



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

1.19 FROM RATIONALITY TO MORALITY TO SPIRITUALITY

All my work as an economist and a businessman focused on the world around me. Almost overnight, this focus was supplemented by a powerful urge to know myself, and to live in accord with my truth.

Peter Pruzan, Professor Emeritus, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

IN PREVIOUS articles, we've shared inspiring stories of people who have found their "true calling" in their work. Another way that some people have walked this path is to deepen their calling as their career progresses. The story of Peter Pruzan, Professor Emeritus from the Copenhagen Business School – and one of our colleagues in researching and writing about spiritual-based work – exemplifies that kind of deepening.

His career was influenced each step of the way by his personal evolution "from rationality to morality to spirituality", as he describes it. For his retirement celebration from the business school, Peter wrote an essay about his journey; we found it fascinating to see how his career correlated with his inner awakening...

I grew up in a middle class, intellectual family in New York, where logic, facts, rationality were the only acceptable perspectives on reality – and where "success", in the forms of economic wealth or intellectual achievement, was paramount. There was little place for intuition and metaphysical conjecture – or for joy. And there was certainly no room for faith based on a religion or in a benevolent Godhead.

During my graduate studies and my early professional work, I looked at the world through an optic of hyper-rationality. My expertise in applying mathematical optimisation techniques to complex decision problems in business was in great demand. I worked for IBM and the Technical University of Denmark before starting a highly successful international consulting firm that worked at the leading edge of theory and application.

When I turned 40 in 1976, I sold my business and returned to academia. It was in connection with my renewed academic work that I slowly moved from my "rationality phase" to my "morality phase". Personal experience and intellectual reflection had led me to challenge my previous world-views and to evolve a concept of ethics that was a natural expansion of my work with economic rationality. From the mid-1980s, I worked at the forefront of emerging fields such as business ethics, social and ethical accounting, values-based leadership and corporate social responsibility.

I achieved international recognition in both of these phases of my career path. But underway, there was also suffering in my personal life that no amount of success could compensate for. Perhaps the pain I experienced led to a softening of my heart, so that I was able to open myself to my spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, whom I met in India in 1989. I was fascinated by this teacher's extremely inclusive, non-sectarian approach to the notion of spirituality and his emphasis on the notion of loving and serving others as the key devotional practice. I was also challenged by the focus on our ego as the major barrier to our personal development.

This radically altered my aspirations in life, my understanding of reality and my relationship with myself. And this of course had a significant feedback to my professional development. All my work as an economist and a businessman focused on the world around me. Almost overnight, this focus was supplemented by a powerful urge to know myself, and to live in accord with my truth. This "spirituality phase" has led to my lecturing internationally on spirituality and business, and to my meeting and marrying my soul-mate, Kirsten.

Looking back at the path I have travelled so far, my "quality of life" has undergone a metamorphosis. In my youth, coping was in focus. Then came structuring and achieving via a powerful, often cynical focus on my (and others') rational behaviour. Later on my rational reflection led to a broader, moral perspective. And since my spiritual awakening, I have gradually become more aware of who I truly am and of the joy and peace and love that is our birthright.

I know from experience that practices such as meditation, prayer, enjoying the company of like-minded people and actively seeking a meaning in existence, which transcends my senses and my intellect, will support me on my path... a path from myself to my-Self, a path from becoming to being, a path that ends where it begins, at the wellspring of rationality, morality and spirituality.

So, ask yourself: *What has been the relation between my personal, spiritual development and my career path?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: The Basics*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of "spirituality and human values for leadership and work", visit our website: www.globaldharma.org