

My Liberating Work Ethic

Paul Hague

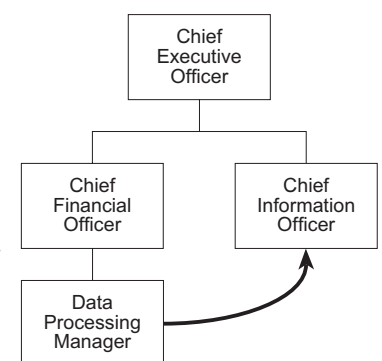
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Since the invention of money, some 4,000 years ago, we have been evaluating the contribution that humans make to society in quantitative terms. This restrictive, competitive way of managing our business affairs is so deeply engrained in the collective psyche, very few think that there is an alternative, more meaningful and harmonious way of organizing society.

Yet, for the past forty years, I have been thinking the unthinkable, adopting the most radical change to the work ethic since our forebears began to settle in villages to cultivate the land and domesticate animals some 10,000 years ago. I have been looking at the psychodynamics of society through the semantic modelling methods underlying the transcultural Internet, rather than the financial methods of accountants, bankers, and economists, which can tell us little about why we humans behave as we do.

I began to change the way I look at our business affairs in the late 1970s, when developing a national marketing programme for Decision Support Systems for IBM in London, the most innovative such strategy in Europe at the time. I was doing so at a major watershed in the data-processing industry, at the birth at what the social scientist Daniel Bell called the 'Information Society'.

To mark this far-reaching change in the way that organizations are managed, IBM in the UK had a marketing slogan 'Manage data as a corporate resource'. As I now know, meaningless data lies at the ontological foundation of the Universe and hence business processes and assets, more general than money, as a lowest common denominator of enterprise resources. To reflect this change, many companies appointed a Chief Information Officer (CIO) on a par with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), both reporting to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as this diagram illustrates.



But what is the relationship of the CIO, managing information, and the CFO, managing money? Well, money is a type of information—as data with meaning—and so can be represented in the models developed by information systems architects. But this is not possible the other way around. The meaning of information, and hence its value, cannot be satisfactorily represented in quantitative financial models.

These rapid, epoch-making changes were happening around 1980 because some thirty years earlier we humans had built a machine that is quite unlike any other that the *Homo* genus has invented during the past two thousand millennia. Unlike the flint axe, wheel, printing press, telescope, steam engine, and telephone, for instance, which extend our rather limited physical abilities, *the computer is a tool of thought, able to extend the human mind, even in some cases replacing it.*

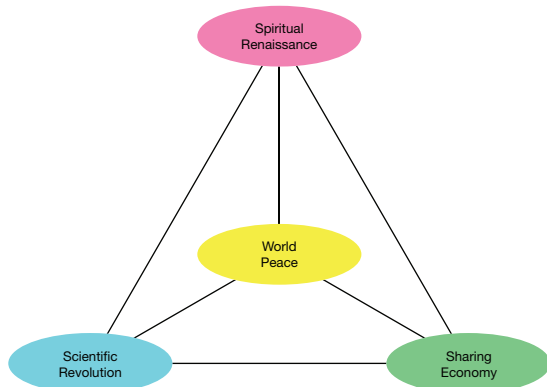
But to what extent can computers replace the jobs of humans in the workplace? If artificial intelligence is possible, this would mean that the opening sentence of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* would no longer be true: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consists always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations."

On the other hand, if human potential to learn new skills and solve problems is greater than

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mechanical potentiality, this would mean that technological innovation could not drive economic growth indefinitely. In either case, the inherently unstable global economy would come crashing down, requiring us to follow a more empowering and enlivening work ethic, free of the constraints of the economic machine, in harmony with the fundamental law of the Universe: *Wholeness is the union of all opposites*.

As this rebellious work ethic has been focused on introspective self-inquiry, what I have discovered is that we understand so little about the long-term psychological and economic consequences of humanity's dependency on information technology because our cultural conditioning inhibits us from understanding what it means to be human, within the Cosmic Context and on the Gnostic Foundation of the mystical worldview, which recognizes that Consciousness is all there is.



To address this critical social issue, in 2013, a visionary friend helped me to create a website for the Alliance for Mystical Pragmatics with the motto 'Harmonizing evolutionary convergence', whose object was to integrate four major global movements in the world today into a coherent whole: Spiritual Renaissance, Scientific Revolution, Sharing Economy, and World Peace, illustrated in this diagram. I visualized that through the apocalyptic awakening of intelligence following the collapse of the global economy, we would

be able to live in love, peace, and harmony in the eschatological Age of Light for a few more generations.

Sadly, however, the Alliance hasn't taken off. One reason for this is that cultures are homeostatic and autoteric, seeking to conservatively maintain themselves in an unchanging state through self-preservation, like the immune response of the body. So our education and economic systems inhibit humanity from intelligently adapting to the unprecedented, exponential rate of change that is being driven by scientific discovery and technological development, threatening the very survival of our species.

At the root of this problem are our fragmented minds and humanity's separation from Divinity—as our Immortal Ground of Being—which have led to the existential fears that have sub- and unconsciously driven human affairs for thousands of years. As Ernest Becker, the Pulitzer prize-winning author of *The Denial of Death*, shows in *Escape from Evil*, we have used our cultures to assuage our fears of death throughout history. For cultures have longer lifespans than those of our bodies. So they have provided immortality systems and symbols to give people a sense of security and identity in life, albeit rather precarious, for such symbols are based on delusion, on a false sense of Reality. Now, while organized religion has provided many with immortality symbols in the past, the worship of sacrosanct money has become the primary such symbol in society today, governing virtually every aspect of people's lives.

However, even the collapse of industrial society will not save us from the effects of imminent abrupt climate change, as Guy McPherson pointed out to me in December 2017, when I met him in Oslo for lunch. So my boyhood dream that we could collectively find Peace by ending the long-running war between science and religion now looks as if it is never going to happen. Ironically, *Homo sapiens*, as 'wise human', is likely to become extinct before discovering what it truly means to be human.

For myself, the enriching and enlightening work ethic that I have been practicing during the second half of my life has well prepared me for the inevitable. As I describe in the two-page overview 'I am Wholeness', there is no longer a split between the Immortal Ground of Being and me. But as this liberating work ethic, as a transdisciplinary Panosopher, is radically different from that of specialists, whether what I am offering as a 'wise elder' has any value to my contemporaries is still largely unknown.