

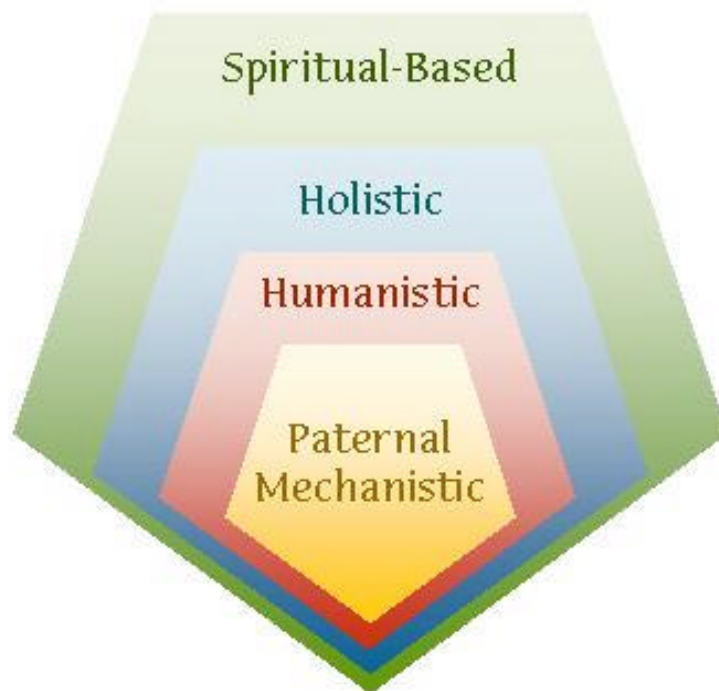
# *Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership*

by  
William C. Miller and Debra Ruth Miller

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the last 100 years, four distinct contexts of business leadership have emerged in the West: *paternal-mechanistic*, *humanistic*, *holistic*, and *spiritual-based*. Each context is now in varying stages of maturity and has its own influences from science and from either psychology or spirituality. Each measures leadership success by its own view of the purpose of business and leadership. And each operates by its own understanding of how to lead and manage people.

We begin this article with the historical and current perspectives of the first three contexts. We then articulate what this emerging, *spiritual-based* context looks like at this time and include early examples of executives (from companies like Motorola and Medtronic) who are leading from a spiritual-based context. Finally, we share the possible stages of development that spiritual-based leaders may go through and give a glimpse of what the future of business leadership might look like from a spiritual-based context.



## ***Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last 100 years, four distinct contexts of business leadership have emerged in the West: *paternal-mechanistic*, *humanistic*, *holistic*, and *spiritual-based*. Each context represents a fundamental change in how we view the *nature* of business leadership. As we embrace and fulfill these contexts of business leadership, we believe it will naturally fuel a fundamental change in *the nature of business itself*, such that business and its leadership can take its rightful place in solving what seem to be the unsolvable problems in the world today.

One way of understanding the core process of business is to view it as, “the conversion of matter, energy, and knowledge into useful products and services for customers... through the power of mind and spirit” – where spirit connotes courage, enthusiasm, meaningfulness, and transcendence. Therefore, business has a special affinity to three fields of study: *science* (matter and energy), *psychology* (knowledge and mind), and *spirituality* (spirit). We have chosen to focus on the influence these three disciplines have had, from among all those that can create a context for business leadership.

The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary<sup>1</sup> defines context as: *the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: an environment; coherence*. Based on this definition, we purposely chose to use the word “context” to describe the four fundamental views of the nature of business leadership. Within each context we will describe the interrelated conditions that allow it to exist – the “mega-view” of “the way things are” – and that form the basis from which leadership is defined and practiced.

Each of the four contexts of business leadership – from the *paternal-mechanistic* (now in its decline), to the *humanistic* (now in its prime), to the *holistic* (now in its development), to the *spiritual-based* (now emerging) – still exists. Within a company, different leaders might operate from any one of these four contexts, and any single leader might operate from a blend of contexts, especially if he or she is “in transition” in their view of leadership. Thus, they all currently co-exist, sometimes not very peacefully, in today’s business world.

In this article, we begin with the historical and current perspectives of the first three contexts as they have occurred in the West. We then articulate what this emerging, *spiritual-based* context looks like at this time, including early examples of executives who are leading from a *spiritual-based* context – from Motorola, Medtronic, the Hard Rock Café, Tom’s of Maine, and Kaiser Permanente Hospital. Finally, drawing from various spiritual traditions, we describe how spiritual-based leaders might develop; and then, using this as a frame of reference, we share a glimpse of what the future of spiritual-based business leadership might look like.

## HISTORICAL AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

### The Paternal-Mechanistic Context for Business Leadership

#### **Influences from Science and Psychology**

After Sir Isaac Newton<sup>2</sup> uncovered the “laws of gravity and motion,” showing that cause-and-effect forces could describe natural phenomenon, people began to view the universe as a great, mechanical “clock.” Over the next centuries, scientific investigation took on the task of defining the deterministic, “clockwork” nature of everything, including life itself. The hope of finding new ways to control nature, and people’s behavior, helped to fuel the search for new “scientific laws” in fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, economics, and eventually psychology.

When Charles Darwin<sup>3</sup> pronounced his views on evolution, people took it as one more sign of a deterministic, cause-and-effect explanation of life. Darwinian “survival of the fittest” became wedded to the theories of Robert Malthus<sup>4</sup>: that people had to compete for a diminishing supply of resources. From “The Wealth of Nations,” by the 18<sup>th</sup> century professor of Moral Philosophy, Adam Smith<sup>5</sup>, people extracted a philosophy that “seeking to gratify self-interests, within the ‘market forces’ of capitalism, would *somehow* balance out for the good of everyone.”<sup>6</sup>

By 1900, the role of science was to create new inventions and learn how to mass-produce them. Thomas Edison<sup>7</sup>, as the inventor-par-excellence, and Henry Ford<sup>8</sup>, with his mass-production assembly line, were two of the biggest “heroes” of the day. It was only a matter of time before scientific understanding would also be applied to managing “the parts” (people) of the corporate machine for greatest efficiency and profitability.

By 1910, the new fields of psychology and psychiatry were emerging with their own version of “determinism” as it applied to understanding human nature. Sigmund Freud<sup>9</sup> developed a relatively mechanistic view of the inner-psyche. The forces of “id” and “super-ego” battled for control, with the “ego” as the referee. Later, B.F. Skinner<sup>10</sup> developed “behaviorist” psychology saying that all behavior was based on a mechanistic interplay of stimulus-response-reinforcement.

#### **The Purpose of Business and Leadership**

So how did all this play out in actual business? From this view, business is “survival of the fittest,” and competition is a win-lose game. The goal of business and its leadership is wealth creation – specifically, profit-maximization – on behalf of business owners.

Running the whole show is the “father figure” owner (or executive on behalf of the shareholders). Across ages and cultures, the patriarch of a family was the man who was revered as having the experience, as well as the power, to guide the good fortunes of the family and pass

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along the wisdom and experience of “those who have gone before us.” Just as this patriarchal figure could bring warmth or coolness to the family relationships, patriarchal owner(s) could manage their companies with personal warmth or impersonal coolness.

In this context, business is often compared to “warfare,” where business leaders use the analogy that an efficient and highly competitive business is one that is a “military machine” that can “crush the competition.” It’s also no surprise that business leaders adopt the military model of command-and-control, with patriarchal, “top-down” power to ensure that the ultimate control of a business is in the hands of the owners.

While greed<sup>11</sup> is not inherent in this context, if greed is combined with wealth creation, self-interest quickly becomes selfish interest, and even employees, consumers, and nature can become the losers. (Thus, were born anti-trust, fair-labor, consumer protection, and environmental protection laws.)

### **Leading and Managing People**

In this leadership context, the common employee is usually seen as an interchangeable part in the big machine. Tasks/jobs are well defined, typically by “job designers,” who usually embrace the efficiency ideas of Frederick Taylor<sup>12</sup>:

*The principle object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the owners coupled with the maximum prosperity for the employee. Maximum prosperity for the employee means not only higher wages than are usually received by men in their class, but of more importance still, it also means the development of each man to his state of maximum efficiency. Maximum prosperity can exist only as a result of maximum productivity.*

To generate this maximum productivity, Taylor inaugurated “scientific management” in which not only jobs, but also tasks within jobs, are specified in detail. Employees are primarily extrinsically motivated, and good ones are those who just do what they are assigned. And if one person can’t do the job, the “Personnel” department brings in a replacement.

Each person is expected to perform within clearly defined parameters; managers want employees to do only what they are told. Directing them is a matter of “command and convince” leadership; they are rarely consulted for their ideas. Motivation is by “carrot and stick;” i.e., rewards and punishments. By the mid-century, Skinner’s “behavior reinforcement”- with its mechanical stimulus-response practices -- was widely accepted and implemented.

Career paths up the corporate ladder are equally well defined. Win/lose competition is often the name of the game for employees vying for the best jobs. Top leaders encourage internal competition, believing it will bring out the best of everyone - or single out the “parts” that need replacing. When performance appraisals are done at all, it is the boss who does the assessment and delivers the “done deal” results.

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The impersonal coolness of the “mechanistic” aspect of this context can be warmed by the “paternal” aspect. For example, IBM’s Thomas Watson Jr.<sup>13</sup> said:

*I believe the real difference between success and failure in a corporation is how well the organization brings out the great energies and talents of its people.*

Still, bringing out the energies and talents of people are mainly in the interest of serving the overall goals for efficiency and productivity. For many insiders, “IBM” stood for “I’ve Been Moved.” In this context, people are valued mainly by how useful they are in helping the company achieve its goals; and refusing a move could stymie a career.

### **Wisdom and Limitations**

This *paternal-mechanistic* context for business leadership arose at the turn of the century, dominated leadership thinking well into the 1960’s, and still continues to dominate in some circles today. We acknowledge the wisdom of this context as:

1. Honoring the experience and wisdom of "those who have paved the way before us."
2. Using resources efficiently.

In contrast, we can acknowledge two limitations:

1. Discounting the inherent capability and motivation of man to do good and be good.
2. Believing that life (including people and nature) could and should be used and controlled for achieving one's own (self-centered) goals.

### **The Humanistic Context for Business Leadership**

#### **Influences from Science and Psychology**

In the early 1900’s, Albert Einstein<sup>14</sup> shook the world of physics with his theory of relativity. Our understanding of the world through our day-to-day senses, so well described by Newton's physical laws, didn't describe what happened at speeds close to that of light. Time, space, and mass were all *relative* and *situational* – it all depended on where you were observing the events from. It didn't make logical sense to the mind, but it was verifiable in the science labs.

The great quantum physicist Werner Heisenberg<sup>15</sup> once said that it takes up to 50 years before the physicist's view of the nature of the universe makes its way into the mass consciousness of society. By the 1950’s and 60’s, “relativity” was a core theme of this *humanistic* context. The writings of the existentialists – Frederick Nietzsche<sup>16</sup>, Albert Camus<sup>17</sup>, Jean Paul Sartre<sup>18</sup> -- became popular. They saw man as being "thrown into this world" with the "freedom" to make their own personal meaning out of it all – i.e., there was no inherent meaning, and we had to create a meaning that fit our own situation in life. Truth and values were all "relative."

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#### **Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership**

Abraham Maslow<sup>19</sup> developed his view of man's hierarchy of needs: that man was by nature seeking to express his full potential -- to self-actualize -- after taking care of more basic needs. Thus, the humanistic notion of "finding and filling needs" was born.

### **The Purpose of Business and Leadership**

Belief in "that's just the way it is" began to dissolve, and people began to question assumptions about religion, politics, societal values, and -- yes -- business. From this humanistic view, the purpose of business and leadership is still wealth creation, but with a win-win mentality in which "enlightened self-interest" supplants "self-interest." That is, everyone who assists in creating the wealth (shareholders, management, and employees) should directly benefit from it. To instill stronger motivation for performance, a larger group of managers and employees are offered the opportunity to become shareholders through various employee bonus and stock option plans. And the code of business is more like "profits with dignity" than "profits -- period."

It took the genius of Edward Deming<sup>20</sup> to bring the humanistic view into practical business, first in Japan and later in the USA and Europe. Deming showed, through Total Quality Management (TQM), that poor quality costs, and high quality can save. He recognized the value of ideas from everyone in a hierarchy, not just from specialists or management. He saw that fear was the biggest obstacle to productivity -- rather than a prime motivator to get the work done.

By the 1990's, one indication that this humanistic context had matured was when Fortune Magazine began to annually publish the "100 Best Companies to Work For" (based on the work of Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz<sup>21</sup>, Their assessments are based on five "humanistic" criteria: credibility/ trustworthiness, respect, fairness, meaning of work, and sense of family/community.

### **Leading and Managing People**

Douglas MacGregor<sup>22</sup> called the paternal-mechanistic understanding of human nature, that people needed to be directed and controlled, "Theory X." He formulated his "Theory Y" as its' opposite: people were basically good; they wanted to do a good job; they could be trusted to do what was right.

By the 1970's, "organization development" emerged as a specialty. "Value-based management," "visionary leadership," "team building," and "empowerment" were valued capabilities. How to motivate people in this humanistic context became "relative" to their needs. How to lead people became "situational," depending on the circumstances. We began to see "situational ethics" and "situational leadership."

Within this humanistic context, people are considered a resource to be managed sensitively. Thus the Personnel department evolved to "Human Resources." "Win-win" problem solving is

prominent in this context, with a focus on balancing the individual wants and needs of one person or company with another's.

Sports metaphors still abound, but with less emphasis on the "team as machine" and more on "working together as a team." Leadership is more consultative, even participative, with an emphasis on empowerment. Motivation focuses more on filling people's Maslow-type needs than on rewards and punishments. Even marketing lives by the slogan, "Find a need and fill it."

The leader's job is to help employees become self-actualized "intra-preneurs" who invest both their emotions and their minds, for their own sake and the organization's. The job of leaders is to provide the right environment for the individual growth and performance of workers. As William Hewlett<sup>23</sup>, co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, said in "The HP Way":

*Men and women want to do a good, a creative job, and if they are provided with the proper environment they will do so.*

The employees' concern is how to fulfill their human potential through the workplace. Leaders see people as having unique talents (as well as needs), and build jobs around that talent as much as fit talent into pre-defined jobs. With empowerment, power is shared, but within limits: authority is given to make incremental changes, but not often significant ones. It's the norm to involve the employee in assessing their annual performance appraisals before the manager does the final write-up.

This attention to individual growth fosters a weakening of parent-child bonds between employer and employee. Employee loyalty decreases as they identify more with their profession than their company. And company loyalty also decreases: with re-engineering and downsizing, any idea of "lifetime employment" goes out the window.

## **Wisdom and Limitations**

This *humanistic* context of business leadership first gained momentum in the 1950's and 60's, and became the norm of many major corporations by the 1980's. We acknowledge the wisdom of this context as:

1. Recognizing the essential goodness and work ethic of people.
2. Providing opportunities for individuals to actualize their potential, which includes self-actualization as well as work abilities and aspirations.

We can further acknowledge two limitations:

1. Focusing on *needs*, where motivation occurs when something is perceived as missing.
2. Focusing on *individualism*, where the "win-win" solutions are between individual interests, and do not necessarily include the interest of the company or the interest of society.

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### **Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership**

## **The Holistic Context for Business Leadership**

### **Influences from Science and Psychology**

An ever-deeper understanding of the physical nature of the universe, along with a reinterpretation of evolution, helped lay the foundation for this third *holistic* context. From the 1930's forward, physics evolved beyond Einstein's relativity to the world of quantum physics, particularly through the work of Niels Bohr<sup>24</sup> and Heisenberg (1999). *Probability* replaced *certainty* in our understanding of matter and energy. And at the micro-level of the atom, the distinction between "object" and "observer" disappeared; the two were a "system," a single field of inseparable interaction.

Through Ilya Prigogine<sup>25</sup> and others, the study of "systems theory" and "complexity science" began to model the seemingly innate wisdom of the self-organizing nature of life. We began to see that uncertainty and complexity are an essential part of the inter-connectedness of all activity, including business.

Simultaneously, people began to re-interpret the popular interpretation of "Darwinian evolution" ("survival of the fittest"). They noted that Darwin himself said, "It's not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change." As pointed out by two Chilean biologists, Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana<sup>26</sup>, life responds not to the "survival of the fittest" but to the great experimentation of those "fit enough to survive."

In this holistic view, business and nature are so inter-dependent that the economy as a whole is seen, in business terms, as a "wholly owned subsidiary of the natural environment." If the environment goes bankrupt (resources depleted), the economy will go bankrupt with it.<sup>27</sup> This begins to bring a new perspective to "win-win" by integrating individual needs with the good of the whole.

Carl Jung's<sup>28</sup> notion of the "collective unconscious" reflected our inter-connectedness. Later, Stephen Covey<sup>29</sup> elevated the discussion of "situational values" to that of "universal principles." In these "holistic" psychologies, people are motivated by something beyond "individual needs" and "individual self-actualization." They are "moved" to do good work on behalf of a dual-focus: self-focused achievement and the well being of the larger whole (which are inter-dependent). That's what makes our "human ecosystem" function and stay in balance.

### **The Purpose of Business and Leadership**

Peter Block<sup>30</sup> was the first to seriously critique the limitations of the humanistic context for business leadership – which he felt was still using and controlling people and nature to achieve



their own self-centered goals. He employed the term "stewardship" to replace "management." Management is the act of "handling" things, while stewardship is the art of taking care of what's been entrusted for safekeeping: in this case, the interests of customers, employees, society, future generations, and nature itself.

In this holistic context, business and leadership have a key role in transforming society and our quality of life. As Willis Harman<sup>31</sup> pointed out:

*Leaders in world business are the first true planetary citizens. They have worldwide capability and responsibility. Their decisions affect not just economies, but societies... and the world problems of poverty, environment, and security. World business will be a key actor in the ultimate resolution of the macro-problem. The business corporation is far more flexible and adaptive than the bureaucratic structures of government.*

The goal of business and leadership evolved beyond "wealth creation for *shareholders*" to "wealth creation for the optimal benefit of all *stakeholders*" -- including shareholders, employees, customers, community, nature, society, and future generations. "Corporate social responsibility," "conscious consumers," and "socially responsible investing" have become new trends, being driven by consumers voicing their preference for dealing with companies that act as ethical stewards for the good of the larger whole.

Novo Nordisk<sup>32</sup> is the world's largest supplier of insulin and industrial enzymes. It's Chairman, Mads Ovlisen, has led its commitment to measuring its success by the "Triple Bottom Line" of environmental, social, and economic performance. How committed? In the company's "Putting Values Into Action: Environmental and Social Report 1999," he stated:

*I ask you to consider this statement: 'Social and environmental performance is as important as financial performance.' Do you agree or not? When we asked the same question to our employees in 1999, 74% agreed with this statement. This is gratifying for me because it shows that social and environmental thinking is now well established throughout our organization.*

## **Leading and Managing People**

From this holistic, systems perspective, the organization is now clearly not a machine; everything is inter-related, as in a complex ecosystem. As Meg Wheatley<sup>33</sup> points out, not only is a business inter-dependent with its community, it is itself a microcosm of community, to be governed more as a society than as a machine.

In this context, the "people" aspect of the organization evolved beyond "Personnel" and even "Human Resources" to that of "Human Capital": the recognition that people are, in fact, the principle assets of wealth creation, especially in the knowledge-intensive, learning organizations that Peter Senge<sup>34</sup> describes. Since those assets go home every evening, they need to be treated in

a new, "stewardship" way. Like managing a complex ecosystem, "control" lies more in having a common purpose and value-system rather than the "command-convince" or even "participative empowerment" leadership styles.

Job descriptions have started to become obsolete as employees primarily engage in self-organizing project teams. While senior executives still have authority, power is also a function of "local" governance in teams. The acceptance of ideas is based on the quality of the idea, not on position or authority. Power becomes more a matter of serving than controlling.

A "new contract" between employer and employee has emerged: each person is treated as an "individual company" responsible for his or her own career. Career growth is less in terms of positions and promotions, and more in terms of variety, personal development, and scope of assignments. The entire range of people working with, and impacted by, a person gives input to "360-degree" performance appraisals.

### **Wisdom and Limitations**

This *holistic* context for business leadership was first voiced in the late 1960's and gained momentum in the 1980's and 90's. It has yet to emerge as the norm of major corporations, but there are signs of its increasing strength, such as the momentum of "corporate social responsibility." We acknowledge the wisdom of this context as:

1. Recognizing the interconnectivity of people, nature, and business enterprises.
2. Emphasizing the holistic nature of values and principles from which to operate harmoniously and creatively.

We also acknowledge two limitations:

1. Basing motivation primarily on self-focused achievement, even as it might benefit the larger whole.
2. Focusing personal and business goals only on having a better "in-this-world" life, rather than taking into consideration the spiritual life that is both "in this world and transcends it."

By 2000, business leadership was primarily a mixture of these three contexts: *paternal-mechanistic* (its influence in decline); *humanistic* (in its prime); and *holistic* (on the rise). Yet another view of the nature of business leadership has begun to emerge, one that offers us an opportunity to return to the true roots of our human nature.

This context is the emerging *spiritual-based* context for business leadership.

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### **Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership**

## THE EMERGING *SPIRITUAL-BASED* CONTEXT FOR BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

In order to understand “spiritual-based,” we begin with “spirit,” which comes from the Latin “spiritus” meaning “breath.” Spirit<sup>35</sup> is *the animating principle, the supernatural essence (beyond material nature), which “breathes” life into creation.*

Drawing from the roots of “spirit,” we define spirituality as *the act or state of relating to the Source of creation and the essential nature of life, both physical and transcendent.*

People throughout the world may describe their spirituality in varied ways, and may or may not base it on participation in an organized religion. Some of those descriptions include:

- a) Tapping into a deeper meaning in life that transcends our physical existence
- b) Having a relationship with the Source of creation (i.e. God, Higher Power, Allah, Jehovah, Brahman, etc.)
- c) Experiencing oneness with Divinity
- d) Being “fully conscious” of the Source of life and living from that awareness
- e) Living in harmony with the essential nature and inter-connectedness of all creation
- f) Living all aspects of life according to a set of religious principles

At this time, we would best describe spiritual-based business leaders as those who have a consciously held spiritual view of life and may be expressing it in their leadership in one of the following ways:

- 1. They are taking their first steps to bring their spiritual view of life into their leadership
- 2. They are integrating their spiritual view of life with their leadership more fully
- 3. They are consciously leading from their spiritual view of life

Depending on their personality, a leader’s spiritual view of life may be a private matter or it may be expressed openly. They may also have varying degrees of being able to articulate their spiritual context.

The spiritual-based context is just beginning to emerge. How might a business executive talk today about a spiritual context and their leadership?

Here is how Janiece Webb<sup>36</sup>, Senior Vice President, Motorola Corporation defines her own personal spiritual context:

*I believe in God strongly. I follow more Buddhist principles than anything else. I connect with the magic in life... This is all so much bigger than what we can physically see. You must earn the right to lead every day, and spirituality is necessary to do that. (spirituality)...gives you immense courage; yet you also embrace your own humanness and imperfections.*

Here is how Bill George<sup>37</sup>, Chairman of Medtronic, the world's largest producer of medical electronics defines a spiritual context on behalf of an entire business:

*We are all spiritual beings. To unleash the whole capability of the individual -- mind, body, and spirit -- gives enormous power to the organization. This has nothing to do with religion. People of many faiths, or no faith at all for that matter, can join together in a common cause of service to others through their work.*

Janiece Webb and Bill George are portraying a profound shift in business leadership. How has this occurred?

### **The Convergence of Science and Spirituality**

The previous three contexts for business leadership were influenced by the powerful mind-sets of science and psychology. During the centuries of mechanistic, deterministic science, belief in and reliance on a God-focused religion declined; the age-old basis for “defining a meaningful life” began to dissolve. It was only natural for the field of psychology to emerge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a substitute for religion in teaching people what it meant to be human in this cosmos.

As science uncovered new understandings of evolution, physics, and systems-theory, a new seed of spirituality slowly began to sprout. It is this seed of spirituality that has converged with science to birth this spiritual-based context, particularly through the work of spiritual-based scientists such as Teilhard de Chardin<sup>38</sup> and consciousness-based physicists such as David Bohm<sup>39</sup>. Add the insights of Fritjof Capra<sup>40</sup> and others about systems sciences and ancient spiritual texts, and you can begin to see a rich tapestry unfold...

The scientific and spiritual converged in the insights and writings of the Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin<sup>41</sup>, an eminent geologist and paleontologist who was part of the expedition team that discovered the skull of the "Peking Man" -- an important verification of the evolutionary roots of mankind. As a scientist he saw consciousness as inherent in all matter and creation, describing his experience as, “The Divine radiating from the depths of blazing Matter.”<sup>42</sup> He dedicated his life to the synthesis of science and spirituality, saying:

*The questions I'm concerned with are indeed those that have animated the deep-rooted life of humanity.*

As a deeply spiritual Christian, he declared that everything emanated from and would eventually return to Christ consciousness, the alpha and omega:

*I believe that the universe is an evolution. I believe that evolution proceeds towards spirit. I believe that spirit is fully realized in a form of personality. I believe that the supremely personal is the universal Christ.*

Once quantum physics demonstrated that the created universe was a continuous field of energy, a few bold physicists inquired: "What about the self-evident existence of consciousness in certain

structures of energy/matter (i.e., human beings)? How does that fit with our view of the nature of the universe?" From the 1950's to 80's, physicist David Bohm (1995) came to the conclusion that energy and consciousness are "implicate" ...*the nature of the cosmos, of matter in general, of life, and of consciousness... (are) considered to be projections of a common ground.* That is, just as wetness and liquidity are qualities of water... energy and consciousness are qualities of the "common ground" of creation.

The works of scientists such as Chardin and Bohm present us with the picture that all of creation is sourced from, and a reflection of, a single, "omnipresent" field of energy/consciousness. This same idea is mirrored in various spiritual texts:

*God dwells in everything, God shines in every heart. Wherever I look, there is God; no one else is seen.* (The Sikh's book, Adi Granth)

*All things are of God... One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* (The Christian Bible, 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Ephesians 4:6)

*It flows through all things, inside and outside, and returns to the origin of all things.* (Tao Te Ching 25)

*I pervade the entire universe in my unmanifested form. All creatures find their existence in Me but I am not limited by them.* (The Hindu text, Baghavat Gita 8:22, 9:4)

*One in All, All in One.* (Zen Buddhism book, On Trust in the Heart)

Fritjof Capra (1988) further supports this convergence of science (specifically physics and systems theory) and spirituality:

*Although mystical views of consciousness go far beyond the framework of contemporary science, they are by no means inconsistent with the modern systems concepts of mind and matter. ...The systems view of mind seems perfectly consistent with both the scientific and mystical views of consciousness...*

An early example of an executive who is demonstrating the strength of this spiritual-based context in business is Tom Chappel<sup>43</sup>. Tom and his wife co-founded Tom's of Maine in 1971 on the principles of customer-focused, environmentally-conscious health products. Between 1981 and 1986, its distribution expanded from health food stores to include supermarket and drugstore chains and had a 25% growth rate. But with this new face and new identity, the holistic culture began to weaken. Profit and growth became driving values and dominated business planning. Tom began to lose interest in the business and considered selling it.

He decided to attend the Harvard Divinity School and was exposed to the thinking of Martin Buber<sup>44</sup>, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish philosopher. Buber says that we can relate to each other in two

ways: I-THOU, where we relate for respect, love, and honor for their own sake; and I-IT, where we treat people as objects. The choice is between the dignity of persons versus their utility in our lives.

In 1989, with a new degree of spirituality growing in him, Tom called a special board meeting to create a new strategy and culture based on, "Respecting people for who they are and not for what they can do for us." As Tom later pointed out:

*Christian mystics and saints have written about finding the via media -- the middle way. The Hebrew prophets often spoke of finding the "good way." I've found the middle way for Tom's of Maine, where we use our head and heart in planning business strategies. We make room for spirit in the world of commerce.*

Their new mission -- born from his spiritual-based leadership -- began to give people permission to actualize the creativity and social responsibility that had been within them all along.

Implementing the changes in strategy and culture were not easy (as his book, *Soul of a Business* relates, 1994). As Tom tapped into his own relationship to his spiritual Source to help guide this process, it carried the company through this transition.

*Thanks to the Mission, we have become the definers of our destiny. Believing in God doesn't mean that you must leave everything up to Him. As Martin Buber wrote in *I and Thou*:*

*"Destiny is not where we wait for God to push us. We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions."*

## **The Purpose of Business and Leadership**

In the paternal-mechanistic, humanistic, and holistic contexts, if "spirituality" is considered at all, it is usually as one of many aspects of life... along with work, family, leisure time, health, etc. If life were a pie, spirituality would be one slice of the pie. In this fourth context, *spirituality is the pie itself*. Work, family, leisure, and health are all "slices" of spirituality and gain their meaning from a spiritual context – including business.

The spiritual-based context transforms the nature of business itself – so that the primary purpose of business and leadership is *spiritual fulfillment* and *service to society*, where both are motivated from the Source of creation. Wealth creation is no longer the *goal*; it becomes a *means* for enabling and sustaining this purpose. Business leaders promote the spiritual fulfillment of everyone touched by the business: employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and society. Likewise, business leaders develop selflessness in their service to society, seeing the Source in all whom they serve.

This new purpose for business and leadership is also a response to two major insights from the 1980's and 90's:

1. Having material wealth doesn't really satisfy the inner yearning to access a deeper meaning and obtain fulfillment in work and life.

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### **Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership**

2. What we've been doing with the earth's resources and with international relations (still based on "survival of the fittest") has been destructive, unjust, and unsustainable.

How does a purpose of "spiritual fulfillment and service to society," both motivated from the Source of creation, sound in actual practice? An early example today would be Medtronic, the world's largest producer of medical electronics. William George (1995), current Chairman, says they "lead by values" rather than "management by objectives." Those values, in *priority* order, are:

1. Restoring people to full health
2. Serving customers with products and services of unsurpassed quality
3. Recognizing the personal worth of employees
4. Making a fair profit and return for shareholders
5. Maintaining good citizenship as a company

These values may seem similar to successful, customer-driven, holistic companies. But for George, what's underneath these values is the consciousness that....

*We are all spiritual beings. To unleash the whole capability of the individual -- mind, body, and spirit -- gives enormous power to the organization...*

Furthermore, regarding this prioritization of corporate goals, George says:

*Medtronic is not in the business of 'maximizing shareholder value'; rather, our purpose is to 'maximize patient value.' The 'real bottom line' for Medtronic is the patients who were restored to full life and health last year by Medtronic products... At Medtronic we believe that if we first serve our customers well, provide products and services of unsurpassed quality, and empower our employees to fulfill themselves and the company's mission, we will indeed provide an outstanding return for our shareholders.*

Notice that from a spiritual context, wealth creation for Medtronic is no longer the *end goal* for which everything else is the means. Instead, money is the *means* for the ultimate goal of enabling the organization to sustain itself and grow in its ability to serve; wealth creation is simply a "natural result" of excellence in living and working from a spiritual context.

## **Leading and Managing People**

From the early 1980's forward, Peter Vaill<sup>45</sup> was an early pioneer who addressed the implications of this growing exploration of spirituality and business. Joining him as early contributors to raising this consciousness included: business executives such as Paul Autry<sup>46</sup> of Meredith Publications, William George of Medtronic<sup>47</sup>, Max DePree<sup>48</sup> of Hermann-Miller Furniture, and Tom Chappel<sup>49</sup> of Tom's of Maine; academics such as Andre Delbecq<sup>50</sup>, Judi Neal<sup>51</sup>, and Dorothy Marcic<sup>52</sup>; and consultants such as John Renesch<sup>53</sup>, Jack Hawley<sup>54</sup>, and Jay Conger<sup>55</sup>. For all of these, spirituality is simply a part of what it means to be human, inseparable from the human enterprise in business.

From a spiritual point of view, the difference in motivation, jobs, and careers, can perhaps best be understood through the Sanskrit word “dharma,” which means acting in accord with our essential nature and purpose. S.K. Chakraborty<sup>56</sup> writes that our most intrinsic motivation is to fulfill our essential nature and purpose – not to fill an ever-present set of “need-based” desires. By corollary, leading employees means evoking each person's sense of spiritual purpose in life. Jobs and career paths are based on having people follow and fulfill their dharma.

An early example of a business leader who is leading his employees from a spiritual-based context is Isaac Tigrett<sup>57</sup>, founder of the wildly successful Hard Rock Café chain of restaurants, when he wasn't yet 20 years old. Isaac was raised in the Southern USA during the 1960's when his town was rigidly segregated, greatly offending his sense of fairness. When the Civil Rights laws brought down segregation signs, he felt, “All of a sudden, all of us, not just Blacks, are more human.”

Soon after, living in London, he saw that, “The social classes were still completely separated. There was literally no place in London where a baker and a banker could meet to talk. I wanted to break that system.” He decided to open an “absolutely classless” restaurant, which became a smashing success from the very first day. Standing in line were those bakers and bankers, laborers and Labor politicians.

Tigrett's humanistic and holistic values were elevated to the level of *spiritual* when he traveled to India on a spiritual pilgrimage. While there, he heard the teaching, “Love All, Serve All.” He learned that “love” in that spiritual context meant unconditional, selfless, fearless positive regard; the same unconditional love that Jesus spoke about coming from His Father: “...For He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” (The Christian Bible, Matthew 5:45)

To Tigrett, “Love all, serve all” embodied the ultimate spiritual goal of life: becoming divine through love, and serving people from that place. It became the spiritual basis from which he began to lead his business.

*Being one of the Hard Rock Café family was therapy for people. Even if they came from a violent home-life, here they were loved and they loved back in return. Respect was the key. The same went for customers.*

He began putting “Love all, serve all” in the kitchens, on paychecks and menus, on T-shirts and sweatshirts. As the business exploded around the world, he continued his personal and business mission of fostering “classlessness” from this spiritual basis. For example, in Tokyo, he insisted that women, “who are non-entities there,” be treated absolutely equally. As Isaac noted:

*All I did was put spirit and business together in that big mixing bowl and add love. I didn't care about anything but people. Just cherish them, look after them, be sensitive to them and their lives.*

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#### **Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership**



## In Summary

Four distinct contexts of business leadership have emerged in the West in the last 100 years: *paternal-mechanistic*, *humanistic*, *holistic*, and *spiritual-based*.

As shown in Figure 1, each context has its own view of the purpose, success measures, metaphor, and leadership style for business.

**Figure 1: Characteristics of Business Leadership Related to “Purpose of Business and Leadership”**

		Contexts of Business Leadership in the West			
		Paternal-Mechanistic	Humanistic	Holistic	Spiritual-Based
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Purpose of Business</b>	Wealth and power for owners, shareholders	Wealth and power with dignity... for owners, shareholders, and employees	Wealth with accountability to all stakeholders	Spiritual fulfillment and service to society that is motivated from the Source of creation
	<b>Measures of Success</b>	Financial – profit maximization	Financial, Employee Surveys (“100 Best Companies to Work For”)	“Triple Bottom Line”: Financial, Social, Environmental	Purity and unity of thought, word, and deed (reflected in external measures)
	<b>Leadership Metaphors</b>	Military Machine	Sports Team Family	Ecology Community	Watering the spiritual roots
	<b>Leadership Style</b>	Command and convince	Participative empowerment	Stewardship	“Radiating” spiritual qualities

As shown in Figure 2, each has its own view of the nature of man, how to motivate, and how to manage people's careers.

**Figure 2: Characteristics of Business Leadership  
Related to “Leading and Managing People”**

		<b>Contexts of Business Leadership in the West</b>			
		<b>Paternal-Mechanistic</b>	<b>Humanistic</b>	<b>Holistic</b>	<b>Spiritual-Based</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Nature of Man</b>	Needs to be controlled	Willing to do good, be good	Inter-dependent and self-organizing	Same energy/ consciousness as Creator
	<b>Motivation</b>	Extrinsic: carrot and stick	Needs (“find a need and fill it”)	Moved by holistic principles for good of self and society	Work as worship, fulfilling one's dharma, spiritual character
	<b>Managing People</b>	Give structure and roles. People are interchangeable parts; jobs based on talent/ skills fitting into organization's needs	Give structure and roles. People are unique; build jobs around talent as much as fit talent to jobs	People are key asset and resource; have them self-define their roles; great flexibility in job definition	People are spiritual in nature; enable them to follow their dharma and express their spiritual purpose

## **A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE**

### **Challenges**

To catch a glimpse of what this spiritual context might look like in the future, and where it might take business leadership, we are all faced with two challenges:

1. To inquire into the nature of spirituality (and its impact on business leadership) requires that we be willing to explore beyond the world of our day-to-day senses and thinking.
2. To attempt to paint a picture of how spiritual-based business leadership will unfold is much like trying to predict the impact of the “Internet” in 1980 when we had just barely invented personal computers.

These two challenges are a part of what makes this new context exciting, bold, and sweeping in its potential impact on business leadership and all of society – and a critically important field of investigation by business researchers.

In the first three contexts we spent our attention and energy studying our creation and learning how to best live within its confines, as we understood them. In this spiritual-based context we turn our attention to the Creator, the un-caused Source of our creation. Earlier we quoted various spiritual texts saying that all of creation is a reflection of an omnipresent Creator. Even Gautama Buddha, who normally side-stepped metaphysical discussion to focus on the practical aspect of “right” living, also referred to the Creator:

*Who can blame those who are pure, good, and meditative? Even the divine beings praise their glory, even Brahma, the Creator.”* (Dhammapada 17:222-230)

In this context, we realize we are indeed made in the same “image and likeness,” the same energy/consciousness, as the Creator. So we are not “at the effect” of a creation we are continually attempting to understand and control; instead we are “co-creators” of the creation we live in. As Martin Buber (1994) said:

*We have become the definers of our destiny. We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions.*

## **Stages of Spiritual Growth**

By consulting the spiritual traditions and what *they* say about the evolution of spiritual wisdom and practice, as it relates to our age-old, yet newfound relationship with our Creator, we can discover the stages of spiritual growth a leader may go through in this spiritual-based context:

### **Stage 1: “Being a servant of the Creator”**

(For Christians, this is the “purifying” stage; for Hindus, this is the “dualistic” stage; for Buddhists, this is “being in harmony with the laws of creation”).

In this stage, leaders feel they are in relationship with a Creator that is “out there somewhere.” They emphasize doing “good works,” living in harmony with creation, and understanding and applying the will of this Creator in their lives. They begin to purify their thoughts, words, and deeds. This stage gives an expanded meaning to the term, “*servant leadership*.”

### **Stage 2: “Being in the family of the Creator”**

(For Christians, this is the stage of illumination; for Hindus, this is the stage of “qualified non-dualism”; for Buddhists, this is the stage of equal-mindedness).

In this stage, leaders feel a kinship with the Creator, such that they are in the family and have a right to ask for and expect the Creator’s blessings in their lives. They develop a reverence for all life, begin to “co-create with the Creator,” and continue to weaken the ego-driven

desires of a separate individual reality. This stage may be termed “*kindred leadership*” as it implies that we are all from a common heritage.

**Stage 3: “Being in union with the Creator”**

(For Christians, this is the stage of unity; for Hindus, this is the stage of “non-dualism”; for Buddhists, this is the stage of “beyond mind and matter”).

In this stage, leaders blossom their kinship with the Creator into an awareness that “we are one and the same” – a recognition that they came from the Creator and will return to the Creator. At this point, they begin to experience Oneness with both Creator and creation. This stage may be termed “*source leadership*” as they become one with the generative force of creation.

In summary, as spiritual-based business leaders move through these three stages of spiritual growth, they come to know, experientially, that all is indeed a “continuous field of energy/consciousness” in which “the Divine radiates from the heart of blazing matter.” That is, they will experience union with the Creator and union with the creation.

At that time, they will have a new depth of understanding of the “golden rule” found in all major spiritual paths: Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Islam, Jewish, Taoist, and so on. They will understand, by experience, that when they “love their neighbor (which includes everyone and everything) as themselves,” they are in fact *loving themselves* because literally *they are their neighbor*.

As business leaders follow their own spiritual path, and proceed through stages of growth such as these, it is only natural to expect that the practices of the businesses they lead will mirror their personal evolution.

**“The Glimpse...”**

From our own experience of leading from a spiritual-based context over the last ten years, we share with you what we can imagine the future of business leadership might look like. Please bring the future into the present with us...

Imagine for a moment... A world in which business leaders have a deep sense of their spiritual roots and heritage... Where they feel a profound communion with the Source of creation, according to their understanding of that... Where they actively express their spirituality in every aspect of their lives, including work... Where they see business as an opportunity to deepen their spiritual journey as they serve others...

As these spiritual-based business leaders mature in their ability to first follow the will of, then feel a close kinship with, and ultimately experience oneness with the Creator, they indeed come

to know that they are “spiritual beings having a human experience,” rather than “human beings having a spiritual experience”<sup>58</sup>.

They feel whole and fulfilled, with nothing lacking; they have nothing to achieve in order to feel valued, and they do not look to the “results” or “position titles” for their self-worth. They know who they are, as defined by their spiritual context and purpose, and operate from that consciousness.

Spiritual-based leaders are aware of wrong-doing within themselves, in others around them, and in the world. However, they see it as a reflection of ignorance, separateness, and a suffering mind. They do not shy away from facing or addressing it, and do so from a basis of love and compassion. They intrinsically know when and how to act, and take firm action, when necessary, without fear, blame, or make-wrong.

They know that all beings in this world come from the same Creator, and that spirituality is “inclusive,” rather than exclusive... that it is possible for all people, and organizations, to have their own unique spiritual-based contexts and still be in harmony with each other (just as all parts of our body work together in harmony). This “inclusive” nature of spirituality assists them in addressing the concern that some people have about spirituality as the context for business leadership.

***The Future Purpose of Business and Leadership.*** As business leaders accept their role as “co-creators” with the Creator, the purpose of business and leadership also takes its rightful place. The mission statement of the business emerges from its’ fundamental statement of “spiritual context.” All aspects of the business -- its essence, its products and services, and its results -- emanate from a dual focus on spiritual fulfillment and service to society, both motivated from the Source of creation.

Leaders identify with and communicate the spiritual context of their business, while still fully aware of and operating from their own. They design their organizational charter as an enlightening metaphor that gives feeling and substance to the essence of their spiritual context.

Wealth is not something that can be gained or lost; it is a sound, healthy, and prosperous state of well being from which character, health, education, and money are created. When the intentions for creating wealth are aligned with the Source of creation, the resources (time, money, talent, and energy) required to fulfill those intentions will be naturally available.

The relationship that leaders have with the past and future shifts as they now operate in the present moment. They are aware of the implications of their actions in “this lifetime” as well as “beyond this lifetime” and expand their scope of leadership to include both. Rather than “react and learn” from past mistakes and successes, or fantasize and desire for the future, they are

aware that they share in the co-creative nature of the Creator and thus keep their focus on what they are consciously choosing to create.

***The Future of Leading and Managing People.*** In the first three contexts, there were three ways of getting things done: “command-and-control,” then “empowerment,” and then “self-organization.” In this spiritual-based context leaders focus their attention on encouraging and assisting employees to fulfill their “dharma,” their essential spiritual nature and purpose, based on their consciously held spiritual context. They combine a trust in each person’s ability to be self-regulating, through their spiritual context, along with clearly defined practices to promote learning and growth.

Leaders are not bound by time, money, physical circumstances, or minds (typically full of rigid beliefs and reactive patterns). They become “masters of time, money, matter, and mind” and use them as wise expressions of their spiritual context. “Deadlines” and “due dates” are replaced with “consciously designed visions” that let them know when something is “complete.” The time it takes to fulfill a specific task, project, or mission is considered a “natural result,” rather than a driving force.

In summary, spiritual-based business leaders see the workplace as a prime setting where people can realize their highest spiritual potential – that of union with the Creator and creation. They transform work into worship and make it a vital, principle aspect of each person’s spiritual growth.

### **Embodying Spirituality in Thoughts, Words, and Deeds.**

As spiritual-based business leaders grow in their spiritual development, they will naturally develop spiritual wisdom and compassion and will “radiate” these through the purity and unity of their thoughts, words, and deeds. Spiritual-based leaders live their spirituality without compromise. Joann Zimmerman<sup>59</sup>, CEO of the Kaiser Permanente South Bay Hospital, in San Jose, California shares what it is like for her to embody spiritual qualities in her leadership:

*Spirituality (for me) comes from a position of Love. I truly love my work and the people I work with. This allows me to create intimacies with people and to achieve higher relationships. I express this, and it makes some people uncomfortable. But it IS love! It's real! You can also forge mountains that way. One staff person said to me, "When you speak with me, I know I can do more. I know I matter."*

*Spirituality is the expectation of the opportunity to live and hope and love and understand that there's a world larger than I can see. Every answer will not be on a spreadsheet. It's easy for our spirituality to be part of the workplace if it's a sincere part of our context and who we are. . I'm on the board of a Silicon Valley manufacturing group composed of all CEO's -- they respond to it too!*

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#### **Spirituality: The Emerging Context for Business Leadership**

When leaders embody spiritual qualities such as truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence, those whom they lead are naturally drawn to emulate them. They want to draw from the deep well of the leaders' wisdom and put that example into practice in their own lives. The esteem given to Nobel Peace Prize winners such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Aung San Suu Kyi (of Burma), and Albert Schweitzer is evidence of this.

Perhaps – the time is coming when business leaders will be held in the same esteem – even with something like a Nobel Prize for Spiritual-Based Business Leadership.

## CONCLUSION

Metaphors capture the essence of a context most powerfully. In the first three contexts of business leadership, the main metaphor for business evolved from "military machine" to "sports team" to "community." All of them focused on our relationship with creation.

*Watering the spiritual roots* is one metaphor that brings the spiritual-based context to life... one that focuses on our relationship with both Creator and creation – the unseen and transcendent as well as the tangible. It also illustrates the relationship between the spiritual-based context and its three predecessors: the paternal-mechanistic, humanistic, and holistic...

Imagine a fruit tree with branches spreading in all directions. Flowers bloom on the branches, and turn into ripe fruits. All of these are nourished from the underground roots of the tree, up through the strength of the trunk.

The branches represent the strength and efficiency of the paternal-mechanistic context. The flowers are humanistic values such as trust, respect, and fairness. The fruits are holistic principles such as ethics and social responsibility. The trunk is spiritual character. The roots represent our spiritual nature. And the source of water and nourishment for it all is the Creator.

When we focus on “watering these roots” by living our spirituality in thought, word, and deed... we naturally grow a strong trunk of spiritual character and strong branches that efficiently bring nourishment to the bountiful flowers of humanistic values and the luscious fruits of holistic principles. The result is business leadership that is spiritually uplifting to all, socially responsible to all, humanly respectful to all, and tangible in its results for all.

Even if no one else in a company operates from a spiritual-based context, leaders can still *water the spiritual roots* by identifying their spiritual context, exploring their spirituality “from the inside out,” and radiating spiritual qualities in every aspect of their day-to-day work. With strong spiritual character, they can also bring forth the wisdom found in the other contexts. That is, they can:

1. Fulfill the potential of the *paternal-mechanistic* context by:
  - Honoring the experience and wisdom of "those who have paved the way before us."
  - Recognizing life's "cause and effect" law: "As you sow, so shall you reap."
2. Fulfill the potential of the humanistic context by:
  - Recognizing the essential goodness and work ethic of people.
  - Providing opportunities for individuals to actualize their potential, which includes self-actualization as well as work abilities and aspirations.
3. Fulfill the potential of the holistic context by:
  - Recognizing the interconnectivity of people, nature, and business enterprises.
  - Emphasizing the universal nature of principles from which to operate harmoniously and creatively.

Theology is "the study of God and God's relation to the world." The three stages of spiritual growth discussed earlier represent a very personal experience of "theology." As business leaders become more and more conscious of the spiritual nature of all of life, the distinction between theology and the study of business becomes less and less. This is testified to by Bob Galvin<sup>60</sup>, chairman of the executive committee on Motorola's board of directors, who once described the primary job of leaders as:

*Inspiring acts of faith ("things are do-able that are not necessarily provable"), spreading hope, and building trust.*

When a VP asked how these values relate to the "real world of business," Galvin replied that executives must develop strong character in themselves and others, not just good technical or financial skills. Then he concluded:

*Faith, hope, and trust... Theology is very practical business.*



## NOTES

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Smith, Adam (2000) *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. New York: Prometheus Books
- <sup>6</sup> Actually, this was a misinterpretation of Adam Smith. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he describes an innate, moral foundation of selflessness, not selfishness, by which his theories of capitalism can be understood. "How selfish so-ever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it." (p 1:1).
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- <sup>8</sup> Ford, Henry (1988) *Today and Tomorrow*. USA: Productivity Press
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- <sup>36</sup> From a research interview conducted by author William C. Miller on the subject of spiritual-based leadership.
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- <sup>57</sup> Tigrett, Isaac (1993) as quoted in *Reawakening the Spirit at Work*, by Jack Hawley, California: Berrett-Koehler
- <sup>58</sup> This is a common statement used in spiritual inquiries; however we do not know the originator of it
- <sup>59</sup> From a research interview conducted by author William C. Miller on the subject of spiritual-based leadership.
- <sup>60</sup> As heard by author William C. Miller (1992) during Motorola University's Vice President Institute seminar