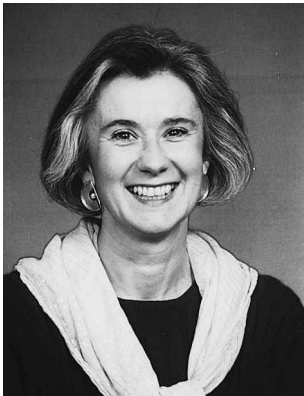


# Spirituality as a Global Organizing Potential

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Spirituality has entered organizational discourse through the back door and is now sitting in the drawing room awaiting a proper welcome. There is much speculation as to why spirituality is emerging as a dominant organizational concern. One possible explanation is the process of social diffusion; that is, as I in my tribal paints and feathers rub shoulders with you in your wool tweed jacket, I get covered with bits and pieces of wool, and you come away smeared with earthen paint and feathers. As people of the world meet to do business, we discover that our varied ways of working are grounded in quite different worldviews. As Americans seek to understand Japanese business strategy, they find themselves drawn into a study of Japanese martial arts. As Western businesses market and sell their products in other countries, they find themselves face to face with people for whom spirituality is an integral daily practice. As we attempt to sell Levis 501 jeans, McDonald's hamburgers, and Gerber's baby foods worldwide, we get more in the trade than simply dollars. Doing business around the world has opened the door to spirituality as a business practice because for many of the world's people, there is no separation of spirituality from life and work.

Each morning, Balinese shopkeepers renew their sidewalk altars with fresh flowers and food for the spirits of life and abundance. That potential customers must walk around these altars is not seen as detrimental to business as it might be in New York City, where every inch of the floor space is at a premium and even sidewalks are filled with wares for sale. To the Balinese, it is good to remember the spirits each step along one's journey. One person who works in close relationship with spirit is Dora Pena from the San Ildefonso pueblo in New Mexico. She is a potter whose pots are in many museum collections around the world, including the White House art collection. Dora describes the way she works as an ongoing prayer. Before she gathers the clay and sand from the hills near her home, she prays and makes an offering to the spirits of the clay and sand. As she mixes water with the clay, she prays to the spirit of water; as she coils and rolls the clay into its form as a pot, she prays to invite the spirit of the pot to be present. And so her work continues, with prayers for the wood and the fire, and finally thanksgiving for the finished pot. Admirers and collectors of Dora's pots cannot help but recognize their life and spirit—each one not simply the output of someone's work, or even a form of art, but rather a living, breathing manifestation of spirit embodied in a pot.

A further explanation for spirituality as a business and organizational consideration today rests with the move from modern to postmodern. We are living at a time when both the benefits and limitations of the modern worldview are readily apparent to us. We see the miracles science has wrought, and we see what damage it has enabled us to create. Great strides in information and communication technologies, transportation, and health care have come packaged with great environmental destruction and the near loss of indigenous life styles around the world (Mander, 1991). The modern focus on objectivity and the separation of science and spirituality, taken to fullness, leaves people separate from one another, separate from nature, and separate from the divine. As a people, we simply can no longer ignore poetry and trust analysis, ignore nature and trust the sterility of the laboratory, or ignore the multiple voices we hear in the night and trust only the

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rules, laws, or policies written by some unknown people to guide their lives, not ours. Modern science in its flowering has given seed to the postmodern, and with it comes a quest for spiritual relationships, meaning, and integration.

My purpose in writing this article is to provide an introduction to spirituality as it relates to organizational development and to create an opportunity for you to welcome the spiritual into the inner rooms of your life and work as global citizens.

As an emergent concept, spirituality, as it relates to business, organizational development, and the workplace, currently engages organization scholars and practitioners in a multifaceted, postmodern discourse. Conversations range from the ordinary worlds of personal energy and enthusiasm to the sacred worlds of mystical knowing, alternative realities, and transcendence. Each of these conversations evokes within the organizational community a differing and yet somewhat overlapping set of principles and practices for addressing spirituality as a global organizing potential. For example, Tom Chappell, founder of Tom's of Maine, describes the link between spirit and business as he sees it:

By spirit or spiritual, I mean the part of you that survives when you eliminate your flesh and bones—the part you can't point to, but can feel, the part you might describe to someone else as your essential being, your soul. Soul is what connects you to everyone and everything else. It is the sum of all the choices you make. It is where your beliefs and values reside. Soul is at the center of our relationships to others, and for me, it is at the center of the business enterprise. (Chappell, 1994)

Another proponent of spirituality in the workplace is Jack Hawley, who draws a line between spiritual and religion. In describing his book, he says: “This is a nonreligious, squarely spiritual management book. . . . It's about the things we're all concerned about: purpose and meaning, peace (inner peace, especially), health, happiness, love, life, and death” (Hawley, 1993). From yet another perspective, Larry Dossey writes that prayer, defined as “communication with the transcendent,” is positively correlated to healing (1993). He suggests that doctors incorporate prayer as part of the work of healing. His definition of prayer is closely related to the Lakota Sioux view of spirituality as one's relationship with the Creator.

Current considerations of spirituality as it relates to business, work, and organization development might loosely be clustered into four primary conversations that I have called spirit as energy, spirit as meaning, spirit as sacred, and spirit as epistemology. What follows is a brief overview of each.

## Spirit as Energy

When we get out of the glass bottles of our ego,  
and when we escape like squirrels turning in the  
cages of our personality  
and get into the forests again,  
we shall shiver with cold and fright  
but things will happen to us  
so that we don't know ourselves.  
Cool, unlying life will rush in,  
and passion will make our bodies taut with power  
we shall stamp our feet with new power  
and old things will fall down,  
we shall laugh, and institutions will curl up like burnt paper.

D.H. Lawrence

For many, the notion of spirit in the workplace has to do with the energy or “feel” of the place. There is a conversation about “spirit as energy.” High-technology entrepreneurial organizations are described as spirited, while large corporate hierarchies are considered sluggish and bankrupt of spirit. In this sense, spirit refers to a sense of aliveness and vibrancy, people's ability to stamp their feet with power. As the poem by D.H. Lawrence suggests, when we stamp our feet with new power, “we shall laugh, and institutions will curl up like burnt paper.” Consultants speaking from this perspective counsel managers

## *Organizational high performance and the capacity for organizational change are said to be derivative of spirit.*

to follow the path of least resistance (Fritz, 1984), to do what they love and the money will follow (Sinetar, 1988), and to manage from their hearts as the means to personal and organizational excellence.

Organizational high performance and the capacity for organizational change are said to be derivative of spirit. As Owen (1987) put it, “Whatever else high performance and excellence may be based on, they would seem to have something to do with the quality of Spirit . . . human Spirit, our Spirit, the Spirit of our organizations.” Much of the early

work in organizational transformation considered spirit as energy. Ackerman (1984) trained flow-state managers to “work on the energy flow in the system, work for harmony, alter structures to free up energy.” Post (1988) explained organizations in the language of Chinese medicine. She suggested we manage energy flows for organizational health in much the same way a Chinese medicine doctor works to open energy flows and to remove stagnation,

thereby promoting health within an individual. Aikido techniques became metaphoric means and methods for dealing energetically with conflict (Crum, 1987). Both the purpose and process of organizational transformation were to free the spirit, to build organizations with vision, purpose, and values, and to remove the energetic blocks to organizational high performance.

### Spirit as Meaning

To live content with small means,  
 to seek elegance rather than luxury,  
 and refinement rather than fashion,  
 to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich,  
 to study hard, think quietly, act frankly,  
 to listen to stars and birds, babes and sages, with open heart,  
 do all bravely,  
 await occasions,  
 hurry never—  
 in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious,  
 grow up through the common.  
 This is my symphony.

William Ellery Channing

Another conversation among organization scholars and practitioners considers “spirit as meaning.” Shared vision and common values are said to create organization meaning and to provide the impetus for organization change. Leaders at all levels of the organization are guided to inspire (to fill with spirit) rather than to motivate. Visionary leadership, as demonstrated by the likes of Lee Iacocca, is said to make the difference between successful and unsuccessful organization change. Visioning, or conversationally projecting the organization into the future, and creating alignment among organizational members about the desired future are essential organizing endeavors.

Spirit and meaning are said to reside in the stories told about the organization. Like a society or tribe’s creation story, the organization’s stories serve to create and recreate what is meaningful for the organization’s members. Storytelling, myth making, and the celebration of the hero’s journey (Barnhart and Borgman, 1991) are taught to managers as tools to deconstruct and reconstruct the organization’s sense of meaning. Organization culture can be considered the grand story of the company, the story that holds it all together. The conscious creation of organization culture involves the careful delineation of the way things are to be done, by whom, and with whom. It is a process of making meaningful selected patterns of daily work life and rendering others meaningless.

Central to the spirit-as-meaning conversation is the recognition that workers in the industrialized countries, especially the United States, want more from work than a paycheck (Yankelovich, 1981). The quest for the soul in business (Bolman and Deal, 1995), artful work (Richards, 1995), and right livelihood is on. As William Channing’s poem

suggests, to live content with small means, financially, does not mean to live without a sense of elegance, worth, or wealth. To let the spiritual grow through the common is a path to meaningful living.

Early conversations about spirit as meaning focused on people who found their work empty and sought meaning in spiritual practice (Occhiogrosso, 1992). As more and more people embarked upon the transformational lifestyle through the commitment to a spiritual practice of some type, the conversation widened. Now, not only do people want their own life to be full of meaning and purpose, but they also expect the same of their organizations. Awakening people want to work for organizations that care and that are consciously contributing to the planet. People want their organizations to make positive contributions to their communities and to the world, and they want work to enliven them. Empowerment (Block, 1987) has become a code word for spirit as meaning. People want to be involved creatively at work and they want their voices to be meaningful to those with whom they work. They want opportunities to express themselves and to know they are heard and are contributing to the social good. They want to be liberated (Peters, 1994) to learn and to grow while making a meaningful contribution. The exchange of labor for dollars is no longer satisfactory. Work has become a lifestyle, and people want a good life. They want to bring their whole selves—mind, body, and spirit—to work. Meaningful work engages the whole person. It is a dialogue unbounded by roles and infused with creativity; a willingness to collaborate with others; and a daily enactment of beliefs, values, and relationships within the context of our now global community.



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## Spirit as Sacred

The man whose mind is rounded out to perfection  
Knows full well  
Truth is not cut in half  
And things do not exist apart from the mind.  
In the great Assembly of the Lotus all are present  
Without divisions.  
Grass, trees, the soil on which these grow  
All have the same kinds of atoms.  
Some are barely in motion  
While others make haste along the path,  
but they will all in time  
Reach the Precious Island of Nirvana  
Who can really maintain  
That things inanimate lack buddhahood?

Chan-Jan

The realm of “spirit as sacred” is a conversation quite different from the conversations of spirit as energy or spirit as meaning. One might consider this the realm of Spirit with a capital S, to distinguish it from the preceding conversations about spirit with a small s (Hawley, 1993). In this arena, there is an implicit understanding that all life is imbued with a divine spiritual presence, a spiritual potential awaiting discovery and emergence. Taoist, Buddhist, and Native American beliefs are drawn on to exemplify the understanding that divine spirit is a quality of all beings. Humans, plants, animals, and rocks are all



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of spirit. From this perspective, spirit is not something separate from mind, body, or action but is indeed an integral quality of being. To posit spirit as separate from body or mind is to miss the point, something modern science has helped us do very well.

Conversations about spirit as sacred in the workplace would have us seeking the Dora Penas of the world. I know of few people other than my Native American relatives who live and work in relation to spirit as an integral part of all life. Among them, the examples are many: Thomas One Wolf who prays to the creator before hunting that he might be gifted with the life of a deer. Grandpa Pete Concha who reminds me to visit before traveling to the Far East for business so he can bless me and ask the spirit to keep me safe and to bring me home safe. The Pueblo women who dance, as the spirit of the corn, with gratitude before the fields are planted and after the harvest is gathered. The people and businesses most organized around the notion of spirit as sacred are the many ecologists and environmentalists around the world. They are, for our times, the voice of spirit in all of life's forms. They are the voice of biodiversity as a sacred trust. They are the voice of our human dependency on nature.

The conversations about spirit as sacred are not about trying to get spirit; it is already here. The quest of spirit as sacred is to live spiritual values as fully as possible. That is, to enact life, respecting all life as sacred; loving rather than fearing (Buscaglia, 1992); recognizing original blessing rather than original sin (Fox, 1983); cooperating rather than competing with other members of our global community; and sincerely appreciating the many gifts life has

laid on our doorstep. Many organizations have entered into the realm of spirit as sacred through the development of values statements and the conscious application of declared values to decisions of strategic and global import. Two well-known examples are Ben and Jerry's and The Body Shop. Leaders of both organizations describe their success as based on the enactment of spiritually and globally attuned values. Decisions about their organizations and products are said to be based on their values. For example, Ben and Jerry's has a cap on CEO salary, and The Body Shop does not conduct animal testing of its products. In each case, these organizations, like the Balinese shopkeepers, risk the business implications of their decisions to enact their values and in so doing create the world as a better place for all life.

*People . . . want to bring their whole selves—mind, body, and spirit—to work.*

The value of integrity is on most companies' values lists. As such, it is a code word for honesty, authenticity, and truth telling within the organization. Discussions about the application of integrity in organizational life seldom evoke the meaning of integrated or whole. Organizations are still suffering under the modern fiction of fragmentation, functionalism, and division of labor. Spirit as sacred acknowledges the connection of all life and all energy such that actions of the part impact the whole. "In Chinese philosophy, it is said that the slightest wave of the hand moves molecules all the way to the end of the universe" (Anthony, 1988). As modern communication and transportation enables us to experience the world as one being, we see the reality of our connectedness. As we see the impact of local actions on global existence, we wonder if perhaps we have been connected all along and just didn't know it. Spiritual practices of peoples around the world assume this connection. It enables them to live in ways and to perform rituals and ceremonies that positively collaborate with the whole of being. I have been told that the ceremonial dances performed by the Tewa people help the sun rise each day. The belief that humans and planets are related is essential to their life and ceremonies. For many

indigenous people, there is a sacred ecology of life based on a sense of wholeness and relatedness.

For many Western business leaders, the notion of wholeness is one of the realities of globalization still to be constructed. Globalization appeared in the conversations of my clients, first as a title in a search of a job and then as a potential strategic leverage. Clients with titles such as vice president of global marketing, global vice president of human resources, and director of strategic globalization are asking questions such as: What is globalization? What are other companies doing about it? How can we take advantage of globalization? Is globalization just another business school fad, or is it real? All these questions belie an understanding of the wholeness of the world and the essential relatedness of all life, as well as the opportunity to cooperate with relatives, colleagues, and business partners worldwide to infuse the notion of globalization with meaning and spirit that will sustain life for generations to come.

With the sense of wholeness and connectedness comes a deep reverence for relationships. Spirit as sacred places relationships at the center of social organization. The Lakota Sioux draw purpose for action as well as a sense of social location from their relatives. A Lakota is credentialed not through schooling and degrees earned or by years of experience, but rather through relationships. Relationships that matter, that is, those that give form to life and social organization, may be bloodline relationships, *Hunka* or chosen relationships, as well as relationships with spirit beings and relationships given through vision. Each person's identity is in relation to the community. The community and the ongoing life of the people are enacted through relationships.

*With the sense of wholeness and connectedness comes a deep reverence for relationships.*

One outstanding example of a business that honored the relationships of the local people and, as a result, achieved global business success is Packard Electric, a division of General Motors. When the decision was made to open a new plant organized with work teams practicing total quality, several locations were considered. The final decision was to locate the plant in the region of Chihuahua, Mexico, where family-owned businesses are the norm. Families were hired as teams, trained in total quality principles and in skills needed to operate the plant. Six years later, the plant and the community are thriving.

Unfortunately, one challenge facing organizations today is the many scars that exist from times when relationships were not honored and people were not treated as sacred. Spirit as sacred calls for a radical relational perspective, one that not only honors all life and relationships, but also honors the multiple voices and ways of knowing of the world's people.

## Spirit as Epistemology

When the animals come to us,  
asking for our help,  
will we know what they are saying?

When the plants speak to us  
in their delicate, beautiful language,  
will we be able to answer them?

When the planet herself  
sings to us in our dreams,  
will we be able to wake ourselves, and act?

Gary Lawless

Perhaps the greatest divide created by modern science between indigenous people and the Western world is the epistemological divide. While Western science developed methodologies and studied the world in order to control the forces of nature, indigenous people studied the world in order to cooperate with the forces of nature (Colorado, 1988). This difference is awe inspiring to me as I have come to realize essential differences in not only the ways of knowing but also the knowledge gained.

For many people to whom spirit is integral to life, there are realities other than the visible worlds of technology, living nature, and human beings. Within these realities reside spirit beings who on occasion make themselves and their views known. Examples include the nature devas who guide the care of the gardens in Findhorn, Scotland, the spirit relatives who talk to Lakota people in sweat-lodge ceremonies, and the many spirits who are channeled by psychics around the world. In all cases, the presence of spirits depends on relationships among them and some person or group of people. To come forth and communicate, spirits are invited through ritual and ceremony. For example, the Navajo sand paintings may be looked upon as symbolic representations of healing, but to the Dine people, “The making of the sand painting is the creation of the presence of the beings. The beings are not at all separate from what the sand looks like. Once the sand painting is there, they are there” (Kremer, 1995).

Business and organizations around the world call on holy people to bless buildings, business endeavors, and the people whose work is to serve the community. Once the blessing is made, be it by a Shinto priest, a rabbi, or a medicine man, what business or organizational leaders engage spirit daily for decision making, for team building, or for maintaining balance within the local community, as it relates to global well-being? All too often, consultants, serving as the metaphoric ministers of organizational well-being, provide assistance based upon the scientific paradigm of control over nature. The challenge of spirit as epistemology is to open to the voices of spirit and to learn the ultimate lessons in cooperation: how to co-construct global communities and organizations in balance and in harmony with spirit.

## Reflections

Spirituality as it relates to work, business, and organization development is a multifaceted conversation. The question is not whether it is relevant in the social understanding and creation of global organizations, but rather in what ways. People around the globe are giving voice to spiritual beliefs and practice while their organizations are suffering the consequences of years of spiritual estrangement. As people live more fully awakened to the spiritual life, old ways of relating and forms of organizing cannot endure. Spiritual ways of working and organizing that currently exist around the world hold potential for organizational realities that blend the best of science and technology with the best of mysticism and love. Let us have faith in the magic of conversation, relational realities, and co-creation, and let us expand beyond the realms of human interaction to include all our relations. *Mitakuye oyas'in*.

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## Commentary

by Ian I. Mitroff

Diana Whitney's article is a "must read" for every manager and executive. Were its ideas to be taken seriously, the end result would be a true revolution in how we conceive of, design, and manage organizations.

A generation ago, the world of management was introduced to the then pioneering work of Abraham Maslow (1964; 1968; 1970). Maslow is rightly famous for introducing two critical concepts into psychology and management literature—the "hierarchy of needs" and self-actualization, his second and perhaps most important concept. Today, we call it *spiritual*.

As previous generations were introduced to Maslow, a giant of psychology, today's generation needs to be introduced to another, Ken Wilber. Given the importance and the prominence of Wilber's work, I was surprised to find no reference in the Whitney article to his framework (1995 and 1996). Wilber has integrated the developmental streams of Eastern and Western thought in ways that no one has. Indeed, he is *the* preeminent writer on spirituality.

Through an extensive study of a wide array of developmental theorists, psychologists, and students of world religions and spirituality, Wilber has come up with a framework to show a multitude of developmental paths of which humans are capable. These encompass not only the earliest physical and mental stages through which all humans *must* pass, but also the later, most profound spiritual stages through which human beings *may* pass if they so choose.

While countless writers have incorporated Maslow's thoughts into management, in contrast, Wilber's are still to be appreciated and are extremely relevant to management.

### Fourfold Framework

A good way to comprehend some of Wilber's contributions to our understanding of human development and spirituality is by means of a simple diagram (see the figure). The horizontal line shows that what we experience and define as "human" comes either from one's deep, internal emotions, or from that which is outside or external. The vertical line shows either the individual as the central focus or the group, organization, or society of which every individual is a part. The vertical line thus corresponds to the differences between those who instinctively focus on the individual or those who focus on the "big picture" in understanding individual humans and their collective institutions.

Through an extensive study of developmental frameworks and spirituality in the East and West, Wilber has discerned at least four different spiritual orientations, represented by the four quadrants in the figure. In the West, spirituality has largely been defined as an inner-individual phenomenon. However, there is also a sense of spirituality that relates to the outer-individual. This regards the human body as proof or evidence of the hand of God or a deity. Western scientists and increasingly the Western public have so devalued the role of spirituality in everyday life—the inner life, in general—that they have come to accept the scientific definition of humans as the only valid description. Wilber refers to this fundamental devaluing of the inner life and its complete reduction to the outer life as *Flatland*, a "flat" description of humans and their inner life.

Newberg et al.'s popular book, *Why God Won't Go Away*, is a vivid testimony to this reduction (2001). Although it is openly respectful of God as a force or presence in the universe, nonetheless, it subtly reduces the experience of God to the biomechanical spiritual quadrant. In brief, the contention is that our brains are "hard-wired" for the experience of God.



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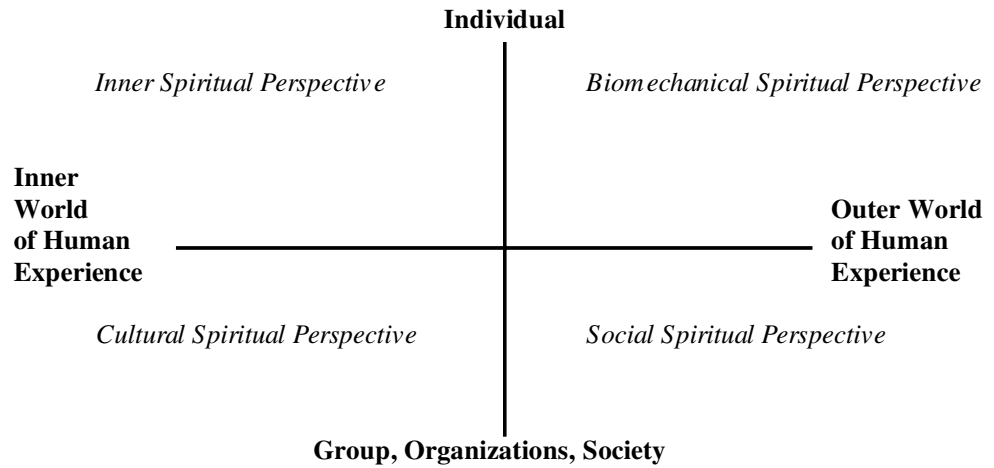


Figure 1 Wilber's fourfold framework.

The outer-group or social spiritual perspective shows nature as a manifestation or evidence of the presence of a supreme deity. Many regard the very structure of nature, and not just the individual human body, as a direct visible sign of the presence of a deity or master designer. Another interpretation is that human spirituality is manifested through institutions that we design to help alleviate human misery. For instance, Mother Teresa's founding of a spiritual order led to an institution to alleviate the plight of the poor. Thus, the outer-group quadrant not only refers to nature, but also to those human institutions or structures that we create in order to realize spirituality on earth. The inner-community or cultural spiritual perspective indicates that spirituality and especially the institutions that alleviate the plight of the poor also have an inner life. This is the culture or ideology of an organization.

### Progression of Spirituality

Just as individuals exist at various levels of development, there is also a progression of various levels in each of Wilber's four quadrants. All the great religious and spiritual traditions recognize a progression from inanimate matter to animate matter, from animals to human beings, and, finally, from mind to spirit. Where Western approaches primarily confine themselves to the progression from inanimate matter to the upper states of mind, Eastern approaches start with the mind and proceed to the highest levels of spiritual attainment.

For example, the Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg has traced in detail the moral development of children. As an individual progresses throughout life, he or she moves from notions of morality founded on immediate identity, family, community, and nation to the earth and the entire human community—the highest level or stages of moral development. In the work of Kohlberg and other developmental theorists, this progression constitutes an orderly hierarchy whose various stages cannot be skipped. The vast majority of human beings have to progress through each of the stages before the others can be attained.

Wilber has identified four historically important models or progressions of spirituality (Wilber, 1995; 1996). Although he refers to them by different names, I label the four models *commonality*, *union*, *identity*, and *no-distinction*.

The commonality model is the nature mysticism found in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through nature, spirit assumes a physical form. Through the deep contemplation of nature, humans can recognize, feel, and experience for themselves the commonality that they share with all things, inanimate as well as animate.

The union model goes deeper, further, and higher. In *The Interior Castle*, St. Teresa of Avila describes in poignant detail the spiritual journey that she undertook, and presumably anyone can undertake, to the center of the human soul wherein Christ resides (1979). The ultimate end of this journey is the complete union or marriage with God.

The identity model progresses to an even more radical breakdown of the distinction between the self and others. In the identity model, one finally comes to the realization that "God and I are

One." This does *not* mean that one literally is God, but rather, that God has been within the self all the time.

Finally, the no-distinction model is characterized by the complete and total collapse of *all* distinctions. There were no distinctions from the very beginning. Indeed, there is no beginning to anything because there is no end. In other words, the universe is the timeless, spaceless, and formless nature of all reality, a Buddhist idea. According to Buddhism, the real self is not to be identified with the ego, its material possessions, or the physical self, all of which perish over time. Instead, the real self is the self that is timeless, eternal, and totally without distinctions or separateness from the rest of the universe.

The four models constitute a strict hierarchy. Each of the succeeding models contains all that precede it. For instance, the union model contains the commonality model, and so forth. Thus, each of the succeeding models is at a higher and deeper level of spirituality. These four models are ideals and should not be dismissed merely because we cannot achieve any of them in today's world.

I hope my remarks have conveyed both the importance and the necessity of understanding what Ken Wilber has to contribute to spirituality. Spirituality is important not only in our lives, but especially in the workplace (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). We need to understand the importance of spirituality, but even more, we need a framework that helps us to understand its very essence.

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Spirituality is one such tool to cope up with stress-related issues. It is an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of happiness, salvation of his being. Incorporating spiritual practices into their learning process enables the students to lead an active spiritual life which helps them to have a better perception of their life skills than students who are not practicing.