

John Drew - Chapter for "Spirituality and Business"

Book Chapter

17 April 2010

Western Civilisation has changed profoundly every few centuries and is now changing again. The Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment developed spontaneously in a number of countries and changed fundamental thought - philosophical, intellectual, scientific and cultural – across the Western world. Those who have eyes to see and hearts to feel recognise that we are in the middle of another even more significant change because it is global, not just restricted to the former Western world.

New paradigms are being proposed in the context of dramatic increases in the speed and comprehensiveness of global communication. Climate change, resource depletion, disparity of wealth distribution, the possibilities of global warfare – nuclear, biological, and bacteriological – all are leading to millions of individuals - sometimes described as the “Cultural Creatives” to recognise that time is short and action urgent if our planet is to thrive or even survive.

This book is a step in the direction of discussing these changes. This chapter explains one approach – the idea of the transpersonal.

Transpersonal Psychology

For over fifty years transpersonal psychology has provided a framework for professionals, including scientists, psychotherapists and psychologists as well as individuals from different backgrounds, to develop the spiritual aspects of their work and explore matters beyond their everyday personal and material lives. As a concept its strength is confirmed by the increasing number of transpersonal psychotherapists and psychologists, an extensive literature, university posts in transpersonal psychology and a wide range of associations, seminars and websites concerned with transpersonal issues. This chapter gives a personal explanation of the transpersonal for a more general public. It provides some pointers to associations, websites and literature for those wanting to study the concept and related issues in more depth.

The word “transpersonal”

The literal meaning of “transpersonal” is “beyond the personal.” It describes a philosophy of life that puts less emphasis on individual and material issues and more on wider spiritual considerations. It is to do with both inner and outer conduct, with the vertical (the relationship of body, mind and spirit) and the horizontal (the relationship of the individual to the external world). It is a spiritual approach to living. Religious beliefs are not inconsistent with it. It is neither a religion nor a sect.

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“Big issues” – such as climate change, energy, population and migration are of increasing concern. Many believe they are too global to be addressed only at a personal or national level. The transpersonal goes beyond the personal to study possible solutions through communication and interconnection of global thoughts, feelings and actions between individuals of different cultures. Countless organisations work on these issues. The “transpersonal” is one of many approaches.

The transpersonal approach

Some people develop a transpersonal approach to life because they see the limitations of a material, purely scientific explanation of “consciousness.” When matters “beyond the brain” are discussed we need to consider questions such as “where is consciousness situated if not entirely in our heads? “ If elsewhere, where is elsewhere?

Others are attracted to the transpersonal because they no longer fully relate to the religion of their upbringing, which for them may have seemed a top- down canonical framework for living and being told what to do or think in matters spiritual. They seek both wider perspectives and something more than the restricted materialist definition and view of life current in consumer society today.

Tolstoy believed the only questions worth asking were “how to live?” and “what to live for?” The transpersonal suggests an integrated response to both questions. It affects the material approach through the way it suggests giving less priority to some aspects of the consumer societies in which we live and more to wider issues of living on this planet.

You can approach the transpersonal from both a scientific and a spiritual perspective. It seeks to bridge the largely uncharted waters between where science ends and spirituality begins. It can involve the scientific exploration of different levels of consciousness. These might include the ego level of western psychology and the mind level of eastern psychology. Levels of consciousness can be explained as states developed by meditation or peak experiences. Many people have peak experiences, a phrase proposed by Abraham Maslow, one of the early fathers of the transpersonal and famous for his Hierarchy of Needs. His researches initially described peak experiences as states of ecstasy, especially joyous and exciting moments in life involving sudden feelings of intense happiness and well-being, wonder and awe. They occur rarely, but more often than we realise as memories can fail to register them. They usually come on suddenly and are often inspired by deep meditation, intense feelings of love, by exposure to great art and music, or by the overwhelming beauty of nature. Some musicians talk of the “tingle effect” a feeling of intense joy experienced through the spine at the back of the head when listening to a particular theme or phrase. Towards the end of his life, Maslow felt it was not enough just to note peak experiences and forget them. They somehow needed to be integrated into our daily lives to help provide the

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driving energy we need to live them fully. Stan Grof, another early father, pioneered the understanding and development of peak experiences through exercises in holotropic breathing. There are many methods and trainings for learning about and experiencing the transpersonal.

The transpersonal is an aspect of spirituality which can be seen as involving the highest levels of human development in, for example, science, art, philosophy or sport. It can be pursued through meditation, prayer, ritual and contemplation.

Or it may just be an attitude towards love, trust, values and ethics especially expressed as a way of being connected to wider global issues and considerations. The transpersonal is concerned both with what Ken Wilber, another father figure, called ascending and descending issues. Descending issues connect with the work and thinking of scientists like Erwin Laszlo who developed the theory that all things and thoughts are interconnected at the quantum level. Ascending issues lead to contemplation of spiritual issues and higher consciousness. The transpersonal acknowledges the unity of all life and the value of acting through or seeking higher levels of consciousness.

Definitions

Definitions are an important and useful exercise and a glance at transpersonal websites shows how often definitions of the transpersonal lack clarity. Forty or more definitions of "transpersonal" have been identified. Just like "spiritual", "science," or "business" the word is used differently and, like them, is incapable of a unique definition. Definitions can be carried too far and will not be discussed here. The working definition of "spirituality" suggested by the editors of this book is; "the multiform search of people for a transcendent meaning of life that connects them to all living beings and brings them in touch with God or 'Ultimate Reality.'" The transpersonal as one aspect of spirituality relates to this definition.

The purpose here is not to convince or convert but to illustrate the relationship between spiritual and transpersonal awareness and to suggest that beyond the tangible, visible world of our daily existence there is a higher, non-material dimension waiting to be explored which perhaps contains values and truths relevant to inner development.

The transpersonal is a broad concept which brings people together from different races, religions, political and economic backgrounds who are reflecting on their inner lives and relations with wider global issues and doing this in ways which include rather than exclude many different traditional approaches to spirituality

Transpersonal Psychology

"Transpersonal" has a more specific meaning in therapy and psychology. Transpersonal psychology has developed over half a century as the fourth force in modern psychology,

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following the schools of analytical, behaviourist and humanistic psychology. It came into prominence in the late 1960s in the USA, where leading psychologists among them Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich and Stanislav Grof, strove to establish a new approach to the human psyche that focussed on the spiritual dimension of existence and liberated the search for meaning from the positivist, reductionist trends of the past. William James first drew attention to the concept over 100 years ago, but in psychology it was an approach identified and popularised by Carl Jung who concluded that many of his patients were concerned about the lack of meaning in their lives. They felt they had outgrown at least some aspects of the religious beliefs of their upbringing and were seeking a suitable spiritual dimension to replace what they no longer found sufficiently fulfilling in traditional top-down religions. Their problems were not so much of a spiritual nature as this lack of meaning. Jung thought these concerns were not being addressed by the conventional therapy and psychology of the time.

Transpersonal psychology has developed through embracing, researching and incorporating aspects of a multitude of spiritual approaches drawn from Eastern and Western religions, mystical and esoteric beliefs, mythical and ancient stories and rituals and therapeutic, artistic and scientific concepts. This influx of philosophies and practices means that transpersonal psychology remains a very flexible framework. Unlike its predecessors, it has no unified philosophy or rule book and no central authority, although it is formally recognised as a branch of psychotherapy and psychology in many countries where these professions are regulated. Moreover, its comparatively rapid spread across the world has ensured that the basic aim – the quest for an individual spiritual reality which is part of a greater, universal whole – is coloured and enriched by the deep traditions and background of different cultures. While it might seem to be too broad for rigorous study, there are many practitioners who are quite clear what **they** mean by the term. Granted the felt need for both clients and practitioners to bring into the consideration issues to do with the vertical as well as the horizontal, the inner as well as the outer aspects of being human, the concept of the transpersonal cannot just be dismissed as being too wide. It has to be wide because it concentrates in a way which previous psychological and psychotherapeutic practices have not done on issues to do with spirituality.

Transpersonal psychology now represents a framework - well developed, well researched and practiced in its manifold parts and used by therapists and psychologists both for their own development and for helping others contemplate big spiritual and psychological issues. "Who am I?" - "Where do I come from?" – "What is the future for humans and our planet?" – "What contribution can I make?" Whether approached scientifically or spiritually, it enables everyone who so wishes, to reflect and act on these eternal questions as they move from a personal to a wider spiritual perspective. It is a perspective that acknowledges the unity of all life and the need for acting from a higher level of consciousness – an approach much needed in these troubled times.

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The Transpersonal in Business

The framework of the transpersonal then is well understood in psychology and Psychotherapy. It is not really recognised in business except indirectly and intuitively. Practising transpersonal therapists and psychologists do not always use the word "transpersonal" with clients in reference to their work. They may refer to holistic values or use words such as personal development, spirituality, inner self, depth psychology, guided imagery, music therapy, breathwork or consciousness. This is in part the difficulty of explaining in simple terms what "transpersonal" means and in part because the transpersonal covers many different specialist or technical terms that they cannot easily be explained. Clients interestingly enough do not regularly enquire about the school followed by their therapist.

It proves difficult to identify businesses, (if there are any), which state they are run on transpersonal lines. It is nearly as difficult, however, to find ones which openly use the word "spiritual" to describe their culture. This does not mean that companies do not accept spirituality or even the concept of the transpersonal. Some companies are developing new definitions of their role and functions in civil society and this could include, implicitly or explicitly, the concept of the transpersonal.

The growing number of articles and books on spirituality and business reflects an interest in and demand for information about the subject. The transpersonal too might be of concern to some businesses, but they do not use the word "transpersonal" and are usually uncomfortable with "spiritual." Companies refer to values, ethics, morality, corporate social responsibility (CSI) or at the margin even love, consideration or kindness. Perhaps "spirituality" and "transpersonal" subsume some of these words as we strive towards developing new paradigms for management. These new paradigms for business are marginal at this stage to traditional role and functions. While many believe this will change during the next decades, there is no firm evidence yet of that these changes are fundamental.

The word "business" itself raises semantic issues. "The business of America is business." Calvin Coolidge said in one of history's famous misquotes. "After all, the chief business of the American people is business" was what he actually wrote - "... of course the accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of existence." Nearly all would agree. For Coolidge, business was close to religion, but again it all depends on what we mean by it! There is much disparaging or unthinking talk about "business," especially when referring to the cutting faces such as production, marketing, finance and especially activities only just on the legal fringes of operations.

It is too often ignored that most businesses are made up of ordinary people not "businesspeople" – specialists, administrators, receptionists, cooks, telephonists, librarians,

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researchers and the like who happen to work in "business." They could equally be working in government, academia, prisons or social services "Business" is frequently attacked or isolated in the same way as "Brussels" – meaninglessly except to reinforce prejudices or save thinking about matters European. Peter Drucker the great management writer once famously suggested that the best managed business in the world was the Salvation Army. Is the check - out person in your supermarket in business? What about the unemployed seller of the Big Issue Magazine? The Body Shop founded by Anita Roddick made a decision to employ the unemployable and established a Scottish soap factory in an area of widespread unemployment. A high proportion of profits were ploughed back into the local community. It "keeps the soul of the company alive" she maintained. She did not specifically mention the transpersonal and yet in talking of the soul of her company, she was not far away from it.

Ground breaking initiatives such as the AWARE programme of Shell are of interest although the word "spirituality" is not part of this programme. APEX - achieving personal excellence and the meditation silence service is another initiative. Also Integral Transformational Coaching and the concept of mindfulness. Over two hundred US hospitals have introduced mindfulness programmes. Some Google personnel follow courses in mindfulness supported by their company.

These initiatives address the "softer" functions of management and they are growing although there is little hard analysis of the rate of growth. Are they part of spirituality in firms? Perhaps the word "spirituality" will come to be accepted and used by business in the future just as "meditation" and "mindfulness" have come into common parlance. "Transpersonal" is not used in business and even "soul" or "spirit" are rarely found. There is perhaps the personal spirituality of some leaders in business - another subject - and of course there is widespread development of coaching in companies and concern about work-life balance. But most coaches in business avoid the word "spirituality."

Interestingly, business is not so worried about "ecology" as a word and a growing number of companies see the concept very tied in theoretically and practically with their business development. Some would claim that ecology has a spiritual dimension, but the "S" word has not yet come into business language and certainly not the "T" word Does this mean that the transpersonal and business have nothing in common? Certainly not!

Just because the word is not in common use does not necessarily mean that the concept is not applied. There is a growing literature dealing with the "softer disciplines" of management and evidence that there is now more emphasis on ethics, morality, values and even love and kindness.

There are also a growing number of professionals, psychologists and therapists supporting companies in their research and helping them indirectly to develop tentative steps towards new ways of doing business in a society which needs to take account individual aspirations,

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global issues and global values.

Questions such as these require an answer: are companies becoming more aware of new paradigms for business activity?

- What do these new paradigms have in common?
- Are there significant changes to the traditional business model of producing goods and services and selling them to make a profit for those who invested in the businesses?

As no serious research seems available to answer questions, It is only possible to give examples of the sort of things that are taking place

There are hundreds of small initiatives many of which have not even been written about which could indicate there are changes afoot

Here are some examples of activities that are known and documented

- Some companies invite qualified therapists including transpersonal therapists to animate training sessions in personal development
- Coaching has developed considerably to help employees become better members of teams working towards achieving company goals. Many companies train staff specifically for this work as well as using external consultants
- Employees are encouraged to find their own paths for personal and even spiritual development and some companies will support financially internal or external programmes. This would not have been considered some decades ago
- Individuals in companies feel more free to talk about their inner selves and related personal issues and discuss them with peers and even bosses
- Programmes in yoga, meditation, self-development and alternative therapies are widely available through companies and are advertised and spoken about in ways that were not possible in western society until comparatively recently.
- Sections of libraries and bookstores now have whole sections under titles such as spirituality, self-help, personal development with subsections on such subjects as mysticism, death and dying, near death experiences, psychology and therapy
- Business Schools are more concerned with these personal issues than they were fifty years ago, although most courses tend to be optional rather than core curriculum
- Human Resources divisions have replaced traditional personnel departments in companies and are headed by senior managers often professionally trained. As a staff rather than line department they not always considered equally as important as marketing and finance for example, but these departments integrate their activities throughout the other functions in ways that would hardly have been understood fifty years ago

Business may have a growing ethical dimension – “the good life profits man” goes the Egyptian saying. But is this just in some cultures and some countries? It is very difficult to

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generalise. Current banking and business scandals receive wide coverage and significant changes are likely to be made through regulation, but the global business model at present does not take into account a spirituality which, while ideal in the best of all possible worlds, is not part of the current concept of business. Ethics, morality, values, love and kindness have a contribution to make and it needs to be shown that these concepts will change and improve traditional business models.

This book shows the efforts that are being made to develop more caring organizations. We can only hope that more books in the future will be written on the subject of Business and Spirituality and that they will be written by business people who believe and can prove that businesses run in a spiritual way can profit all stakeholders. They are not yet written, but to times in hope? Many might wish that businesses were more ethically based and indeed can say so, but suggesting that spirituality is the way ahead is too far in advance of the main stream of companies and their employees in Western countries. Generalisations are difficult. Islamic practice is against the concept of interest which is based on an historical dislike of usury. Some cultures assume that some form of incentive is necessary to oil the wheels of business, while others would see this as bribery

Armies are now in motion as they have always been. But philosophers, scientists and spiritual leaders are needed more than ever to contribute across boundaries to wider planetary considerations and to communicate their concerns in comprehensible terms to wider audiences. The problem is increasingly one of communication across cultures and the transpersonal could have a role in this

The idea behind the transpersonal then is of developing a spiritual journey which concerns both internal and external aspects of an individual's life. It suggests a positive approach to the journey and recognises the individual as related to all other individuals and to the planet. It provides a broad way of reflecting individually on this our collective sparrows' flight from the cradle to the grave!

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The following books and websites may be of interest in looking at matters transpersonal and spiritual. They do not relate specifically to business and are a personal selection

The Transpersonal; Psychotherapy and Counselling John Rowan. 1993 and 2004 Routledge

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Revisoning Transpersonal Theory; a participatory vision of human spirituality. Jorge Ferrer. 2002 State University of New York

A Brief History of Everything. Ken Wilber. 1996

Approaches to Consciousness – The Marriage of Science and Mysticism. Brian Lancaster 2004

The Cultural Creatives. Ray and Anderson Random House 2000

After the Ecstasy the Laundry. Jack Kornfield Bantam 2000

Quantum – Einstein, Bohr and the Great Debate about the Nature of Reality.

Websites

The European Transpersonal Association

<http://www.eurotas.org>

Scientific and Medical Network - exploring and expanding the frontiers of science, medicine and spirituality

<http://www.scimednet.org>

Transpersonal Web Directory - references to a wide number of transpersonal associations and personal sites of well known specialists in transpersonal psychology

<http://www.psychosynthesisonline.com/dir/transpersonal-psychology.html>

Google website with extensive references

http://www.google.com/Top/Science/Social_Sciences/Psychology/Transpersonal/

Now, as throughout human history, the world is undergoing transformation, and business organizations are caught in the turbulence of a change they are not able to control. The fundamental assumptions of our Western orthodox worldview, on which our business institutions were founded, has proved inadequate to regulate either our society or our business institutions. New business structures—communities—are emerging based on a transpersonal worldview, one that embraces spirituality, psychology, and science in an integrated perspective on human experience. Transpersonal learning communities combine an emphasis on the development of human consciousness and business performance by adopting triple-loop learning practices. While they do business, transpersonal learning communities will simultaneously transform themselves and society as a competitive advantage.

American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 43, No. 8, 1262-1285 (2000)

What is spirituality at work? There's a wide range of perspectives. Some would say that it's simply embodying their personal values of honesty, integrity, and good quality work. Others

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would say it's treating their employees in a responsible, caring way. For others, it's making their organisation socially responsible in how it impacts the environment, serves the community or creates social change. And for still others, it's holding religious study groups or using prayer, meditation, or intuitive guidance at work. Some see God as their business partner or even their CEO. However, some observers fear the corporation has begun to co-opt the function of churches. Others fear spiritual beliefs or employers will impose practices, but to-date this has been extremely rare. Others warn about the potential for superficiality and the distortion of spiritual practices to serve greed.

Spiritual values that are widely embraced in business include integrity, honesty, accountability, quality, co-operation, service, intuition, trustworthiness, respect, justice, and service. Perhaps spirituality is not so much "the answer" to corporate problems, but rather a way to prompt an inquiry about them.

The transpersonal recognises and works with our yearning, ingrained in the human psyche, for something beyond the personal, beyond the material and the everyday. I and Performance Consultants International are committed to the wider adoption of the transpersonal in life and work and the area of corporate coaching. In recent years people especially in Western culture are waking up to the transpersonal within themselves through the emerging need to find meaning and purpose in all aspects of their lives and to work in the service of something beyond just making a profit. This was less urgent when we were more focussed lower down the Maslow hierarchy (on the survival, on belonging and material success), and when religion was the preserve of the spiritual. Affluence, global communication and the secularisation of society have now brought the transpersonal onto many people's agenda, both personally and at work. When coaches are familiar with the transpersonal dimension in themselves and the methods of addressing it in others, their capacity to help others is greatly enhanced. Even the most pragmatic of coaching interventions, such as daily task performance, is enhanced if the coach holds a transpersonal perspective. Coaching tends to be viewed in the business world as an action-orientated way of addressing problems. Transpersonal coaching is an empowering process which helps clients discover the power and effectiveness of who they really are. This core, source of our deepest values and qualities, is a well-spring of real strength, creativity and actualisation. Operating from this core enables clients to connect with their staff, the vision of the organisation and the global context fully and effectively. Transpersonal coaching is at the cutting edge and now more than ever vitally needed by business, individuals and humanity if we are to build a world we wish to live and work in that is mutually sustainable and beneficial to us all.

Sir John Whitmore

Transpersonal Coaching In Action

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