and superrational God and his Kingdom as defined in the Christian Credo'' (Sorokin, 1964). In an ideational culture, what is most real is the inner world. In an ideational culture, ''theology is the queen of the sciences,'' because it deals with the inner state and encourages a value system that deemphasizes the material. Even though there were considerable advances in practical fields like architecture, the knowledge was used to serve inner needs—witness the great Gothic cathedrals. Music, painting, and sculpture dealt almost exclusively with religious subjects. What little European portraiture was created from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries appears ''flat,'' lacking perspective. Sorokin pointed out that this was not because painters did not understand the rules of perspective. The basic rules of perspective had been known since the Greeks. They had no interest in perspective. They were more interested in rendering the inner state of their subject rather than a ''realistic'' outer image.

The key idea here is what constitutes ''real.'' A function of culture—perhaps the primary function—is to define reality, to provide principles by which people determine what they regard as most real. Of course, this function is very deep, virtually invisible to the members of a society. How a people define reality constitutes a defining feature of living together. Yet it operates so subtly that we take it for granted. In this way, the functioning of culture constitutes the deepest strata of social existence, and shifts in culture signal truly profound changes.

Sorokin argued that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were just such a period in Western culture, in which the predominant worldview shifted from the *ideational* to the *sensate*. A sensate culture regards the data of the senses as the primary arbiter of what is real. You immediately see this in Renaissance art. Perspective returns. Art becomes more ''realistic,'' as we judge it from today's sensate standards. Michelangelo, one of the great pioneers in this movement, dissected cadavers so that he could understand the musculature of the body and render it accurately. Historic figures like da Vinci made extraordinary contributions in both art and science, showing that similar principles and methods of inquiry and learning prevailed in both.

Sorokin claimed that the birth of modern science lay in the shift to a sensate worldview. When the data of the senses are regarded as the most fundamental reality, people develop an immense curiosity in the world around them. Measurement becomes a primary strategy for rigorous exploration of the data of the sensorium. Galileo showed how to measure the velocity and acceleration of a falling body, separate from its other properties, and, in so doing, established the cornerstone of modern science's methodology. In so doing, he also started a course of learning about the natural world based on fragmenting its inherent wholeness, because *all* measures are piecemeal accounts of a system in movement.

The sensate culture gradually became the dominant worldview of the modern age, steadily spreading to much of the world's peoples—so much so that to question its prem-

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ises today would literally constitute heresy, not unlike its pioneers faced 500 years ago. Without realizing it, all modern institutions are dominated by the sensate worldview. What is most ''real'' is what is most measurable. In management, this gives rise to the familiar dictum, ''what gets measured is what gets done,'' and to the pernicious distinction between ''the hard stuff''—what is measurable—and the ''soft stuff''—the human side of enterprise that is difficult to measure. When taken to an extreme, a sensate worldview actually denies the existence of anything not measurable, or at least relegates it to a category of the ''less real.'' This leads to bizarre consequences, yet ones we mostly accept without questioning. A child's standardized test score becomes more real than the gleam in her eye upon making a new discovery. A company pioneering a new, environmentally sound product watches its stock price fall because it allocates resources away from established products with toxins that poison animals and people. A society's GNP rises when everyone goes indoors on a beautiful sunny day, closes the windows, and turns on the air conditioning.

But, at some level, we know that these extremes represent taking a good thing too far. Five hundred years of cultural history do not wipe out millions of years of evolution. The data of our sensorium are far richer than what can be measured, and the inner world of our experience has not vanished simply because we have become culturally obsessed with measurement.

Sorokin also had a prediction. He believed that the turbulence and struggles ''in philosophy, religion, ethics, politics, economics, and social life'' of the twentieth century arose from the breakdown in the dominate sensate culture. He believed that something new was trying to be born, something he called an *integral culture*. He argued that the beginnings could be seen early in the century. Important artistic movements like cubism clearly broke with realism as defined by our senses. Physicists were showing us that our senses are fallible indicators, even of the nature of material things. What appears solid to our touch, like this page, is in fact mostly empty space at the atomic level. Picasso was not unable to render sensate realism, as his beautiful human figure drawings show. He was just interested in moving into more untapped realms of experience. Nor did the early architects of relativity and quantum theory reject measurement; they just moved beyond the small portion of the electromagnetic spectrum accessible to our senses. For Sorokin, an *integral culture* was based on a worldview that honored the outer and the inner, and sought to bring them into greater harmony. And he had genuine hopes that this transition would constitute a new breakpoint, ''a reunification of truth, beauty, and goodness in the emerging integral culture.''

It has been many years since I encountered Sorokin's thesis, but I have never been able to put it out of my mind. It has always seemed to me to be one of the most illuminating and hopeful perspectives on these times of extraordinary crosscurrents and confusion. As you read the articles in this issue—reflections by consultants, researchers, and practitioners on their personal and professional journeys—what do they say of the possibility that an integral culture is indeed emerging? In what ways do they embrace and find harmony in the culture of measurement and the culture of experience? Might there be a new science emerging that integrates empirical and inner investigation? Might some of the Leonardos of this age emerge from the world of commerce and organization? What can each of us do to participate fully in the Renaissance of the twenty-first century?

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