

The Human Spirit at Work: an introduction

A recent article by Sam Walsh (Chief Executive Rio Tinto Iron Ore), *Resetting the Moral Compass in Business - WA Business News December 2009*, ignited a desire to reflect on the topic in this column.

People in business generally become very suspicious, or at least guarded, when spirituality is raised in conversation. They see the topic as out of place in the work arena and any exploration of it is welcomed only in an air of secrecy...

Why go there? Why would we even speak about spirituality in the same breath as business? Indeed, in his address on this topic at St Georges Cathedral just before Christmas, Sam Walsh referred to this tension, saying “Indeed, some might say that putting spirituality and business in the same phrase creates an almighty oxymoron”.

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A disconnected world

Corporate collapse, financial crisis, corporate greed, white collar crime, deceptive board practises... they are all symptomatic of a chronic disconnect in human beings (and in particular); leadership. I am not picking on the big end of town. Personal debt, or the ability to manage our debt, is driven by an appetite to have more now and disregard the consequences. Wanting more, and measuring our worth by all things external has a human consequence. Thus, we hear people say that the world has lost its integrity, moral compass, commonsense and creativity; and that we merely exist without meaning.

'The world' of course, is a euphemism for my next door neighbours, work colleagues, lovers, and friends. And if I am to be honest, it is also ME - I am greedy, self-centred, have too much debt, consume beyond my needs and perhaps even fear that **who I am** is never good enough without the garments of prestige, power, control and what I possess.

On the other hand, I have the capacity to be thoughtful, kind-hearted, altruistic, hard working, creative, self-motivated and compassionate.

Our inner life and outer life are ONE

Who I think I am comes to work, goes home, has families; engages or disengages with everyday life. We all have the capacity to create **who we are** in our mind. This is our inner life. But our inner life and outer life are ONE. When we are talking about our inner world we are talking about our spiritual capacities. Our endowment to form ideas, attitudes, beliefs, vision, likes and dislikes are all due to the fact **that I think**. Our ability to manifest personal reality is a spiritual power. Spiritual, not in the sense of some deity - out there - but a natural faculty within our minds to create attitudes, beliefs, etc. that influence everything we call our life.

Similarly, we are sensate beings, having an innate capability to experience and know our existence; consciousness, again, a spiritual skill.

LIFE, that energy that endowers all matter with existence; is intelligent. I have near to no understanding of the four fundamental forces (gravity being one) of physics, and how they influence matter in our universe. Yet, I trust the elementary knowledge that these forces exist. And as science knowledge expands, so will our understanding of the influence they have on our universe. LIFE has intelligence, and that intelligence influences our human experience. Charles Chaplin alludes to this with "Think of the power that's in the universe, moving the earth, growing the trees. That same power is within you." Again this spiritual power...

Our physical, intellectual, emotional, behavioural and spiritual self is all one; there is no division. It is a fiction to see there is a division. Hence, we are coming to a place in our history where we are mature enough (conscious or self-aware) to see this fiction. Our whole being comes to work. To think we can isolate or quarantine part of ourselves at work is a fiction.

"Our mind is capable of passing beyond the dividing line we have drawn for it. Beyond the pairs of opposites of which the world consists, other, new insights begin."

Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) German author, novelist, 1946 Nobel Prize winner.

Acknowledging our inner world and outer world as ONE

"Spirituality in the workplace starts with the acknowledgement that every entity, individual, or group has spirit. Spirituality in the workplace has little to do with religion, but everything to do with interconnectedness. The awareness of being interconnected reaches much further than merely in the workplace - it affects the individual worker, the organisational network, and the interaction between organisations and communities."

*Extract from *Spirituality in the Workplace*. Joan Marques, Satinder Dhiman, Richard King.

Human beings are independent thinkers, have different levels of self-awareness (consciousness) and have access to LIFE'S intelligence. And the capacity to think, be self-aware and be open to LIFE'S intelligence is a universal spiritual force within each of us. Spiritual forces make up our being, and it is our whole being that comes to work and life.

See you next month as the reflections continue... ■ ■

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