SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: A WAKE UP CALL FROM THE AMERICAN DREAM

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ABSTRACT

The American Dream, born out of a desire to emancipate people through the principle of the individual right to freedom, has metamorphosed. What we now have is a materialistic, self-serving American Nightmare that has inspired a wealth-creating society that is spinning out of control. A parallel world view, the European Dream, offers a more humane alternative for a world in crisis. We propose that the American Dream and the European Dream are so diametrically opposed that any movement from the short-run materialistic mindset toward a more humanist long-run perspective will require an intermediary. The spirituality in the workplace movement, which may be both a cause and an effect of the decay of the American Dream, is proposed as a conduit to facilitate this evolution. Canada and Canadian companies in particular are identified as potentially fertile ground for carrying the message of spirituality to the workplace and inspiring an evolution to a more globally conscious and sustainable society.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Nearly three hundred years ago, as Europeans landed on Plymouth Rock, disheartened and driven from their homelands by famine, political strife, and generally poor living conditions, they needed a dream to give them hope. Faced with the daunting task of conquering the new world, and out of necessity for

survival, the American Dream began to crystallize, promising pioneers of the new frontier not only freedom from oppression but hope for wealth and meritocracy for anyone who was willing to believe. Settlers in the new world came to believe that they were the chosen people, entitled to convert any and all resources they encountered into their own material wealth. Social status became synonymous with material wealth and power. Over time, other nations came to marvel at the pace of material progress in the Americas and would regard the American Dream as a beacon of hope (Rifkin, 2004: 33).

Although not officially adopted as a phrase until the mid-1930s by author James Thurlow Adams (1931/2001), the American Dream originally motivated society to uphold the principle of freedom. Within 200 years, that dream had transmuted from the right to freedom to the right to have material things and wealth. This emphasis on materiality over spirituality or humanity may well be a warning sign of the moral decay of society (Nester, 1973).

This materialistic version of the American Dream provided the foundation for what organization and management theorists conceptualize as economic rationalization. In the 18th century, Adam Smith would conclude that it "is not from the benevolence of the butcher the brewer or baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own interest" (Smith, 1776/1976: 119). Two centuries later, Frederick Taylor's scientific principles of management would provide organizations with the means to amass material wealth by reducing human input to mechanistic, measurable resources (Taylor, 1911/1947). However, three centuries later, the American Dream is in danger of imploding on itself, destroying everything it purports to hold dear. It appears that "over the last three hundred years [we have] constructed a remarkably efficient wealth-creating machine, but it is now out of control" (Bakan, 2004: 159).

THE AMERICAN DREAM TURNED NIGHTMARE

At this period of our history, as we experience global crises such as wars, decaying social structures, and depleting ecosystems, the American Dream appears to be of no assistance to us. Nearly half of our world's population (2.8 billion out of 6 billion) lives below the poverty line on less than $2 a day and is too undernourished to learn how to read or sustain a living, even if education were available (World Bank, 2001: 41). It appears that the American Dream is contributing to the global crises we are now facing. In the name of economic progress and entitlement, inherent in the American Dream, oceans are polluted, natural resources are depleted, and life-giving forests are destroyed (Salleh, 1997).

Corporations that don't even exist except by social and legal construction are now capable of owning other living beings. This has been most clearly demonstrated by a 1980 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Diamond v. Chakrabarty*, where it was ruled that a genetically modified organism could be patentable. The monopolistic control that American corporations now have over

living forms of nature that have coexisted with humankind for thousands of years has created tension between those who value the earth as a shared heritage to be cherished and those who seek to exploit nature for economic gain. This exploitation, predominantly undertaken by capitalist corporations, also widens the chasm between the privileged Western world and the underprivileged developing nations (McLean, 2004; Shiva, 2001).

Perhaps the time has come to recognize that the needs of the new millennium are vastly different than they were in the 1600s. Since "epoch-making systems have as their real content the needs of the time in which they arose" (Rigby, 1998: 277), it is time to radically revamp the American Dream. Just as Marx foretold in *Das Kapital*, "a sustainable, steady state of economy is truly the end of history defined by unlimited material progress" (Rifkin, 2004: 8). Perhaps the emotional and spiritual fallout following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, in the United States was a painful indication of the inability of the American Dream to provide solace for a society in despair. Although a slim majority of Americans still embrace the American Dream, many appear to have given up on it. According to a report commissioned by the Ford Foundation in 2001 on American public opinion about poverty and upward mobility, more than one-third of Americans believe that it is harder to get rich than it used to be and that it is no longer possible for most Americans to live the American Dream (Bostrom, 2001). These results are especially pertinent because they emerged prior to the wake-up call of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. Since 9/11. many former American Dreamers have been reevaluating their lives and their work as they search for a deeper meaning in life, beyond material success (Cannon, 2002; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Howard, 2002; Wrzesniewski, 2002). Perhaps ethical fiascos such as Enron and WorldCom are additional alarms, waking us up to revise our view of ourselves and of how we should be leading our organizations (Cacloppe, 2000; Fairholm, 1996).

VIOLATION OF WORKERS' RIGHTS TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

Beyond the pursuit of wealth and leisure, the promise of liberty that underpins the American Dream/Nightmare can be intoxicating and inspire isomorphism by other nations. Thus, "anti-Americanism is not always directed against the United States. At times, it can also be an attack against fellow [foreign] citizens who have embraced the U.S. ways" (Gobat, 2005: 7).

Even though the American Dream purports to be the ideal vehicle for liberty and freedom, we argue that it actually infringes on the individual rights of people and workers. Ironically, the drive for American liberty, ensconced as it is in meritocracy and emphasis on material wealth, actually alienates individuals from themselves and undermines individual freedom of expression. If we agree with the existentialist notion that "man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in

his life" (Frankl, 1959: 121), then the American Dream/Nightmare with its predetermined map for material success does a great disservice to individuals. By removing the individual's right and ability to choose his or her own vision of success or meaning, it robs the individual of his or her freedom of expression. The American Dream thus becomes more like Weber's iron cage than a ticket to freedom.

In her best-selling novel, *Feminism and the Master of Nature*, Plumwood (1993) explains how the American Dream/Nightmare has metamorphosed in three phases: justification and preparation; invasion and annexation; and instrumentalization and appropriation. Over the past centuries, the powerful corporations have rationalized their own existence (as employers), divided and conquered society by demoralizing workers, and ensured their own survival as a cornerstone of the economy and politics. In the final stage of Plumwood's evolution, "the colonialised are offered the alternatives of elimination or incorporation. Only those who can be incorporated into the empire of self, who offer no resistance, are permitted to exist" (Plumwood, 1993: 192). Although this may read like a science fiction novel to some, the concept is not far-fetched in light of the antiterrorist movement in the United States that is force-feeding assimilation under the guise of peace. This form of terrorizing is somewhat reminiscent of the anticommunist panic of the McCarthy era in the United States after World War II. It is not difficult to imagine how the alleged plots against the U.S. government, both then and now, could be diversions used to preserve the fragile American Dream.

The American Dream/Nightmare is a reification of what Marx described as the capitalist class structure. where workers are mere cogs in the wheel of corporate progress or rungs on preordained career ladders. The ruling class or bourgeoisie (shareholders and corporate agents) exerts hegemonic power over the working class or proletariat (employees) who, completely alienated from the true meaning of work, merely provide surplus for the ruling class's profits. Organizations that embrace the American Dream place an overwhelming emphasis on shareholder and material wealth maximization. Historically there have been a number of calls for changes to the current business model, especially with respect to the workplace environment and the treatment of employees. Unfortunately, despite advances in the standard of living and increased choices of careers, work for many people is still a "daily humiliation" (Ciulla, 2000: xiv). In his award-winning documentary and book, *The Corporation*, Bakan (2004) posits that the American corporation has evolved into a destructive psychopath, justified in exploiting people and the environment in the name of profit. But the psychopathic personality, we argue, is not only embedded in the corporate mentality; it is endemic in the American Dream/Nightmare.

Even organizational and management theorists have unwittingly bought into the American Dream by commodifying workers and defining work in terms of economic outcomes (Brief & Nord, 1990). While claims of exploitation or

alienation are decried by many eloquent critical theorists, much of mainstream management theory upholds the need to measure and improve production efficiencies and profits. However, "Profit, quality, cycle time, and market share are not the core points of work. They are [simply] measures of how well an organization is doing at creating greater value that it is consuming" (Henning, 1997: 35). So, while researchers and business leaders are focusing on such functional measures, the true value of work, the "creating, sustaining, and enlarging [of] the possibilities of life" (Henning, 1997: 35), is largely overlooked.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

In this time of twilight for bureaucracy and the American Dream, the topic of spirituality in the workplace is flourishing (Bell & Taylor, 2004; Elmes & Smith, 2001; Harrington, Preziosi, & Gooden, 2001). We propose that the spirituality in the workplace movement not only signals the decline of the American Dream but will actually help to diminish the dream. Special academic journal issues have been published on the topic of spirituality in the *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (Biberman & Whitty, 1999), the *Journal of Management Education* (Dehler & Neal, 2000), and the *Journal of Management Inquiry* (Bowl & Hirsch, 2000). Additionally, the Academy of Management publishes a regular Management, Spirituality, and Religion (MSR) newsletter and recently introduced the *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* (JMSR). Ironically, some research indicates that engaging the spirit of employees enhances the meaning of work, increases commitment and productivity, and deepens relationships in the workplace (Neal, 2000). To intensify the situation, over the past few decades, traditional support systems like places of worship, community neighborhoods, and extended families have declined in importance in the United States (Conger, 1994). Whether as a cause or a result, many people are spending more time at the workplace (Conlin, 1999), where they are feeling emotionally and metaphysically disconnected, and less time with family, neighborhood, church, and social groups (Fairholm, 1996). As previously discussed, due to the aging demographic, a majority of the North American population has reached middle age, resulting in a reevaluation of work. Some workers are redefining their career aspirations to encompass the satisfaction of their inner spiritual identity needs and personal fulfillment through their labor (Block, 1993; Fairholm, 1996). In short, work values, particularly for many in the middle class, are shifting from "earning a living" to "creative expression and making a difference" (Neal, 2000: 1320).

The increased level of questioning the individual meaning of work is a strong driving force behind the popularity of the spirituality in the workplace movement:

> It is hard for many of us to separate our work from the rest of our being. We
> spend too much of our time at work or in work-related social and leisure

> activities for us to expect to continue trying to compartmentalize our lives into separate work, family, religious and social domains. As one result, the pressure many of us feel to recognize and respond to the sacred in us must find an outlet in the secular workplace. If personal or social transformation is to take place, it will most likely take place at work. For, after all, life is about spirit and we humans carry only one spirit that must manifest itself in both life and livelihood. (Fairholm, 1996: 12)

The construct of spirituality, by its nature, can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and defined in many ways. Therefore, it is not surprising that there has not yet been an agreement on what spirituality really means, in the workplace or anywhere else. For some, "spirituality is highly individual and intensely personal, as well as inclusive and universal" (Howard, 2002: 231). It can be viewed abstractly as the "feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (Mitroff & Denton, 1999: 83) or simply as that which "distinguishes us from rooted plants" (Savickas, 1994: 43). Regardless of the worldview or definition of spirituality, organizational theorists observe that "whatever one's underlying belief system, everyone has a spiritual life, just as they have an unconscious, whether they like it or not" (Howard, 2002: 234).

Organizations that are respected as functional and rational are openly considering replacing systems composed of rules and order with more spiritually centred practices involving meaning, purpose, and a sense of community (Fairholm, 1996). For example, corporations such as Tom's of Maine, Ben and Jerry's, the World Bank, Medtronics, and The Body Shop succeed because (or despite the fact that) they incorporate spiritual values into their corporate culture. Research on 18 "visionary" companies whose core values were based on non-ecomonic beliefs and an empowering culture outperformed their more traditional counterparts, in economic terms, by as much as 61 to 1 (Collins & Porras, 1997). Tom Peters found similar evidence in the search for "excellent" companies. The implication is that spiritual culture can create a synergy in which both the organization and the individual are better off. By encouraging the spiritual education and growth of the individual, the organization will reap the benefit of the individual's increased motivation (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

In Canada, Holding OCB Inc. of Montreal, a large frozen foods manufacturer, has proposed a unique philosophy of business that incorporates both economic and humane aspects. Several values-based management activities are incorporated into the plant's operations, to ensure that people are not a means to an end. Rather, the dignity of the individual and the well-being of employees are the goal, and profit is merely the means to that end. Profits serve people; people do not serve profits. For example, hiring practices include tests of authenticity and humility along with technical expertise; groups of employees volunteer at soup kitchens twice a year on company time; a quiet room is available on site; and managers who have laid off employees are required to meet with those employees twice within nine months following the terminations. By treating employees with dignity, the

organization has managed to ease the tension between economic and human goals. Organizations such as Holding OCB Inc., that adopt a humanistic culture that respects the body, mind, and soul of employees are more likely to inspire employees to feel a sense of connection with their work, which then becomes more meaningful to them. This meaning can then be translated into shared organizational meanings, which, in turn, will align employees' intrinsic motivation with the achievement of organizational goals (Neal & Bennett, 2000). Harrington, Preziosi, and Gooden (2001: 162) argue that having a spiritual component in the workplace "will help to sustain organizational goals and energize people toward greater output."

THE AMERICAN WORKER BEGINS
TO WAKE UP

Nearly 30 years ago, as we moved into the information age, researchers identified the problems associated with prioritizing organizational motives of profit over human development:

> The aims of productivity and profit making have had top priority in the industrial age that is now passing. As we move into an age in which production and power might be less overriding concerns, we have a chance to reorder our priorities. It remains to be seen whether we shall give higher priority to enhancing the meaning of work and to creating work organizations that foster development as well as productive efficiency. (Levinson, 1978: 338)

The evolution from the industrial age to the information age has instigated many changes in society, the economy, and business. The assumption of unemployment and an "industrial reserve army" that is integral to Marx's (1863/1969) capitalist theory is being threatened by an impending skilled labour shortage due to demographic shifts. Baby boomers who represent a large segment of the North American population, are due to retire within the decade and the proposition is that there are insufficient skilled tradespeople in North America to replace them. Some researchers assert that the resulting skilled labour shortage coupled with a generalized decrease in job satisfaction will dramatically change the way that work is performed and jobs are designed (Jamrog, 2004).

The decline of the psychological contract between employers and employees, downsizing and massive company layoffs, and increased use of technology are considered to be instigators of a new movement to bring the meaning of work and spirituality into the workplace (Harrington et al., 2001). We suggest that this backlash is also a call to wake up from the American Dream/Nightmare. According to some, "business owners, managers, policymakers, and academic researchers all need to remember, as many surveys indicate, that tens of millions of world citizens are hungering for transmaterial, mind-expanding, soul-enriching,

and heart-centred (spiritual) values" (Butts, 1999: 329). Faced with th increased stress of social, economic, and ecological crises, people are "looking for avenues to cope," such as increased "spiritual awareness and practice." As a result, "Workers now desire a stronger integration of their spiritual values with their work and leaders will be forced to respond by accommodating the transformation of a more humanistic workplace where spiritual principles and values become integral parts of the organization's culture" (Harrington et al., 2001: 162).

Another factor impacting on the examination of the meaning of work is a heightened awareness of the questionable fate of humanity and the world. Perhaps "this renaissance, this dawning and awakening of humanity, is the emerging era of evolution . . . it is a time of our conscious creation of human evolution shaping all life on earth" (Jaccaci & Gault, 1999: 2). Some researchers propose that society is close to an explosive point due to cognitive dissonance and the need for more fulfilling work. "The burning fuse [of the impending explosive point is] unstable work environments too concerned with advancement and survival to lend support to two basic human needs of employees: to build meaning in an employee's own life through their work and to cultivate an environment that encourages the growth of the human spirit" (White, 2001: 47). Beyond the American Dream's vision of work as fulfilling economic, social, and prestige needs, work can also provide intrinsic meaning (Sverko & Vizek-Vidovic, 1995).

In a vein similar to that of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, people must first take care of their survival needs then move on to higher-level esteem and actualization needs. However, the American Dream has convinced us that our self-worth and sense of well-being are inextricably linked to our income (Lane, 1993). Sadly, for the workers who are under the illusion of the American Dream, the effect is only temporary, since an increased salary provides short-term pleasure without the lasting intrinsic benefit of meaning in their lives. Just as addicts become dependent on drugs, workers become addicted to high-paying but low-satisfaction work in their insatiable desire for the social esteem that money supposedly buys. Then the trap door closes as people adapt to their circumstances, so that each incremental increase in wages soon creates a new standard against which they measure themselves. Not surprisingly, research suggests that money cannot buy self-esteem. Although some people vehemently claim that they work for money, research suggests that many others work for meaning in their lives (Dalton, 2001).

In the classic work *Habits of the Heart,* work is categorized as being either a job, or a career, or a calling. A job is defined as "a way of making money and making a living," where one's identity is "defined by economic success, security and all that money can buy" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985: 66). Since work as a job is primarily conceived as a means of economic survival or success, career choices will be based on the highest-paying salary. In a career, "work traces one's progress through life by achievement and advancement in an occupation [and] yields a self defined by a broader sense of success, which

takes in social standing and prestige, and is itself a source of self-esteem." In addition to economic factors, work choices would now be made based on opportunities for development and advancement over a number of years. Finally, in a calling, "work constitutes a practical ideal of activity and character that makes a person's work morally inseparable from his or her life [and] links a person to the larger community . . . a crucial link between the individual and the public good" (Bellah et al., 1985:66). For those that regard work as a calling, work becomes life's mission.

Some workers are slowly waking up from the American Dream, looking for a career calling or more meaning in their lives, and are no longer amenable to being treated as "replaceable drones in the hive." Along with balance, they want "meaning in their work" and "opportunities to contribute and to know how their work contributes to the organization" (Herman & Gioia, 1998: 24). After all, "the practical business of working . . . [has] not remained constant over time . . . and it is likely that the conceptual and perceptual understandings which we have of work—the intellectual assumptions and expectations we make about the work we do and why we do it—will also change over time" (Ransome, 1996: 1).

Demographic shifts are also instigating change in workers' opinions about their work or careers:

> Organizational and occupational ladders provide a common understanding of social mobility and an identifiable pattern of progression through the life course. But this common understanding represents a set of practices and policies that no longer fit with the realities of a changing economy, changing gender roles, blurred lines between work and retirement, and a cohort of educated, introspective baby boomers newly valuing family life and uncertain about middle age. (Moen, 1998: 44)

The increased presence of women, various ethnic groups, and older workers in the labour force has resulted in increased questioning of the status quo of the American Dream job and perhaps further evidence of a shift toward more feminine values on Hofstede's (1984) masculinity/femininity continuum. Sixty hours a week at the office while your toddler takes his first steps to his or her paid nanny is no longer the standard vision of career success. Balance between home and family life is becoming much more prevalent than material wealth or individual success at work.

This is an ideal time in our history for corporations to change their paradigm from strict profit maximization to balancing profit with the long-term needs of society. In the post-Enron era, people are looking at corporations with increasing cynicism and distrust. To reinstate trust, "what is called for . . . involves nothing less than a rethinking of the basic purpose and responsibilities of the corporation. Restating corporate purpose in terms of social needs rather than solely of maximizing profit is the surest way" (Wilson, 2004: 21). But therein lies the root

of the problem with the American Dream: Within this mindset, the objectives of maximizing short-term profit and serving the long-run needs of society are diametrically opposed. As long as the American Dream drives the goal-setting process and supports the objective of maximizing material profit above all else, the best we can hope for is slight incremental improvements to the work environment.

THE EUROPEAN DREAM:
AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

It is time for society to embrace a new dream, one that reflects the humane needs of the planet at this time in our history and provides guidance for a world in crisis. Perhaps what we need is a new vision, one that recognizes that people, workers and owners alike, possess minds, bodies, and souls that are worthy of respect and need meaning for nourishment. We propose that the basis for such a vision does exist and is alive and well in parts of Europe. While the American Dream emphasizes accumulation of financial wealth, assimilation, and autonomy, what Rifkin (2004) refers to as the European Dream emphasizes quality of life, interdependence, community embeddedness, and diversity. The European Dream, "focused not on amassing wealth but, rather, on elevating the human spirit," "seeks to expand human empathy not territory" and "takes humanity out of the materialist prison" (Rifkin, 2004: 7–8). Thus, what we are referring to as the European Dream is not so much defined by geographic boundaries as it is a mindset that values success in humanitarian rather than economic terms.

Since we recognize the danger in making sweeping generalizations about a positivist, unified European culture, the term "European Dream" is used in this context to denote a general attitude shared by many people throughout the world rather than a geographic phenomenon. According to Hofstede (1984), culture is a system of shared values and beliefs where most people within that group share reactions to or attitudes about four constructs: uncertainty avoidance; masculinity/femininity; individualism; and power distance. For the purposes of this article, we focus our attention on issues of masculinity/femininity and individualism. We would expect a culture that embodies the American Dream to share more masculine traits, for example, emphasizing heroism, achievement, and material success, than its European Dreamer counterpart, which values more feminine characteristics, for example, emphasizing relationships and quality of life. With respect to the individualism dimension, we would expect European Dreamers to have a more collectivist attitude than their American Dream counterparts. Concern for others' welfare would take precedence over the self-serving, save-yourself attitudes that are evidenced by the increased incidence of unethical corporate behavior in the Western world (Arnold, Bernardi, Neidermeyer, & Schmee, 2005).

In summary, we do not propose that any one nation or group is superior to another. Rather, in viewing the situation from a position of cultural relativism, we

propose that the appropriateness of a custom, such as valuing human life over materiality, should be evaluated with regard to how this custom might help society and the planet evolve. Some of the most contented people are those who are living intrinsically rewarding lives; by simply living compassionately they are giving their lives meaning. They are not necessarily considered the most successful by American standards but they are happy:

> These people work very hard, they often don't get recognition, they often have to skimp and do without the comforts that everybody else takes for granted. But they are doing what they want to do. And essentially what they want to do is follow their curiosity and their interests. For one person it is understanding why the galaxies move one way or the other. For another it is expressing their feelings through words and poetry. For others it's helping humanity by working for social policies or the social good. The important thing is that it's something you feel particularly in sync with, something that attracts you, something that moves you, something that resonates with your interests. (Whalen, 1999: 164)

Perhaps it is time for those who hold the torch of the American Dream to evolve from the old materialistic "me" worldview to one where "we" embrace change and each other willingly. Whereas the American Dream is tired and adding to intensified strife in the new millennium, the European Dream is flourishing as a conduit for evolution to a truly global society. "The new European Dream is powerful because it dares to suggest a new history, with an attention to quality of life, sustainability, and peace and harmony." In the United States and Canada, such a "steady state global economy is a radical proposition, not only because it challenges the conventional way we have come to use nature's resources but also because it does away with the very idea of history as an ever-rising curve of material advances" (Rifkin, 2004: 8).

Some researchers are questioning whether, in light of intense economic pressure and global diversity, the European Dream is sustainable and able to withstand the pressure to conform to an American civil liberty mindset in order to survive globalization (Estes, 2004). Although we embrace the tenets of social solidarity and cohesion inherent in the European social state, we recognize that differences among European nations and cultures coupled with increased diversity may yield different interpretations of the European Dream. We also appreciate that Europe is a collection of distinct and diverse groups, such as the Anglo-Saxon, Continental, Central, and Eastern Europeans.

However, we also recognize that cultures across the various groups are not necessarily similar or consistent over time (Kolman, Noorderhaven, Hofstede, & Dienes, 2003). During the last decade of the 20th century, economic problems, increases in the number of conservative national governments, the shifting of political authority and fiscal responsibility to the private sector (Ascoli & Ranci, 2002), environmental issues, and social conflict due to increased diversity led to an overall decrease in the social welfare system worldwide. However, at the same

time, the decline in the North American social index was reported to be more than double that of Europe (Estes, 2004). And, even though evidence suggests that some European nations are emulating the American model by shifting the welfare mix and placing more onus on private citizens and enterprises (Estes, 2004), there is no empirical research to substantiate the claim that the "New Europe" is incompatible with the European Dream's philosophy of social cohesion (Taylor-Gooby, 2005).

Despite the differences among the various nations, there does appear to be a prevailing attitude of placing human rights and social solidarity above economic rights:

> European codes of private law have traditionally commenced with a concept of the person. In the development of private law in the European Union, we require a modern concept of the person, one which goes beyond the idea of the bearer of economic rights, to one which embraces ideas of human rights and social solidarity, as found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. (Alpa, 2004: 734)

It is this defining identity of social solidarity, this emphasis on people and society over profit that supports the notion that the European Dream can survive regardless of geographic boundaries (Weiler, 2002). In much the same way that the American Dream crosses geographic boundaries and infiltrates Asian, African, or even European cultures, the European Dream is not constrained by geography or nationality.

The crux of the problem, however, is how to communicate the nonmaterial conceptualization of success to American Dreamers. And how do we stop the spread of the American Dream across the globe? Although some researchers and politicians claim that "if an enlarged EU is to function, it may have to become a little more like the US in its social attitudes" (Prowse, 2003), we propose that this shift away from social and human values is not inevitable. However, it will take a concerted effort and perhaps an intermediary of sorts to retain the European Dream of social cohesion and emphasis on human over economic success.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE AMERICAN DREAM?

The spirituality in the workplace movement has attracted much attention from individuals and organizations with strong personal beliefs. However, if personal agendas dominate, as they do by design in the American Dream, the inevitable alienation of many people who could and should have been involved will impair the movement's growth. Because of the nature of spirituality, it is better understood from a humanistic worldview than from an economic, materialistic one. While profits and productivity can be and are quantified, spirituality defies

objective rationalizations. Although we respect the fact that for some people spirituality entails religion (Hicks, 2003), we caution against the inclusion of specific religious beliefs, because of the inherent exclusivity. The problem created by placing priority on one belief or religion over another will likely lead to the alienation and marginalization of the spirituality in the workplace movement.

Perhaps out of a "deep-seated antagonism toward centralized power," and to guard against a "single official state religion" such as existed in Europe, the American Dream was founded on the separation of state and religion and the relegation of the government's role to one of "guarantor of individual property rights" rather than redistributor of wealth (Rifkin, 2004: 33). As a result, the American Dream inherently promotes the individual's right to express one's religious beliefs and allocate one's time to help society as one sees fit. Consequently, religion has played a much more prominent and vociferous role in American society than it has in Europe. Research conducted in the 1990's indicated that religious organizations represented 11% of nonprofit employment in the United States, more than three times that of Europe (Wojciech & Salamon, 1999). According to the same study, Europeans tended to volunteer their time out of personal choice, whereas nearly one-third of American volunteers were more likely to volunteer through religious affiliations in order to perpetuate and legitimize certain religious institutions. It is as if the expression of religious beliefs is an extension of the American Dream's fundamental right to freedom of individual expression.

However, the view of spirituality as religiosity may be problematic if, through the hegemony of the American Dream, subjective voices are silenced by dichotomous beliefs in terms of right or wrong, good or bad, and the assumption that one religious belief is superior to another. As a remedial step, the spirituality in the workplace movement could be viewed from the perspective of the individual's quest for meaning in life, work, or simply a meaningful existence. Actors involved in the movement would need to acknowledge their personal beliefs and opinions on the role work plays in their lives. We suggest that this examination would be difficult for a society that wholeheartedly embraces the American Dream and its inherent prioritization of profits over people. Adopting or even understanding spirituality in the workplace requires a paradigm shift from a materialistic to a humanistic perspective and a shift from an American to a European Dream.

We suggest that an open, respectful forum is needed, one that is consistent with a humanistic European Dream mindset, if the spirituality in the workplace movement is to grow and be a force for positive change. Rather than embracing dichotomous doctrines or a preference for economic gain, we must embrace all belief systems equally. Rather than focusing on making workplaces more efficient, we must focus on making workplaces more humane, so that workers are free to be more productive. Rather than focusing on careers and material wealth, we must focus on helping people understand the meaning of work and how it

aligns with the organization's purpose. And, rather than focusing on amassing individual shareholder wealth, we must focus on the long-term sustainability of all stakeholders, including the earth.

We posit that it is the responsibility of corporations such as Tom's of Maine and Holdings OCB Inc., which possess economic power in society, to institute an ideological shift from the American Dream to the more humanistic European Dream. Since "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Marx & Engels, 1845/1974: 64), we need more organizations to experiment with economic gain as a means to serve human well-being rather than as the end itself. As more organizations report economic success as a result of feeding human dignity and the human spirit, the more likely the paradigm is to be adopted by other rationalizing and isomorphizing firms.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE IN CANADA: A CONDUIT FOR EVOLUTION FROM THE AMERICAN TO THE EUROPEAN DREAM

When viewed from an American Dream perspective, business leaders and politicians might ask, "What does spirituality have to do with profits?" or "How can we harness this new tool called spirituality in the workplace to increase productivity?" When viewed from a European Dream perspective, however, there is space to conceive of workers as much more than tools or means to the end of profit. The spirituality in the workplace movement offers emancipation for workers from the iron cage of the American Dream through enhanced meaning of work and respect for each individual's mind, body, and soul. From such a humanist perspective, spirituality and the meaning of work are subjective and defy objectification or commodification.

Canada occupies a particularly unique role amid the polarization of materialist and humanist worldviews. Neither purely American nor purely European, Canada possesses both materialistic and humanistic aspects. Although Canadians may appreciate material comforts much as their American counterparts do, share similar consumption patterns, and tend to overuse exhaustible resources, in contrast to the United States, Canada is widely respected as a peacekeeping nation and a cultural mosaic rather than a melting pot. The Canadian national anthem encapsulates both national languages, regions of the country are granted special status due to uniqueness of culture, and even the Royal Canadian Mounted Police uniform, regarded as a national icon, is modified to embrace members' diverse cultures or religions.

With less (materially) to lose than their American neighbors, and with a need to increase population through immigration, Canadian organizations are increasingly more tolerant of diversity and different worldviews. Because of this unique position, midway between the American Dream and the European Dream, we propose Canadian organizations as prime candidates for experimentation with

spirituality and the workplace and for building a bridge between the two dreams. For example the first Canadian university to establish a centre for spirituality in the workplace is situated in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Saint Mary's University, 2007). The centre provides a hub for similarly minded business people and researchers and offers contemplative practices, lectures and presentations from ethical and spiritual businesses and organizations, research opportunities, and courses in spirituality in the workplace. It is through this centre that Canadian business leaders such as Robert Ouimet of Holdings OCB Inc. in Montreal are able to reach out to other business leaders and future business leaders (university students) with an appeal to integrate humanistic ideals with economic gain. Ouimet believes that an emphasis on employee well-being is compatible with organization success and in fact is the key cornerstone of it. In an incremental rather than a radical way, as is so typical of the Canadian culture, Canadians are questioning the dominant ideology (the American Dream) and examining how people just might be more important than profits.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we argue that the American Dream must be replaced with a vision that is more consistent with the humanistic approach of the European Dream, one that values humanity over profit. While some may argue that the American Dream has helped create a better world from an economic standard of living perspective, it is difficult to ignore the fact that corporations are adept at making the wealthy wealthier as they destroy the environment in the process. Our evolution is at stake. Some research indicates that "income mobility appears to be lower in the United States than in other OECD countries" (Reuters, 2004) and that there is a higher proportion of the American population living in poverty than in many European nations (McCartney, 2003).

Some organizational theorists propose that we have a disconnect between our inner world and the external world (Durkheim, 1915). While we focus on amassing our own wealth and engage in individual therapy to cope with our daily problems, we have neglected our accountability to the evolution of humanity:

> In 1930, anticipating future economic growth, Keynes wrote a letter to his "grandchildren" advising them to try "encouraging, and experimenting in, the arts of life as well as the activities of purpose [earning a livelihood]." "But chiefly," he said, "do not let us overestimate the importance of the economic problem, or sacrifice to its supposed necessities other matters of greater and more permanent significance." Keynes thought that "the permanent problem of mankind" is learning not just to live, but to live well. (Lane, 1993: 65)

Although the world has made great strides technologically, the evolution of humanity is in question as we are still focused predominantly on financial and material gain (Hillman & Ventura, 1992).

> The evolutionary myth based on material progress allows us to formulate goals that are congruent with only the first two stages of individual development: physical well-being and conformity to group values. This limitation makes us very vulnerable to exploitation by any idea, product, or technology that is advertised as making life more comfortable materially and as helping us live up to societal expectations. To go beyond these to the stages of individual autonomy and then to harmony with our social and nonsocial environment, we must find a way to recast the current idea of evolution so as to include a model of psychological progress based on what we know about personal growth. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 34)

In short, the American Dream, with its focus on individual short-term material progress, fails to serve the evolutionary needs of the individual or society. We agree with futurist writers and researchers who are exposing the need for the conscious evolution of society (Cornish & McCuinness, 1993; Hubbard, 2002).

> The human species is facing a great transition from one stage of evolution to the next. In our generation, *Homo sapiens* have gained unprecedented technological and social power to either destroy this world as we know it, or to co-create an immeasurable future. We stand at a threshold, and it has become clear that if we continue to use our new powers in the same state of consciousness in which we created them, we can wreak havoc upon ourselves and the other species of earth. But if we use our new powers wisely, we will transcend the current human condition, not only solving our problems but participating in the co-creation of futures that are chosen, open-ended and ever-evolving. (Hubbard, 2002: 359)

We propose that the time has come to evolve from the American Dream to a more humane paradigm and approach to work that is consistent with the substance of the European Dream. To assist with the transition, we propose that the spirituality in the workplace movement is an ideal conduit and that Canada, with its tolerance for diversity, is an ideal breeding ground. We put forward a challenge to ourselves and to other management and organizational researchers to work with Canadian businesses and organizations to advance the theory on the evolution of healthy individuals, workplaces, and society.

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