

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF INSPIRATION

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INTENTION

In this CCI Forum session, we will focus on spirituality as the basis of inspiration, to identify the factors that are necessary to capture the imagination and inspire diverse people to bring them together in shared purpose. We intend to focus on this through the key questions and perspectives listed below – presenting one particular frame of reference to “try on” for the sake of initiating a dialogue that has each person relate inspiration to their own spiritual frame of reference.

We believe the fundamental attitude and spirit for this type of dialogue is “both-and” rather than “either-or”. Our presentation will inaugurate starting points for dialogue without pretending that we have “the answer.” We hope the process and outcome of this Forum session will be 50% knowledge-sharing and 50% knowledge-creation of new insights and ideas that none of the participants had before the Forum.

KEY QUESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OFFERED FOR DIALOGUE

1. What is spirituality?

Spirituality is defined by people throughout the world in many ways, and may or may not be based on participation in an organized religion. Some of the ways people define spirituality include:

- Tapping into a deeper meaning in life that transcends our physical existence
- Having a relationship with the Source of creation (i.e. God, Higher Power, Allah, Jehovah, Brahman, etc.)
- Being “fully conscious” of the Source of life and living from that awareness
- Living in harmony with the essential nature and inter-connectedness of all creation
- Inquiring into the nature of one’s true Self
- Experiencing oneness with Divinity
- Living all aspects of life according to a set of religious principles

In this session, we offer the following views on spirituality as a stimulus for the dialogue:

- Spirituality is the thread that underlies and joins together the pearls of the world’s religions and spiritual paths
- Spirituality is the essence that connects all living beings together with all of life
- Spirituality is found cross-culturally in fundamental human values such as truth, righteousness, peace, love, non-violence, and the “Golden Rule” (“treat others as you would want to be treated”)
- Spirituality is often viewed as distinct from religion, though the teachings of the founders of the major world religions were quite spiritual

2. What is inspiration?

“Inspire” and “inspiration” can be defined as both “profound insight” (“I had the inspiration that...”) as well as “to impel, motivate, or spur on” (“I felt inspired to act”). Both definitions have a common ground in something which is *meaningful* to a person: a meaningful insight or a meaningful purpose for acting. In exploring spirituality as the basis for inspiration, we will address these distinctions as they relate to spirituality.

3. What is the *source* and *basis* of inspiration?

We have conducted research with people who have engaged others in accord with noble human values that are spiritually-based (versus those who have engaged people towards self-interest-based initiatives,

violence and warfare). From this research, we have come to realize that there can be two fundamentally different assumptions and starting points for inspiration:

- Separateness – using “superior vs. inferior” and “we vs. them” dichotomies to rally people into meaningful, motivated action (which can at times be destructive, as with Hitler and others)
- Connectedness / oneness – starting from the premise of an underlying unity in which all beings involved deserve unconditional love, respect, tolerance, and brother/sisterhood

4. Who are we? –Who’s in charge, and what’s running the show?

One source for these two bases for inspiration – separateness and interconnectedness / oneness – are two distinct world views (paradigms) about “who we are” as human beings:

- A body-mind complex (where each person is a separate, physiological-based organism)
- A soul-spirit complex (where each person exists beyond the physical body, part of a transcendent reality)

These paradigms are “nested”, such that the paradigm of a soul-spirit complex includes reference to the body-mind complex, but not vice-versa. Our proposition is that those who identify “who we are” as body-mind complex are more likely to have separateness as their basis for inspiration; those who identify with soul-spirit complex are more likely to have connectedness/oneness as their basis.

5. What are various cultural world views (paradigms) about separateness / connectedness / oneness?

There are potentially four different world views that relate to the question of “who are we”:

- Worldview of “self-and-family” (separateness – based in body-mind complex)
- Worldview of “community” (inter-dependence – based in body-mind complex)
- Worldview of “humanity” (connectedness – on the cusp of body-mind and soul-spirit complexes)
- Worldview of “oneness” (spiritual unity – from soul-spirit complex)

These world views are also “nested”, with “self and family” being the inner-most circle and “oneness” the outer-most circle, such that the worldview of oneness includes the other three. The significance of this is that the worldview of “oneness” is more likely to have connectedness/oneness as the basis for inspiration.

6. What are the implications of spirituality as the basis for inspiration?

As key questions for dialogue, we propose... *If inspiration* (as “profound insight” and “compelling motivation”) *were drawn from a spiritual basis, how might it shape how a person or a community...*

- Thinks, talks, and acts?
- Undertakes initiatives?
- Makes decisions?
- Relates to time?
- Defines a sphere of influence (affecting those close or far away), and the possible impact on that sphere of influence?

7. In our closing 10 minutes, we will comment on some possible implications of spirituality as the basis for inspiration as it relates to the Forum’s exploration in the other disciplines. For example:

- Physiology – the relation of the body-mind-neurology complex to the soul-spirit complex
- Psychology – the relation of personality-ego needs to spiritual development
- Mythology – the relation of cultural differences to universal, spiritual-based qualities found cross-culturally