



Economic and Spiritual Arguments for Individual, Organizational and Societal Transformation

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Abstract

This paper explores issues of what matters most in individual, organizational and societal transformation - economic issues or spirit? Transformation is defined and literature on individual, organizational, and societal transformation is presented. We look at the standard arguments that economics are the driving force in transformation and then postulate that spirituality may be as much - if not more - of a driving force. Evidence is provided on the growth of interest in spirituality. Then three theories of transformation are offered, one at the level of individual transformation, one at the level of organizational transformation, and one at the level of societal transformation. Each of these theories incorporates elements of spirituality in order to understand the prerequisites of transformation.

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Why must anyone seek for new ways of acting? The answer is that in the long run the continuity of life itself depends on the making of new experiments....The continuous invention of new ways of observing is man's special secret of living.

(Young, 1960, quoted in Vaill, 1984: 18)

In an earlier work (Neal, Lichtenstein and Banner, 1998), we postulated that there are conditions that seem to underlie the transformational process. By transformation, we mean a discontinuous leap forward in consciousness, a paradigm shift, wherein the person is significantly changed in terms of world view, behavior and attitude. After reviewing some of the literature that documents the growing interest in spirituality, we will present our theories of prerequisites for transformation at the individual, organizational, and societal levels.

At the individual level, we postulate that individual transformation is most often precipitated by a "spiritual crisis", an event such as a divorce, life-threatening illness or losing one's job, that wrenches one into a new way of seeing. This precipitates the "dark night of the soul" where previous life anchors lose their meaning. A period of spiritual searching follows, which then culminates in a spiritual integration phase where learnings are applied to life situations.

At the organizational level, we suggest that "grace, magic and miracles" might be causal factors. How else can we explain the non-rational process by which organizations transform? The best laid plans of transformational consultants often yield results that they were NOT expecting, and that is the beauty of the process. It is not susceptible to reason and logic, confoundingly so. Chaos theory and self-organization theory give us clues as to how this might operate in an organization. Organizations are complex, non-linear, dynamic systems and, as such, they move and change in often unpredictable ways. At a

critical threshold, it seems that non-linear logic and spontaneously-felt action...grace, magic and miracles...that actually support organizational transformations.

At the societal level, another process, different yet intimately related to the first two, seems to be operating. Individually, it is the "spiritual crisis" that provokes non-linear change; organizationally, it is by grace and magic, the movement of Spirit, that seems to be involved. In societal change, we see what could be called the "critical mass" or "Hundredth Monkey" phenomenon at work. Habits of belief are what seem to hold together a shared reality construction; this is what Carlos Casteneda used to call a "consensual reality." Everyone just agrees that "this is the way that things are." These habit patterns, ways of thinking and experiencing the world, seem to hold steady until a new thought or habit reaches a level of potentiality such that an incremental increase in that new habit or thought propels the whole system into (literally) a new reality. One could look at the women's movement as an example of this phenomenon; in the early days, writers like Gloria Steinem (1983), Carol Gilligan (1982), and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) all were holding up a mirror to our patriarchal society and getting some agreement; then seemingly suddenly, lots of agreement started showing up, from both men and women. Some would say it was an idea whose time had come; but, what makes the fertile bed for such a coming? Perhaps, it is an incremental increase in the idea that causes a critical mass to be reached, and suddenly a "fringe" idea becomes mainstream.

Individual, Organizational and Societal Readiness

Having said all that, let us explore today's world for signs of transformation.

Thomas Kuhn (1970), the father of the concept of a paradigm and paradigm shifts, said that a prevailing paradigm or world-view would last until one could no longer ignore the threats to that paradigm, i.e., evidence that the paradigm no longer worked to describe the new reality. Also, he said that old paradigm proponents, out of fear of change, would desperately hold on to the old way of thinking in spite of the increasing evidence that it is untenable. Then change reaches a critical mass.....and pop.....we find ourselves in a new reality.

We suggest that today is a time ripe with potential for a major paradigm shift, individually, organizationally, and societally. Why do we say this? Over the past two hundred years or so, we in the Western world have increasingly moved to a secular view of reality. We have begun to worship the apparent power of technology and the material world. We have come to find our meaning in status, materiality, and personal aggrandizement. Science and religion have become widely separated; science has become for what "we know" and can measure; religion is for the unanswerable mysteries of life and the spirit. And yet, a gnawing sense of insecurity is rampant in the culture; we somehow know that, by buying the Lexus, it won't assuage the anxiety. We sense that somewhere , we have gone terribly wrong.

Why are we so pervasively insecure? Could it be a natural result of our disconnection from the spirit of Life itself? By focusing on the created world for our meaning and satisfaction, we become more and more removed from the realm of Cause, of Spirit. And this, by its very nature, is a very insecure place to be! No wonder the marketers can keep selling us the next material fix, with the implicit (sometimes, it is

explicit!) promise that this thing will make us feel whole. But, of course, it never does, because security cannot be found in the realm of the physical world, which is by its very nature, always disintegrating and changing. So, we keep chasing the elusive brass ring of security in the material world where it cannot be found. And we keep buying and buying...until we are exhausted.

A new idea is dawning, yet it is an idea based on the ancient wisdom of the world's spiritual traditions. This idea suggests that we are Beings of Spirit in a material form, living out a material existence. But, our primary nature is spiritual, not physical. This idea suggests that, as spiritual Beings, our primary responsibility is to Spirit, not to the material world. Our essential Self is eternal, it is inextricably linked to the Source of Life itself. By focusing our attention on the material, we have lost contact with the spiritual. But Spirit hasn't gone anywhere. A simple turning of one's face, a change of orientation, away from the material, worldly preoccupations toward the invisible, unmeasureable world of Being, can cause the personal transformation. The more people who do this, the more likely an organization can transform, and ultimately, the planet can be born into a new realm of consciousness.

The Need for Transformation

Management literature is replete with discussions about the need for individual, organizational, and societal transformation (c.f. Adams, 1984; Fox, 1994; Harman & Hormann, 1990; Hawken, 1993; Henderson, 1996; Maynard & Mehrtens, 1996, and Owen, 1997, Yukl, 1994). In general these authors argue that the pace of change is increasing and that in order to keep pace with it, individual, organizational and global

transformation is required (Hubbard, 1998; Russell, 1998). Individual transformation is needed because managers and leaders must be proactive leaders, open to change, and flexible enough to adapt to constantly shifting demands from their organizations.

Organizations must transform because of the shift to the global marketplace, increased competitiveness, and the rapid acceleration of change. Societal transformation must occur because of environmental degradation, shifts in economic power, inequalities in distribution of wealth, and unsolved social problems such as hunger and illiteracy.

For all these reasons, interest in transformation has become widespread. For most practitioners and management educators, the focus of interest is economic. In order to justify investing in any transformational processes, most managers focus on the bottom line effects of transforming their organizations, emphasizing increased performance, increased profits and reduced costs from transformation. Additionally, empirical research on organizational transformation (e.g. Romanelli & Tushman, 1994) and industry punctuations (e.g. Tushman & Anderson, 1986; Meyer, Barley & Goes, 1992) has also focused on the performance impacts of transformative change. These perspectives are based in the competitive and economic value of major, rapid change at the organizational and industry-wide level.

But is this what really matters most in transformation? Not all management scholars believe so. According to an important and growing stream of research, the core benefits of transformation are not economic, yet are critical to the success of individuals, organizations, and society. At the individual level, increased attention on personal meaning and transformative leadership has shown striking benefits of integrating personal development and awareness in everyday work (Torbert, 1991; Whyte, 1994).

Numerous recent books have emphasized the dramatic increase in interest in incorporating spirituality into management theory, management development, and management practice (Neal, 1997; Renesch & DeFoore, 1996). The titles of some of these books suggest ways in which individual, organizational and global transformation can be integrated: *Managing with the Heart* (Bracey, Rosenblum, Sanford & Trueblood, 1990); *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good* (Chapell, 1993) *Leading with Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit* (Bolman & Deal, 1995); *Managing with the Wisdom of Love: Uncovering Virtue in People and Organizations* (Marcic, 1997).

A similar argument is being voiced at the organizational level. For example, in their longitudinal research on 18 "visionary" companies which have been leaders in their industries for over 50 years, Collins and Porras (1994) show that their success was due to a focus on core values, not solely on the bottom line. Most importantly, the greatness of these organizations was identified with non-economic beliefs and an empowering culture--and yet they outperformed their comparison companies by as much as 16:1. Peters and Waterman (1982) found much the same thing in their research on "excellent" companies.

More globally, recent insights from throughout the natural sciences have shown the world to be an individual whole, a web of relationships in which any action has complex, non-linear and unpredictable effects (Gleick, 1987; Capra, 1996). Accepting the veracity of this research requires a shift in how we perceive and experience our world. This shift brings the values of environmental sustainability, social equality and global awareness to the forefront of our attention, recognizing that at its essence, management is much more than an economic endeavor. Moreover spirituality and consciousness, far

from being "far out" and irrational, have been found to be at the core of dynamic evolutionary systems, and thus must be included into our analysis and practice of organizational design and change (Ackerman, 1984; Banner & Gagne, 1995).

Forces for Spiritual Transformation

There is significant evidence that a spiritual awakening is occurring and this has vast implications for individuals, for organizations, and for society as a whole. There are three driving forces that have contributed to this trend. One has to do with demographics. The baby boomers, who were very influenced by the idealistic 1960s, are now reaching middle age. It's as if a large segment of the population is having a shared mid-life crisis. Many are looking at their lives and asking themselves questions that are essentially spiritual questions; "Who am I? Where am I going? What do I want to do with the rest of my life? What is my purpose? What is my true work?" These questions have implications for the type of work a person does, how he or she feels about the organization and its products and services, and how one balances work, family, community, and spiritual needs.

Another major force is the downsizing and other turbulent changes that organizations have been going through over the past decade. The concept of a secure job has gone the way of the black and white television. A new employee contract has taken its place (Noer, 1993), and employees are now expected to be "career resilient" (Waterman, Waterman, & Collard, 1994). The fact is, however, that many organizations are seeing labor as an expense that must be cut rather than seeing employees as assets in which to invest. People are scared and are feeling devalued and dehumanized (Galen &

West, 1995). They hunger for jobs that nourish their souls and that provide some sense of meaning in the chaotic and unpredictable workplace (Neal, 1995).

The third force is the turn of the century and the expectations that people have about a new millenium (Harman, 1993). On an individual basis many people use the New Year, their birthday, or a religious holiday as a time of reflection for the past year and a time to make commitments for the coming year. On a societal basis, it seems that the turning of the millenium gives us the change to reflect on where we have been as a human race, and to think about what kind of a future we want to create. Some are even asking, “Do we have a future if we continue to consume as we have and continue to ignore the damage we are doing to the planet?”

Evidence of the Growing Interest in Spirituality

In November 1994, *Newsweek* ran a cover article titled, “*In Search of the Sacred*” (Kantrowitz et al., 1994). The article described the growing interest in spirituality among Americans. It reported a number of statistics from a *Newsweek* poll that were fairly surprising. 58% say they feel the need to experience spiritual growth and 20% have had a revelation from God in the last year. The article also reported that sales of spiritual music and spiritual books have been skyrocketing. Places that hold spiritual retreats are booked months ahead of time. And spirituality is featured on major talk shows such as The Oprah Winfrey Show.

The Wall Street Journal reported that mainstream publishers are finally looking to tap the powerful religious and spiritual book market. For example,

[S]everal big publishers are producing their own Christian fiction, a market estimated by the Christian Booksellers Association at more than

\$40 million per year. For mainstream publishers, the move is no leap of faith. From their favorite TV shows to their choice of compact disks, Americans increasingly are drawn to spiritual subjects. Publishers have been hitting home runs with religious memoirs, biographies, essays and self-help books. Now they're looking at fiction as the next frontier. All kinds of answers to the question, 'What is the meaning of my life?' are selling," says Susan Petersen, president of Penguin Putnam Inc. (January 20, 1998, B1)

The following figures are from a Gallup Poll reported in the Wall Street Journal:

- 96% of adult Americans believe in God
- 90% believe in heaven
- 79% believe in miracles
- 73% believe in hell
- 72% believe in angels

In a large international study on workplace values, White and Renesch (1994) found that 55% of their respondents had experienced what they called a "personal transformation" in the last three years. Over two-thirds of the respondents expressed a desire to become a part of "a formal organization to further 'new thinking' and humanistic values in the workplace.

High Tor Alliance conducted research on contemplative practices in the workplace and found that people overwhelmingly felt that contemplative practices added to their creativity, openness, and built more conscious work cultures through enhancing community and deepening the mission and values of the organization (Schaefer & Darling, 1997).

There has been an intense focus on work as a major part of our lives, and there is a growing hunger for spiritual meaning. Increasing numbers of people are becoming interested in integrating their spirituality and their work and are hungering for transformation. In the early nineties there was one conference every other year on the topic of business and spirituality. Now there are often two or more conferences a month,

and they are being held all over the United States, as well as in Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Great Britain, and India. These conferences have titles such as “Rediscovering the Soul of Business,” “The International Symposium on Spirituality in Business,” and “The International Conference on Business and Consciousness.”

Although the interest in spiritual transformation has been growing dramatically, the theories and concepts that might guide us in implementation successful transformation processes have been woefully lacking. We believe that a focus on economic factors alone are likely to doom any transformational effort. Therefore we are offering three theories that describe the transformation process in hopes that this will further the dialogue about transformation. It is also our hope that these theories might guide the development of transformational processes that bring more meaning, purpose, balance and light into our lives, our organizations, and the world as a whole.

Individual Transformation: A Stage Model of Spiritual Evolution

This model is based on in-depth open-ended interviews with 40 people from different walks of life. These include a coffee grower, a duplicating clerk, a CEO of a non-profit, a female train attendant for Amtrak, a surgeon, a fitness trainer, an unemployed computer programmer, a corporate magician, a dentist and his dental assistant. Some of the questions were:

1. Tell me a little bit about your work background and your career choices. What role, if any, has spirituality played in the career choices you have made.
2. How did you come to be interested in integrating spirituality and work?
3. Tell me about a particularly satisfying or meaningful time when you were able to practice one or more of your principles, values, or beliefs at work..

4. Tell me about a time when you had difficulty integrating your spirituality and your work.
5. What are the costs and benefits to you of focusing more on spirituality in your workplace?

Data for this theory also came from a facilitated online discussion group on spirituality in the workplace that lasted for three years, with an average membership of 150 people and over 700 informal conversations with people interested in work as a spiritual path. The majority are from the United States, but there is also the CEO of the meteorological service in New Zealand, a Ninja master from Sweden, and consultants and academics from Australia, Norway, England, and Canada.

One of the key learnings is that interest in integrating spirituality and work is widespread. The interest exists in sole proprietors, small businesses, and at all levels of large corporations. It is in non-profit, for-profit, governmental and religious organizations. It also appears to be occurring in individuals in most of the industrialized countries and is not just limited to the United States. The types of careers where it seems to be most widespread are consulting, education, and healthcare. In spite of the growing interest, most of the people who are consciously integrating their spirituality and their work feel very alone and have difficulty finding others to talk to about this process.

This model addresses: (1) what seems to trigger a spiritual transformation in people, (2) the process of integrating the transformation into one's work, and (3) the effects that this transformation has on their relationship to their work. For example, some of the typical "causal factors" of spiritual transformation are:

- a spiritual crisis such as a life-threatening illness, a divorce
- losing one's job
- a profound spiritual experience that is the result of a near-death experience

- a personal epiphany experience related to being in a sacred place
- being alone in silence for an extended time
- being in nature.

The process of integrating the transformation into one's work appears to unfold in three major stages:

- (1) **Spiritual disconnectness**, where previous life anchors no longer have any meaning
- (2) **Spiritual searching**, a search for new core spiritual principles
- (3) **Spiritual integration**, learning to apply those principles in key aspects of one's life, including work.

These stages can be further broken down into five stages that individuals go through when they experience spiritual transformation. For simplicity's sake, this model leaves out the earlier childhood and adolescent stages.

1. **Segmentation:** People tend to compartmentalize their spirituality and to keep it separate from the rest of their lives. They may give it attention when going to church or temple, or when they say their morning prayers or do their daily meditation, for example. It has no relevance to work or to any other part of life. It is a separate part of one's identity that is walled off from the way an individual sees himself or herself most of the time. Spiritual practices are done mostly out of habit. During this stage, individuals tend to be motivated by economics and are preoccupied with accumulating material goods and with preparing for the future (college education for the children, a second home, retirement).
2. **Spiritual crisis:** Some major life event occurs that deeply challenges a person's value system, their perception of the world, their perception of themselves, and of their feelings about what's important. The life event may be the death of a loved one,

a serious illness, being laid off, or a divorce. Many questions arise about the role of work in his life, and there is much confusion about what, if anything, to do.

Economics are no longer a driving factor. There is a crisis of meaning, and material goods cannot satisfy the inner hunger. The individual often experiences paralyzing fear, uncertainty, and may even go into a depression. Sometimes the spiritual crisis comes about as a result of a transcendent or religious experience that cannot be explained in normal everyday terms. Even though the experience is positive at the time, the reaction is still frequently one of fear, uncertainty, and confusion, as the individual wonders if he or she is crazy.

3. **Dark night of the soul:** Among the research participants, this period tended to last about a year, and often people were not working during this time. It is a time of searching for answers, restructuring values, rediscovering the importance of spirituality, but also feeling very lost. It usually leads to a kind of letting go and trusting that there is a greater purpose, and asking to be shown what it is. The individual may return to the religion of his or her childhood, or may explore other spiritual traditions in the search for answers. Spiritual teachers, spiritual books, and support groups can be of tremendous help during this stage, as can a therapist who understands the psychology of the dark night of the soul.
4. **Right livelihood:** Often a moment of grace occurs and things suddenly fall into place. There is no way to predict how this will happen nor is there any way to will it to happen. The stage of Right Livelihood seems to come as a gift. The individual has a strong sense of what work to do that will nourish her spirit and will allow her to be of service. From this point on, synchronous events seem to occur that make moving

towards right livelihood appear almost effortless. Sometimes Right Livelihood comes about as a result of seeing one's current work in a new way, or redesigning one's job to fit with what the individual is passionate about in life. It is not uncommon for someone to take a lower-paying job that is more meaningful work, or that provides a more balanced work and family life. Right Livelihood is often the driving force behind the urge to be an entrepreneur; the ability to create a workplace that is not in conflict with deeply held values, and that can be nurturing and supportive of spiritual principles such as service, compassion, and empathy.

5. **Beneficial presence:** During right livelihood, the person lives passionately for their work. At some point there is a sense of imbalance as the "doing" overwhelms the "being." People then begin to simplify their lives so as to spend more time in spiritual practice, with the understanding that their "work" is to work on their level of consciousness. They no longer need to achieve in the outer world. This stage can be just a "time out" or a sabbatical where the individual takes an extended break from the outer world to nourish his inner world. Or it can be the final stage of a life well-lived, a sort of "spiritual retirement." The key focus on this stage is on inner development and working with the spiritual world for the good of mankind.

For most people, the effects of this process on their relationship to their work is to find new meaning in their work, a renewed and inspired commitment to performance through service, and a deepening of the valuing of relationships in the workplace. However, for some people the transformation process creates a severe conflict between the culture of the organization and individual's needs for spiritual development. In this case we often find people leaving their jobs (either physically or emotionally). It appears

that an increasing number of those who are leaving are starting their own businesses where they feel freer to live their spiritual principles more openly.

Of the people interviewed, 10% did not fit this model. These individuals are referred to as “Old Souls.” They seem to come into this life just knowing what they are meant to do for their work in the world and they seem to go about doing it quietly and without any struggle and fanfare. But for most of us, it seems that we need to be more conscious about choosing to make spirituality an important focus of the way we are in the world, and we find that our spiritual principles and practices can be extraordinarily helpful in improving our effectiveness at work and in creating a sense of meaning and purpose in what we do for a living.

Organizations have tended to ignore the fact that employees have a spiritual nature and that they may go through the spiritual crisis described above. Often, because of the lack of understanding and support, organizations lose good people because they don't know how to help people through this transformation process.

However, a few very progressive organizations such as McKinsey, Andersen Worldwide, AT&T, Public Service Electric & Gas Company, and Elf Atochem are beginning to offer training programs that are based on individual transformation processes. These programs may be a way to avoid people having to go through the spiritual crisis stage, because they emphasize an awareness of core values and look at whether or not behavior and goals are in alignment with those core values. They often require that participants adopt some form of contemplative or spiritual practice to support the transformational process. The early results of some of these efforts are being reported

at spirituality in the workplace conferences but have not yet been published. However, they look quite promising.

Exploring the Trans-Rational Logic of Transformative Change in the Workplace

This part of the paper reports on a research project exploring the actual moment of organizational transformation, and especially the relationship between theory and practice in creating major organizational change, as described by three individuals who have formulated theories of organizational change which they use as practitioners for generating change in formal organizational settings (Lichtenstein, 1997). Case study data on a number of successful transformations was collected through in-depth interviews with three practitioner/theorists—Peter Senge, William Torbert and Ellen Wingard. These were a select group of organizational change experts who had developed comprehensive theories for understanding and effecting organizational transformation that guided their own practice, and who's practices were known for their wide ranging positive success on many levels.

Ostensibly spirit was not at the core of any individual's change theory, and none of the stories seemed to be related to spirituality per se. Yet a marvelous if puzzling finding was revealed through my qualitative analysis of the transcribed interviews. Talking across nearly a dozen examples, each practitioner/theorist uses their theory to diagnose and design the initial stages of a change process. Their theory provides a rational logic for pushing the organization to the brink of transformation, and tools to support the overall effort. Yet, in all cases the transformations they helped generate were

sparked not through rational efforts at all—the actual ‘cause’ of transformation was explained in terms of "grace," "magic," and "a miracle."

How can we explain these findings? By definition the terms—grace, magic, and miracles—identify phenomena that cannot be scientifically or logically explained: Formally grace is defined as "unmerited divine assistance," magic means "an extraordinary influence seemingly from a supernatural source," and miracle is defined as "an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs" (Websters 1996). These words connote a felt sense of going beyond theory and rational action, suggesting that the actual transformation is out of the (rational) control of the practitioner. That is, as the theory is stretched to its limit, what actually sparks the transformation is somehow un-reachable through logic, not tied to rationality. What then can be the explanation of this process?

Answering this question is especially crucial, since the widespread expansion of transformation and spirituality at work requires some logical explanation and theory. My own exploration of this data and these issues has focused on the theories of chaos and self-organization, which provide new ways to model the non-linear, complex behavior of dynamic systems (Gleick, 1987; Goerner, 1994; Goldstein, 1994). These theories have begun to be extended to organizations (e.g. Thietart & Forgues, 1995; Cheng & Van de Ven, 1996; McKelvey, 1997), but are just beginning to be used to understand transformation in and of organizations (Dubinskas, 1994; Stacy, 1995; Lichtenstein, 1996).

Chaos and Self-Organization can link with more mainstream theories to provide an explanation for the apparently spiritual elements of organizational transformation.

According to these case studies, there is a logical framework that produces rational actions in the first stages of an intervention effort. However, at a critical threshold it is non-linear logic and spontaneously felt action—grace, magic and miracles—that actually supports organizational (and personal) transformation. Theories of chaos and self-organization can integrate the deductively logical and non-linear aspects of this process, through understanding the dynamics of far-from-equilibrium dynamical systems. These complex systems show how seemingly random events occur as high degrees of order, and why unexpected events can become amplified into new regimes of order that increase the capacity and functionality of the organizational system.

As such, these new models may also suggest a response to the question of whether economics or spirit are more important in organizational transformation. Namely, the cause of transformation may indeed be spirit, yet the result may indeed be an increase in effectiveness and productivity within the system.

Transformation at the Societal Level

The two previous sections of this paper focus on the micro (individual) and group (organizational) process of transformation. Now, let's look at the macro (societal) perspective. At this level of analysis, we can say that the "building blocks" of societal transformation are individual and group transformation. This is an accurate statement, but there is more to this process. By now, most people have heard of the "hundredth monkey" phenomenon. (Keyes, 1983) In 1952, a group of scientists were providing a group of Japanese monkeys (*macaca fuscata*) with sweet potatoes dropped in the sand. The monkeys liked the sweet potatoes, but disliked the grit of the sand. So, one monkey took

the potatoes down to the stream and washed them off before eating them. The monkey taught this trick to her mother, and so it went...monkey after monkey teaching other monkeys to wash the potatoes before eating.

Then, an amazing thing happened. After a certain critical mass of monkeys were washing their potatoes (say, 99 monkeys), the next monkey to learn this process caused it to instantaneously be transmitted not only into the entire monkey tribe on that island but to all monkeys in nearby islands. The added energy of this "hundredth monkey" somehow created a breakthrough of transformational proportions. Dr. Rupert Sheldrake has proposed a theory to explain this phenomenon (Sheldrake, 1986). Collective belief patterns form what he calls "morphogenetic fields" , which are actually habits of thought, and these maintain a relative permanence through what he calls "morphic resonance", i.e., people agreeing with the belief add strength to the pattern and it becomes "fixed." But, if a critical mass of people begin thinking a different way, then a new field of belief is created and instantaneously, transformation in thought (and therefore behavior) can occur. This work by Sheldrake is controversial within his discipline (biology), but it does give a new way to look at a process which often occurs outside the range on conventional change theory to explain.

As mentioned in earlier, chaos theory, systems theory and the "new physics" have begun to inform management theory and practice (Senge, 1990; Jaworski, 1996; Wheatley, 1992; and Youngblood, 1997). Terms like dissipative structures, synchronicity, self-organizing systems , connectedness, wholeness, and invisible fields that shape behavior are becoming commonplace in management thought and practice. David Bohm has described reality as an "unbroken, seamless whole" and our perception

of separateness is merely a habit of thought (Bohm, 1983). In other words, modern physics says we are part of a larger whole, interconnected with all life, but we experience ourselves as separate from each other and from Nature itself. So, the nature of "objective reality" in a very real sense doesn't matter to us; what matters is our experience of reality. And that experience is created by our individual (and shared) paradigms.

A culture promotes a particular cultural paradigm in its socialization processes. Once learned, this cultural paradigm becomes "the ways things are" and, as such, are basically unquestioned and assumed to be true. (Banner and Gagne, 1995)

Cognitive theory and Eastern mysticism have converged to declare that we, in fact, create our collective reality by agreement in thought, i.e., we see what we believe. (Castenada, 1974; Dyer, 1995). So, a good question to ask at this point is this: what is the nature of the dominant societal belief pattern that has created our experience of reality?

One researcher had posited that there are four main beliefs that dominate our cultural paradigm and, therefore, our experience of reality. (Hotchkiss, 1996) These beliefs are : (1) I am a body (our main focus is on health, feeling good, avoiding disease, etc., and my experience of life is dominated by my experience of my body and its limitations); (2) I am guilty (maybe through religion-"original sin"- or through guilt programming from parents and others, we get the idea that we are deeply guilty); (3) I am separate (we believe that we as individuals are set loose at birth to fend for ourselves in a hostile universe); and (4) I am incomplete (in and of ourselves, we are inadequate and we need to add material possessions, degrees, titles, etc. or a marriage partner to make ourselves whole). These dominant beliefs lead us to concluding that we are unsafe in the world and that we must control everything to get what we want (or to avoid unwanted

outcomes). (Schaef and Fassel, 1988) This control assumption leads us to addiction and to what writers are now calling the power-over or dominance paradigm. (Banner and Gagne, 1995; Breton and Largent, 1996) Up until the fairly recent influence by chaos theory, systems theory and the "new science", management thought has been dominated by the assumption that the job of the manager is to control everything, so that things turn out "right," i.e., according to plan.

But Lichtenstein (1997) found that when organizational transformation occurred, it usually seemed like "grace, magic or a miracle." Could it be that we have to let go of the control tendency we all share to allow for transformation to occur? Could it be that "Let go and let God", a familiar religious phrase, is a prerequisite for transformation at any level, i.e., individual, organizational or societal? Could it be that our propensity to trust only our physical senses and what we can measure with our sciences is related to our need to dominate and control? So, perhaps, societal transformation will occur when enough of us (a critical mass?) decide to let go of the control imperative and trust the design and control inherent in life itself. The so-called New Age movement has been identified with the phrase "go with the flow"; maybe there is wisdom in that approach. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). All of this is not saying that we should give up on controlling anything, but, rather, that we should be aware of invisible fields of thought and belief that govern our experience and be ready to loosen our grip on "reality" in order to let new wisdom come in. In this way, paradigm shifts can occur (and societal transformation can take place) to propel us into our next stage of collective evolution.

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