



12 STEP
WISDOM
AT WORK

TRANSFORMING YOUR LIFE
AND YOUR ORGANIZATION

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C H A P T E R S I X

At the heart of Twelve Step principles are the concepts of “values” and “spirituality.” As we enter the new millenium, both concepts have assumed a new sense of meaning and urgency among many people in the corporate world. Much like alcoholics coming to grips with their addiction and powerlessness, businesspeople on all levels of the organization are struggling to find meaning in work beyond simply the accumulation of money. As Robert eloquently describes, we all must seek and discover the Divine Essence within each of us—the only true basis for authentic values—and then infuse our most sacred personal values into the values of the organization we work for. If we do not do this, our culture will remain in a continuous state of “koyaanisqatsi,” a Hopi word meaning crazy life, life in turmoil, life disintegrating. Profits are essential to a business, of course; but to achieve true “profit,” business must also exist to nourish both our human and spiritual nature.

—Editor

The Answer to Our Prayers

Robert Rabbin

 *t is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching.”*

—St. Francis of Assisi

Our Predicament

Every year or so, a novel spasm of possibility trembles through the business world, business being a symbol for a community of people engaged in commerce. Continuous learning, creativity, visionary leadership, social responsibility, and sustainable development are some tremors that have recently opened the body of business to heightened perception and sensation, the mind of business to greater purpose, the heart of business to greater wisdom, and the soul of business to greater meaning. With each wave of new consciousness that washes over business, we—the real and living people within the symbol—become more aware of what we do and how we do it and of the consequences to ourselves, our communities, and the entire world.

The current spasm of possibility is about values. The word has become a virtual mantra: values-based leadership, values-driven cultures, spiritual values in the workplace. We can scarcely walk through a corridor, enter a cubicle, or sit in a meeting room without seeing or hearing a reference to values. One could get the impression that before today we were a horde of heathens without values. This, of course, is not true. The simple fact is that every thought we entertain, every word we speak, every action we take, every decision we make, every goal we create is a graphic demonstration of our values. Our values indicate what is important to us and what we esteem and consider significant.

We can all agree that our values are our North Star of Significance. Values are the orienting point we use to determine our actions, our choices, our decisions, our motives, our goals—all of which generate our life experience. The entire game of our life is played on the field of our values. Our values are always on display, as colorful and loud as a band marching straight down the main street of our life. Our values are a symbol for the quality of our hearts and minds. Our values are the face by which we recognize ourselves and others, the unmistakable fragrance of who we are. The life we create and experience and the results we produce are predicated on our values, on what is important to us.

This seeming sudden and widespread interest in values implies that our past and current values have produced experiences and results we don't like or want. With even the most cursory look at the headlines, we can see that our values as a society have created a *koyaanisqatsi* culture. *Koyaanisqatsi* is a Hopi word which means crazy life, life in turmoil, life disintegrating, life out of balance: a state of life that calls for another way of living. In a word, *koyaanisqatsi* means insane, and this suggests why our interest in values has become acute.

An exploration of values is timely in the extreme, because, as Peter Russell states in his book *Waking Up in Time*, “We are living through the most exciting, challenging, and critical times in human history—possibly the most critical time in the history of

life on Earth. Never before has so much been possible; never before has so much been at stake." We are hanging from a precarious ledge by the weakest of grips. What is at stake is the continued existence of our species.

As business leaders, we may not agree that safeguarding the existence of our species is our primary concern. We may feel that strengthening and expanding our business interests alone should be our main area of focus, that the success of our business and the financial satisfaction of shareholders are most important. As corporate executives and managers, we are naturally concerned with the health and vitality of our business, and we are always striving to improve our ability to deliver products and services to our customers. We are confronted with myriad daily challenges to maximizing efficiency and effectiveness, performance and productivity. We have to accomplish more with less, learn to be flexible, develop cultures in which diverse work groups treat each other with respect and dignity, attract and keep top talent, find that edge that guarantees success. To realize all of this, we need a set of values that will help us choose a course through the dangerous straits of conflicting realities: short- and long-term; self-interest and the common welfare; expediency and restraint; profit and purpose; purity and corruption; denial and truth; blame and accountability; greed and sufficiency; life-affirmation and destruction; oppression and freedom; domination and humility; reverence and disdain; rational and mystical; mind and heart; fear and love. Business leaders are often thought to be the captains whose vision and skill can navigate these straits, steering the bow of the business ship unerringly to a safe harbor of promised abundance. Most business leaders feel that profit is the true and sacred bottom line.

In today's world, however, this bottom line must be drawn with an entirely different pen from the one that dots the *i*'s and crosses the *t*'s of profit, an obsession that has driven most captains of industry insane. Business leaders now must accept responsibility for a vision of a higher order. The Dalai Lama tells us:

In our present state of affairs, the very survival of mankind depends on people developing concern for the whole of humanity, not just their own community or nation. The reality of our situation impels us to think and act properly. Narrow-mindedness and self-centered thinking may have served us well in the past, but today will only lead to disaster.

The notion that we must feed profit to sate the appetite of business before we feed humanity—indeed, the entire Earth—with loving-kindness, honesty, and decency is one of the values that has contributed to our koyaanisqatsi culture. Searching for new techniques and strategies to run our businesses more profitably is too narrow a focus. Expanding our focus to take in the world, we need instead to become more fully human. Then, with our humanity leading the way, we will know how to act properly and avoid disaster—both in the world and in our business.

We have to place our commitments as business leaders in a larger context than the old bottom line. We have to place our commitments within the context of reality itself. We have to ask and answer questions more fundamental to who we are as human beings. We have to consider the aspirations of the soul of humanity, to the longings of our true heart, and then we must place our business goals within that longing. Such unbounded commitment to new and higher principles is at the core of the Third Step of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Before we are businesspeople, we are human beings. As human beings we need to redress an array of personal and social problems that we have created. We must urgently begin to cure illness and end epidemics; feed, clothe, and house the hungry and homeless; end brutality and war; end the wholesale incarceration of people without hope and opportunity; reverse the pollution and degradation of the environment; curtail corporate and governmental corruption and greed; safely dispose of industrial and nuclear waste; educate children without crushing their free and spiritual minds. Becoming authentic human beings, responsible for the whole world, is our primary responsibility. Business

can no longer exist solely to generate profit; business must also exist as a means to express our most authentic human nature. Business must become the environment in which human beings discover and demonstrate their truest and most exalted nature.

The Truth about Values

Albert Einstein is rumored to have said, “We cannot solve problems at the same level of consciousness that created them.” AA defines *insanity* as doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result. We know we have to produce different results, and so we have to do things differently. This means we have to change our values, since values guide our actions.

Or do they?

We normally speak of our values, as I have done above, as something separate from us; over here is me, over there are my values. This is not true. Our values are not something separate from us. Our values are not something we have to align or negotiate with, as in “walk our talk.” Our values are not some high-minded horizon toward which we must aspire. Our values—expressed in thought, word, and action—are who we are. Our values come into being as an image of the thoughts we give power to, the words we give passion to, the actions we commit our bodies to.

A few years ago, the owner and president of a communications company asked me to evaluate the degree to which his company expressed their corporate values in day-to-day activities and interactions.

He asked me if I wanted to review their corporate values documents. I said no. He asked if I would circulate a survey or questionnaire. I said no. He asked if I would use some form of assessment tool. I said no. He asked if I wanted to interview people one on one or in small groups. I again said no, I don’t want to talk to anyone.

He asked how, in that case, I was going to proceed. I said that I was going to use my “mute button” assessment tool, that I was going to stuff cotton in my ears and then just walk around and watch people work for three days. After that, I would be able to tell him what their actual values were, based on how people conducted themselves in the course of their work. I told him that any values printed on his mission, vision, and values document were idealized. I told him I would rather watch the employees—without any explanation—to see how they interacted with themselves and each other, with customers, vendors, suppliers, the public, OSHA, the fire department. That is the true, the actual, values document: how people behave. If people don’t like their behavior, they can change. But they have to see how they actually behave. Those are their values in action, the only values worth paying attention to. To superimpose a set of idealized values on our actual behavior is a sure way to institutionalize hypocrisy.

It is pure nonsense to think that what we say and what we do are two separate things that must be brought into proximity, like two ocean liners coming together, side by side, in the middle of the Atlantic. We might think that our real values are what we say they are, but that is a delusional conceit. Our real values are expressed in our actions, in what we do and how we do it. Our actions never contradict our values: Our actions *are* our values.

If we believe our values are what we say they are, then we will also believe all the reasons and excuses we give about why we do not live up to them. The simple reason we don’t live up to our espoused values is that they are not our actual values. “People are our greatest asset” is an idealized value of many corporations. Though this value is declared and repeated by thousands of people every day, we can scarcely see the demonstration of it. It is not that we fall short because of this devil or that reason; we fall short because we do not value people as our greatest asset. In the daily stories about corporate mergers and downsizing and reorganization layoffs, we read about the need to optimize productivity while cutting costs to maximize profits

to shareholders, but we never read about obscenely bloated executive salaries being cut. No one blinks when a hundred people are fired, or two hundred, while a single person's salary—equivalent to those hundred or two hundred casualties—remains a sacred cow.

In the corporate world, people are rarely a great asset.

If we want to know what we value, then we have only to watch what we do and how we do it. If we don't like what we see about ourselves as we observe this, then we can change our behavior.

We act from what we are, from what is written on the tablet of our hearts. If some value work is to be done, it is there, in our own hearts. We need to change who we are from the inside out, not because someone else says we should, but because we have looked into the mirror of our actual behavior and don't like what we see.

We lead with who we are, and our values come behind us, like approving or disapproving shadows. In sales training courses, we learn that people buy on emotion and justify with reason. In other words, people buy things because they want them. That's it. Afterward, they justify, explain, or defend their action. Their action itself, however, has to do with who they are, or who they think they are, not with any of their reasons.

So it is with values. We choose, decide, commit, go this way or that way because of who we are. Our values sit in the backseat of who we are.

We are our values, our values are us. There is no separation or distinction between one and the other. When we speak of our values, we are saying, "Look, here's who I am, dramatized in thought, word, and deed."

It is important to recognize this distinction, because we are too forgiving when we say we do not act in accordance with our values,

for one reason or another. This is a delusion. For example, we may say that every life is sacred and that no one should take the life of another. Still, we sometimes do take the lives of others. For example, we may approve of state-sponsored murder in the form of capital punishment; we may shoot doctors who perform abortions, all the while screaming that all life is sacred; perhaps we invest in stocks of tobacco companies whose products kill more than a thousand people each day; maybe we spend a quarter of a trillion dollars for military weapons systems each year, the use of which has only one outcome. These actions are not in accordance with our idealized value of not taking the life of another. They are in accordance with our actual values, with what we, unfortunately, are.

It may be hard to admit, but we do not actually value human life to the extent we say we do, because we are so cavalier about ending those sacred lives whenever it suits our more valuable and pressing purposes. If we say we are nonviolent, then we must be nonviolent, and no mitigating circumstances will move us to violence, since violence does not arise within us as a possibility.

In the wake of the recent heartbreaking shootings at Columbine High School in Denver, President Clinton said, “We have to teach our children how to solve their problems without violence.” Where do we have such teachers? Where do we have people in whom violence can not appear, because it no longer exists within them?

If we say we are charitable and generous, then we will not be motivated by greed of any sort. We must live simple, generous, charitable lives. We will never take or use more than we need, because it is not within us to do so. We will not be excited by wealth, status, power, or celebrity. Should any of these things come to us, we will use them for the benefit of others, not for ourselves. Meister Eckhart states bluntly, “They for whom God is not enough are greedy. The reward for all your works should be that they are known to God and that you seek God in them. Let this

always be enough for you.” Could we hear such conversation in corporate strategic planning sessions throughout America? Or for that matter, at home in our living rooms?

We fool ourselves when we take idealized values for actual values. Only actual values are real. Actual values are what we do and how we do it, each moment—and that is what we are. We do not need to modify, change, or transform our values. We need to transform ourselves to produce different results. We need to transform ourselves to affect the world—the world of our creation. We need to transform ourselves to create a different world, one that does not threaten itself with suicide.

Now, how do we do this?

The Higher Power

There are over eighteen million alcoholics and six million drug addicts in the United States. Tens of millions more suffer from addictions to gambling, tobacco, food, sex, Internet chat rooms, entertainment, money, and power. The cost to the quality of our individual lives and to society is astronomical. We cannot measure the personal suffering and financial repercussions of these forms of addiction, which are themselves a symptom of *koyaanisqatsi*.

Many people find solace, benefit, and cure through one of various Twelve Step programs, modeled originally by Alcoholics Anonymous. Embracing the themes of the Twelve Step program, addicts seek to restore balance and harmony to their lives. They seek to restore themselves to sanity, which we as a culture also must do. The Twelve Steps represent one map of how we may change. Once we are changed, our world is changed. The sage Jiddu Krishnamurti said, “The crisis is not out there, the crisis is really inward.” If our life and society are out of balance, insane with excess and addiction, denial and blame, it is because we are inwardly *koyaanisqatsi*. What do we

do? We have to change ourselves inwardly, and the first three of the Twelve Steps offer a way.

The First Step is to admit that our life has become unmanageable, that we must learn to live differently. The Second Step suggests that a Power greater than our own self can restore us to sanity. The Third Step is a decision to turn our life over to that Power.

What is this Power toward which we turn to recover our sanity, balance, and humanity? Is it something separate from us, or is it an aspect of our own self, a dimension of our forgotten or unexplored nature?

Self-Transcendence

Almost ten years ago, one of my clients, a corporate president, asked me to design a values retreat for his executive team.

Seven of us trotted off on horseback into the Santa Cruz Mountains of northern California like urban gunfighters on a mission. We made camp beneath ancient redwoods. The first day we settled in, exhaling the tension and congestion and noise and complexity of the city. I wanted the presence and silence and antiquity of the forest to enter us, individually and as a group, before we started our work.

The next day, we began. I said that any group values statement had to originate from individual values statements. If the team values were going to have any meaning, then those values ought to be the nexus of each team member's personal values. There would be no point in creating a set of idealized values that no one believed in, just to make us look good. I proposed that we take some time to reflect deeply about our life and led the team through a visualization exercise designed to get them in touch with their most heartfelt values. I thought a good place to begin to speak about what each one valued would be to access a valuable experience and mine it.

I asked the group to describe the experience that came to them in the meditation and what that experience taught them about significance. A vice president in his midfifties, and a former Marine Corps pilot, told of how, when he was fifteen, he was suddenly transported out of his body. He experienced himself as pure light and was intensely joyful. He felt that he was actually a part of all living things. He said, struggling for the words and with soft tears forming in his eyes, that this light body was the body of everything and that love was the universal spirit of life, binding every living thing together as one. He said that he experienced himself as this love and that he existed everywhere. He said it was an experience thrilling beyond words. In the midst of this recollected experience, he said that what he valued above all else was this experience of himself, this recognition that he was this light, this love, this oneness with all living creatures.

He said it was the most significant experience of his life, though he had not spoken of it for over forty years. He sat quietly for a bit, and then he said that he didn't feel anyone would understand. He himself did not understand. There was no support for that experience in his youth, and certainly no support for it in his military career and subsequent business career. He felt it was an anomaly of some kind and thought it best to forget about it. He hadn't known how to build his life from this most significant experience, and so he had gone on without it, heavier and sadder as the years went by. Instead of living from this spiritual core with its organic values, he assumed a series of roles. We explored this theme further, and we all came to admit that we, too, get lost in the roles and masks and facades of our lives. We forget that behind all of them is this universal identity, this self-transcendent beauty of being.

The fifteenth-century Indian mystic and poet Kabir speaks to us about this self-betrayal. He says:

We sense that there is some sort of spirit that loves birds and the animals and the ants—perhaps the same one who gave a radiance to you in your mother's womb. Is it logical you would be

walking around entirely orphaned now? The truth is, you turned away yourself, and decided to go into the dark alone. You've forgotten what you once knew; that's why everything you do has some weird failure in it.

Our koyaanisqatsi culture is rife with the weird failures about which Kabir speaks. These failures are the breakdowns in our ethics and morality, the narrowness of our visions, our obsession with profit. We will not be successful in correcting these failures with new strategies for organizational development. And yet, we are not without the skillful means to bring sanity back into our lives. We are only forgetful of the spirit that gave us radiance in the wombs of our mothers.

There is something we have all forgotten, and that forgetfulness makes us heavy and sad. It makes us anxious and fearful and angry. The weird failures have to do with forgetting who we are and with turning away from the spirit that gives us radiance. This alienation causes us to suffer and appears in the world as koyaanisqatsi. The koyaanisqatsi of the world is ours. We own it. It persists because we tinker with idealized values and do not face ourselves directly. It persists because we try to solve problems at the same level of consciousness that created them. It persists because we let our lesser roles and identities tell us what to do and how to behave, when we should be following our human heart and letting our humanity inflate and animate the roles and identities we assume. We should never forget that these roles are subordinate to our essence. We should not become the roles we play, because we are something far greater.

The thirteenth-century Sufi mystic Jelaluddin Rumi reminds us, "You are the whole ocean. Why send out for a sip of dew? A True Human Being is the essence, the original cause. The world and the universe are secondary effects. Don't trade yourself for something worth less!"

A workshop participant asked me if who we are and what we do are not two separate things. He suggested that we could act out

our business commitments in a manner that did not reflect who we were. He said we all have to sacrifice at least a little of who we believe we are for the sake of job requirements and corporate values. I said that was insane. If we let the rules of our roles and masks corrupt the more significant rules of reality—of who we are essentially—then we are sowing the seeds of our own suffering.

If we pursue only the business of business, if we consecrate our actions to strategic plans for profit alone, our values become corrupt and reflect an impoverished understanding of our selves. Our business goals must reflect the more noble and worthy goal of living: actualizing our essence, our divine nature. The affairs of business seem complex only because we do not live in accordance with our inner knowing of who we are.

In *Forgotten Truth*, the eminent professor, author, and sage Huston Smith writes:

In the opening chapter of this book we argued that the triumphs of modern science went to man's head in something of the way rum does, causing him to grow loose in his logic. He came to think that what science discovers somehow casts doubt on things it does not discover; that the success it realized in its own domain throws into question the reality of domains its devices cannot touch. In short, he came to assume that science implies scientism: the belief that no realities save ones that conform to the matrices science works with—space, time, matter/energy, and in the end number—exist.

The same is true for business. We have become rum-drunk on our plans and strategies for business success, trying to subordinate the higher truths to mere profit. The domain of business must become subordinate to the domain of spiritual truth.

Aligning with God

Mohandas Gandhi once said, “Each of us must *be* the change we want to see in the world.” This suggests that we need a

transformation of self, of our consciousness, not a change of our idealized values to bring sanity into the world.

How do we do this? Again, we can turn to another step in the Twelve Step program, the Eleventh Step.

The Eleventh Step urges us to pray and meditate to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

The Eleventh Step does not ask us to pray to God in order to make more money, carve out more market share, increase stock value, or in any other way enhance our business life. This step asks us to implore God or whomever we view as a Higher Power to help us become fully and authentically human in mind, heart, and action. We are asked to put aside our business roles, masks, and identities to find the face of our truest glory.

What does God want for us?

I think God wants us to listen to author Tom Robbins, who wrote:

Our purpose is to consciously, deliberately evolve toward a wiser, more liberated and luminous state of being; to return to Eden, make friends with the snake and set up our computers among the wild apple trees. Deep down, all of us are probably aware that some kind of mystical evolution is our true task. Yet we suppress the notion with considerable force because to admit it is to admit that most of our political gyrations, religious dogmas, social ambitions and financial ploys are not merely counterproductive but trivial. Our mission is to jettison those pointless preoccupations and take on once again the primordial cargo of inexhaustible ecstasy.

Epiphanies: Interventions from God

When addicts are unable to confront their own *koyaanisqatsi*, the people who care about them may stage an intervention, in which a circle of devoted and concerned friends and relatives shower love and compassion upon the addict in an attempt to salvage his soul. God stages interventions also when we refuse to confront the insanity of our lives. God's intervention is called grace, or epiphany. God's intervention is meant to show us the face and features of our true nature, our divine nature, our eternal essence, that we may remember and behave accordingly.

I experienced an epiphany of this last kind a few years ago at the Mt. Madonna Center in Watsonville, California. It is a retreat facility founded by Baba Hari Dass, an Indian yogi who has not spoken a word since 1952. I was facilitating a planning session for a management team of a computer chip manufacturing company. I had arranged a private meeting with our group and Baba Hari Dass, who communicates succinctly and humorously by writing on a chalkboard. We visited with him for about thirty minutes, asking a variety of questions, including several about spirituality in business. When our time was over, I went to thank him. A force emanated from his eyes that I had experienced in the eyes of my teacher many years earlier. It was a ray that could penetrate deeply into the core of one's being: it is the touch of reality, or grace, and one awakens to another world of significance.

As I walked outside with our group I suddenly felt strange, light headed, and off balance. I told my associate to continue without me, that I would catch up. I wandered into a grove of trees, found a boulder, and sat down. Something pierced my heart. I bent over and started crying. It's hard to say what occurred to me then. It is probably difficult for all of us to speak of these moments—so full of silence and beauty and awakening.

When I stopped crying, I sat still for a long time. Everything about me seemed newly alive, radiant, as though I was seeing these common things for the first time: flowers, trees, rocks, dirt. It seemed that everything was breathing! I felt light and spacious, extending beyond the familiar boundary of my body. I became aware of an orderly connection between things, much as when you finally piece a puzzle together, and you see how each piece fits into the others to form the whole. I was relieved of a burden I didn't know I was carrying. A profound peace embraced me.

When God stages an intervention, we see another dimension of life about which we were ignorant. The mask of appearances falls away, and we see something profound about life. We experience something of the timeless, the real, that which gives radiance to us in the womb. It is beyond words, and the mind hardly grasps it. In these moments, the fortifications against the soul dissolve, and a new perspective appears, a new life is born.

It is the awareness of being authentically human. Our humanity is born in this encounter with self-transcendence. Only when we go beyond the personal self can we discover the truth of the personal self. Only when we experience the subtle light and overwhelming sweetness that is the mystical nexus of all life do we know who and what we are. Only when we return from this journey to pick up and put on the masks of our roles in life can we know how we are to live. Only when we return from this journey do we find God's will and desire for us to be the same as our will and desire to know God.

Living in Reality

I am of the opinion that each of us has experienced the intervention of God in our lives. Each of us knows what it is like to be lifted to a rapture of communion with life itself, to be overwhelmed by silence and beauty, by simplicity and awe, by meaning and connection. This experience is universal. I use the

word *self-transcendence* to refer to these epiphanies, in which we encounter the full measure of our humanity.

I believe that in these moments of grace, who we are becomes revealed unequivocally. It is in this intersection of time and eternity that we discover we all share the same parents, the same heart, the same longing, the same values.

Huston Smith brings needed clarity to the nature of this experience of self-transcendence. He says there are four universal characteristics imbedded in the mystical nexus of all spiritual paths and philosophies.

1. **The first is ineffability.** This means that the experience is difficult to accurately portray in words. The best we can do is to use poetry, image, metaphor, or even music, as Steven Jeddelloh does eloquently in Chapter 8. We cannot say it directly because words do not travel that far.
2. **The second is unity.** This means we feel connected to, or part of, something larger than our own body and mind. It is as though our boundaries of self slip and slide away until they embrace all that exists within creation itself.
3. **The third is immense joy.** The sudden encounter with grace lifts us to dizzying heights of bliss and ecstasy. The thrill of peace opens our inner eye to mysteries previously unseen.
4. **The fourth is certitude.** One is convinced that what one beholds is true, the way things are. This certitude is beyond reproach, beyond proof, beyond sentiment. We are standing in the oceanic rhythms of reality.

To these four characteristics, I would add a fifth: **wholeness**. Surrounded and permeated by grace, we are complete, full, and without lack of any kind. Nothing—neither experience nor knowledge nor material goods—can enhance the wholeness we feel in mind, body, and spirit. Nothing is missing.

This treasure of self-transcendence is what God wants for us. This is the answer to our prayers for sanity, harmony, balance, peace, and prosperity. This answer to our prayers is the love that saturates every atom of this universe, if only we would see, feel, touch, hear, and smell this distilled essence of life. This is why even the most downtrodden of addicts and alcoholics have hope and a way out, through God or another Higher Power.

The treasure of self-transcendence is the context in which all of our other activities and pursuits must be placed. The bottom line of life, as of business, must be drawn with the pen and ink of the Creator, who wishes that we consecrate our every action to realizing love.

We have the seeds of this kind of transcendent humanity within us, we all know such moments of surpassing beauty and unity, and we know this is real. We have only decided to live in lesser ways. Emanuel Swedenborg said, "The divine Essence itself is love and wisdom." What more do we need than to know we are that divine Essence? Productivity and profits are the twin towering idols of business, but wisdom and love are the twin formless faces of the soul.

The simple fact is that we cannot live without the soul. We cannot turn from the soul, from the Spirit that gave us radiance in the womb. We have to free our soul from servitude to lesser gods, from lesser purposes, and feast together at the banquet set and ready for us here, where we live in this truth.

We might say that we already know this, but that it is not practical enough. It does not encompass enough of our daily dilemmas and problems, nor does it embrace the complexity and pressures of our lives in business.

We may know it, but we do not yet live it. Our supreme task is to refine and clarify ourselves, until the reflection of that brightness shines outward. In this light, the dilemmas and problems, the complexity and pressures of our business life will of their

own accord disappear, inasmuch as they are but images of a lesser consciousness.

In an interview with James Lipton on the Bravo television show *Inside the Actors Studio*, Sharon Stone told of sitting with her acting teacher, Roy London, during his final days. Dying of AIDS, he would lapse in and out of consciousness. One time, he opened his eyes and said, "It's so beautiful. It's so beautiful. It's all about love. I only wish I could teach one more class."

Must we wait until we are taking our last breaths to remember to live what we already know, that life is about love, not fear; selflessness, not self-interest?

Transcendence does not remove us from daily life, rather it connects us to all of life. Transcendence does not leave us incapable, but more capable. Transcendence does not destroy intelligence, but imbues it with wisdom. Mohandas Gandhi said, "I do not believe that the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields."

Vaclav Havel, the president of the Czech Republic, says emphatically:

Yes, the only real hope of people today is probably a renewal of our certainty that we are rooted in the Earth and, at the same time, in the cosmos. This awareness endows us with the capacity for self-transcendence. Politicians at international forums may reiterate a thousand times that the basis of the new world order must be universal respect for human rights, but it will mean nothing as long as this imperative does not derive from the respect of the miracle of Being, the miracle of the universe, the miracle of nature, the miracle of our own existence. Only someone who submits to the authority of the universal order and of creation,

who values the right to be a part of it and a participant in it, can genuinely value himself and his neighbors, and thus honor their rights as well.

At various times in the history of human beings, cataclysms of perception have occurred to rare souls and have propelled the course of humanity in an altogether stunning new direction. We—all of us—stand at just such a moment when we can give birth to an earthquake of self-transcendent realism that will forever banish from our consciousness *koyaanisqatsi*, addictions, weird failures, and heartbreaking sadness.

The Final Step

Coming full circle, what do we know? We know that our values denote what we deem important and significant in any given moment. We know that our values are expressed in each thought, word, and deed, and that the external world we create—the one of relationships and situations and experiences—is a mirror of our internal values. We know there is a vast difference between idealized values and actual values. Idealized values exist on the surface of our lives as hopes and wishes, as fantasies and fancies. Idealized values are an abstract horizon of purity, a virtuous standard of conduct we never realize. We know that our actual values are demonstrated, not spoken, and that we can never be at odds with our values, because our values, our actual values, are not different from us: We are our values, acted out each moment. All of these insights show us that manipulating our idealized values does not produce any real effect. We know that if we want to affect any change in our world, we have to first create that change within ourselves: We must *be* the change we want to see in the world. Finally, seeing that we must refine our own being, we stand on the brink of the holiest and profoundest of all questions, *Who am I?*

In the end, as in the beginning, we must know who we are. We must know who we are in our universal essence, before we lose

ourselves in lesser loyalties of roles and masks. We must remember the Spirit who gave us our radiance in the womb and recognize that we and that Spirit are one.

The divine Essence itself is love and wisdom. These are our actual values, because we are the divine Essence—every one of us. This is what we must know and be.

This is first. This Essence is the silence before the word, the Spirit before the form. If we are looking for answers and solutions, find it here. If we are looking for prescriptions and models, find it here. If we are looking for practical skills and know-how, find it here.

The divine Essence itself is love and wisdom, and we are that Essence.

Our humanity is born in this encounter with self-transcendence. Only when we go beyond the personal self can we discover the truth of the personal self. Only when we experience the subtle light and overwhelming sweetness that is the mystical nexus of all life, forces, and dimensions do we know who and what we are. Only when we return from this journey to our lives can we know how to behave.

We can do nothing until we awaken from our forgetfulness and self-betrayal and live consciously in our eternal being. The values of this awakening are demonstrated in our entire presentation of self, in thought, word, action—nothing hidden, nothing twisted.

This return—alone, by itself, and without doubt—will immediately bring balance, sanity, and clarity to koyaanisqatsi. This return will charge the Earth with a living current of wisdom and love, electrifying and enlivening us with the wishes of that Higher Power toward which we turn, from which we come, and of which we are.

Here then is my recommendation: Become the One to whom we pray and upon whom we meditate, grow your body into the

soul of the universe, become the human being that exists before any lesser mask appears. We cannot wear these masks until our humanity has exploded within us, until our divine nature has become our human nature. Our divine nature is a flower of light deep within each chest, open and fragrant, more heart than heart, more soul than soul, and this flower is our humanity. Our true life is a field of these flowers, covering the plains and hills of our daily existence, piled high for the free taking on every corner of every market. Take this free flower of your essence, give it to others, throw it around freely and without care or thought.

What does this have to do with business, with management, with leadership? Just this: When we are whole and full, without wanting but to love, without desire but to serve, without motive but to heal, without sentiment but kindness, then at every moment we will know how to act from what we are.

If we are going to invoke a Higher Power, then let us go all the way. Let us become that Higher Power and act as that Higher Power acts. Do this, and you will have fewer business problems to solve.

May blessings be upon all of us, and may we return to what we have always been.

Robert Rabbin

Robert Rabbin of Mill Valley, California has had a lifelong interest in the nature of consciousness, self and reality. In 1969 he began to research mystic traditions while practicing meditation and self-inquiry. During the early 1970s, while continuing his spiritual explorations abroad, he traveled to India where he met meditation master Swami Muktananda, with whom he studied for the next ten years.

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Robert is the author of *Echoes of Silence: Awakening the Meditative Spirit* (2000); *Invisible Leadership: Igniting the Soul at Work* (1998); *The Sacred Hub: Living in Your Real Self* (1996); and is co-author of *The Values Workbook: Creating Personal Truth at Work* (1997) and *Leadership in a New Era* (1994). He also wrote and produced *Brilliant Business: A Road Map to the 21st Century* (1997), a video about creativity and spirit in corporate America. Over 50 of Robert's articles about mysticism and leadership have been published internationally.