



How Businesses Are Changing

Part 3

By Amit Goswami

164 years ago this month, Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered his famous essay, The Method of Nature. "The rapid wealth which hundreds in the community acquire in trade, or by the incessant expansions of our population and arts, enchants the eyes of all the rest; the luck of one is the hope of thousands, and the bribe acts like the neighborhood of a gold mine to impoverish the farm, the school, the church, the house, and the very body and feature of man. ..There is in [technology] an act of invention, an intellectual step, or short series of steps taken; that act or step is the spiritual act; all the rest is mere repetition of the same a thousand times....Let there be worse cotton and better men. The weaver should not be bereaved of his superiority to his work, and his knowledge that the product or the skill is of no value, except so far as it embodies his spiritual prerogatives."



At the moment the relationship between Man and Machine was becoming intense and all-pervasive, Emerson asserted that the spiritual growth of just one millworker vastly exceeded the economic value of his life's output at the loom. This essay reopens the question and views the post-Modernist 21st century for indications of things to come.

*In this conclusion to his three-part exploration, Academy Fellow **Amit Goswami** examines the prospects for spiritual and conscious evolution amidst the dominant capitalist economic paradigm. The horizon yields a surprisingly large number of positive indications.*

Are the changes in business practices over the years reflecting an evolution of consciousness?

Everything changes, in content at least, and businesses are no exception.

In previous ages, business was about agriculture, then came industry, then technology, and finally, the current high technology. This is one kind of change, and some authors, notably Alvin Toffler, make a big case for such changes. What I want to discuss is the question, are the changes in business practices over the years reflecting an evolution of consciousness? In slightly different words, can we see evolution of consciousness, evolution of our capacity for meaning-processing in the ways business has changed over the past centuries? I think we can.

In olden-day India, businesspeople were placed in a separate caste called *Vaishya*. The *Vaishya* caste was allowed to pursue meaning, but there was a catch. A *vaishya* person could pursue meaning only within the context dictated by the highest class, the Brahmins.

Other cultures, especially Western cultures, never had an explicit class system, but the same practice was quite prevalent until Adam Smith's time, the eighteenth century. In eighteenth-century England, where Adam Smith was born, the kings (including George III, for example, with whom every American is familiar) set the context: landowners, merchants, and industrialists carried out their quests for meaning within those contexts. In return for their loyalty to the king, they were allowed to hold very concentrated and corrupt power over England's economy. This was the "mercantile system" in Smith's terminology. One of the motivations for Adam Smith's creativity came from the desire to end this corruption. The result within a mere century was a transition from a feudalist/mercantile economy to capitalism. In capitalism, many more people are involved in the search for meaning; the processing of meaning expands. Consciousness evolves in the direction of increasing preoccupation and processing of meaning.

Smith clearly saw that creative and innovative forces were developing for many decades that could revolutionize industry only if allowed to do so. The corruption of the mercantile system meant lost opportunities for creativity, and the solution was to shift the power of setting contexts (of meaning-processing) from a few selected people to the "invisible hands" of the free market competition. Any context is okay in the new system; any idea can be explored for a new industry if it survived the competition of the free market.

Thus began the successful phase of capitalism. In America, innovative industrialists like Henry Ford and Thomas Edison epitomized this success.

But something happened to Adam Smith's vision on its way toward fulfillment in the form of a perfect capitalist society. I have already mentioned these difficulties in the last two articles in this series: finitude of the resource base; environmental pollution arising from the finitude of the environment; loss of freedom of the free market; the closing down of the two openings that enabled the labor class to pursue meaning, namely, relative affluence and more leisure time; and finally, multinationals throwing the management-labor compromises for the share in meaning-processing into utter chaos.

So economics must have a paradigm shift from capitalism to what I call "spiritual economics." Whereas capitalism addresses the satisfaction of the most basic ego

needs of people, spiritual economics addresses the holistic well-being of the people. (That includes the vital energy, mental, soul, and spiritual needs in addition to the physical.) Then the question is, what are the signs that the time for this new economics has come? For Smith, the sign for the need for capitalism was the innovative spirit that he saw already awakened in the society. What do we see now, if anything, for signs of change?

In this article, I want to make the point that businesses themselves are changing. A new wave is coming following Toffler's term, which is making room for an evolutionarily more appropriate spiritual economics.

I became aware of this more than a decade ago when I was researching creativity and came across a book called *Creativity in Business* by a Stanford professor [Editor's note: The [referenced book](#) is co-authored by Academy Fellow **Michael Ray** and Rochelle Myers.] . Since then other books (including some good ones by Willis Harman) have appeared on the subject, and it is now well known that many companies and corporations, especially high-tech companies, are encouraging creativity not only from their research teams but also from their management.

Let's go back to the basics and look at the customary capitalist model of the beginning of a business venture. You get an innovative vision of a product or a service. You gather around people whom you think will be loyal to that vision. You find capital and you start your business. But when we changed from an industrial to a technological society, this model had to give way because one person's (or that of a few directors') creativity was not enough to sustain the productivity of a business any more. So the burden of creative innovation shifted from the very top to middle management. In this new wave of capitalism, many more people are participating in the creative processing of meaning. Certainly, this suggests the evolution of consciousness. But more, it suggests that there is the budding of a new spiritual economics because the creative processing of meaning involves a quantum leap from the mind to the soul level of our being. It not only serves the ego but also crucially involves the soul and serves the soul's purpose. It also increases the global output of mental meaning.

Another key development of business is the "green" business that grew up from the ecology movement. The green business has two components. The first is the realization that ecological considerations can be used for economic gains, for making profits. An example is recycling; the Xerox Corporation made a ten-fold return on its investment in recycling toner cartridges. And the second is the realization that in the long run ecological sustainability--harmonization of the business activity with what the earth can support--is a good thing to aim for. Sooner or later it is going to be imposed by governments or by nature itself, whichever comes first.

But what is ecology based on? On the idea of the web-like relationship between life and its environment. To be sure, ecologists are talking about local connections alone. But from ecology it is a small leap to realize that the connection of life and environment is much deeper. It is not only through material, local signals, but through vital energy, and ultimately, through consciousness itself, through a quantum non-local connection.

So you see ecological businesses are also moving beyond the mere satisfaction of ego needs toward the satisfaction of more subtle needs of non-local con-

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sciousness. Ecologically sustainable businesses are literally increasing our global vital energy output.

The board of directors of an old wave capitalist corporation watches over their businesses to make sure of the selfish gain in the material profits of the corporation's shareholders. The board of directors of a new wave capitalist corporation is not only increasing the material profit for its shareholders, but also literally contributing to the vital energy, creating profits for everyone. This is already a good beginning of spiritual economics.

There are a couple of other trends that are also worth mentioning. One is that corporations have begun noticing that employees perform best if their value structure is not in conflict with the corporation's value structure as exemplified by its products and practices. This indicates that businesses are recognizing the value of values (the supramental dimension of humanity). The second one goes beyond this. In view of many recent market-related scandals, many businesses are asking aloud if it is not more profitable in terms of public relations alone if one follows ethical practices in business. And they don't mean greatest good for the greatest number ethics, but the real McCoy, the way ethics is defined in spiritual traditions.

In this way even the supramental dimension is gradually entering the businesses.

What more does it take to make the transition complete from capitalism to spiritual economics? We still have some ways to go. And I think that businesses can and will lead the way to this transition.

The goal of spiritual economics is to maximize the profit not only in the material output, but also in our vital energy output, mental meaning output, and supramental output. Even with creativity, ecology, and ethics included in the workplace in the ways mentioned above, we have only made a dent in the possibilities.

At the next stage, we can encourage creativity not only for the management or the research people, but also for everyone. True, only a professional can make quantum leaps of creativity that will produce a product in the outer arena, but everyone can be creative in our inner arena. I have called such creativity inner creativity. If a corporation encourages inner creativity (a major component of which is transformation of negative emotions to positive ones) for all its employees, allows all employees to open to their souls, what happens? The entire environment of the corporation becomes a happy one full of vitality and meaning. Is this valuable? Of course. It contributes directly to the production outputs in our subtle dimensions. And it is a fact that happy people produce better products. And more. Inner creativity can increase the outer creativity of already outwardly creative people, the backbones of an innovative corporation.

So ultimately, the practice will even improve material productivity and profits.

From ecological sustainability, the next step is the awareness of the evolutionary movement of consciousness. Not only do we demand ecological sustainability but also we ask: Is my business contributing positively to the evolutionary movement of consciousness, or at least, not harming it? This is when we put explicit attention, not implicit, to making tangible production in the vital

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energy, mental meaning, and supramental value sectors of the human economy.

Of course much has to happen before businesses take these remaining steps. The paradigm shift to primacy of matter to primacy of consciousness has to take root in the academe and in the society. Our politics has to change from the politics of power to the politics of meaning. Our educational institutions have to stop their preoccupation with job training and revamp meaning and soul in the classrooms. Our religions have to give up telling people how to vote and influence politicians and return to the pursuit of godliness and teaching it to people. And so forth. I believe all of this will happen soon, and some beginnings are already in sight.

Capitalism played a crucial role in getting to where we are today, and as Adam Smith himself envisioned, small businesses are the backbones of capitalism and the free market. In the same way, the path to spiritual economics will also be paved by small businesses. So we should not lose heart that the big multinationals of today are corrupted and very far from practicing what I discussed. It is not unlike the corruption of the mercantile economy of Adam Smith's days. But corrupted mercantile economy disintegrated when a better way of doing business that is more conducive to people's needs became clear. The same thing will now happen to capitalism. It will disintegrate before our eyes making room for a spiritual economics. There are evolutionary pressures, the "new invisible hands," that are guiding this change.

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About the Author: Academy Fellow **Amit Goswami** was recently a research fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and now has returned as a professor of physics at the University of Oregon's Institute of Theoretical Science. He has taught physics for 36 years in this country. His education was in India with a Ph.D. degree in physics from Calcutta.

Amit is the author of six books including the successful textbook, [Quantum Mechanics](#). Amit is a pioneer of science within consciousness — science based on the primacy of consciousness — which is developed in his books, [The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World](#) and [Science and Spirituality](#). He has also authored [Quantum Creativity](#) and [The Visionary Window: A Quantum Physicist's Guide to Enlightenment](#), and [Physics of the Soul](#), and the upcoming *Integral Medicine*. Amit gives workshops in the United States, Brazil, Sweden, and India on the subjects of quantum creativity, quantum healing, physics of the soul, and science and spirituality. He recently appeared in the film, [What The Bleep Do We Know?](#)

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