

Chapter 28 Transcendental Situations of Spiritual Leadership

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP – Sometimes the Snail beats the Rabbit!

Anyway, Boje, one day was watching a snail cross the road, and decided to test his mettle. Could he wait till the snail crossed the road? It seemed to take hours. But it was only minutes. Any minutes can be a long time. The snail was regale, in a shell with a rainbow of colors. Boje tried and tried, but could not wait. Yet, he did stay quite awhile. He noticed the snail leaves a trail, seems to have a purpose, and moves along. Surely a snail cannot be an animal guide. Surely we cannot learn from a snail. Still the Snail did beat the Hare! In a flash, it came to Boje. What if by slowing down, it was possible to see more. The snail slows down and can see the pattern of time. What if this is a way to understand complexity? - End of Snail Island Story.

What is Situation Rhythm in Theatre of Leadership? – The application of the Snail Island Story

1. Boje's rhythm needed to change. He was working, working, being the workaholic self. His time, watching the snail, he thought, 'How nice it would be to slow down a little, take time, be in the moment.' When you have a workaholic rhythm, then you have so much to do, so much on the plate, doing so much multi-tasking, you can barely cope, are usually behind, and with a few 24/7 weeks you run out of steam.
2. What happens when the rhythm of the working day is too full. **Story from Marx: Mary Anne Walkley died from Over-Work:** The following is from Karl Marx, chapter on 'The Working Day.'
 - Mary Anne Walkley had worked without intermission for 26 1/2 hours, with 60 other girls, 30 in one room, that only afforded 3 of the cubic feet of air required for them. At night, they slept in pairs in one of the stifling holes into which the bedroom was divided by partitions of board. [57] And this was one of the best millinery establishments in London. Mary Anne Walkley fell ill on the Friday, died on Sunday, without, to the astonishment of Madame Elise, having previously completed the work in hand. The doctor, Mr. Keys, called too late to the death-bed, duly bore witness before the coroner's jury that "Mary Anne Walkley had died from long hours of work in an over-crowded work-room, and a too small and badly ventilated bedroom." In order to give the doctor a lesson in good manners, the coroner's jury thereupon brought in a verdict that "the deceased had died of apoplexy, but there was reason to fear that her death had been accelerated by over-work in an over-crowded workroom, &c." "Our white slaves," cried the Morning Star, the organ of the Free-traders, Cobden and Bright, "our white slaves, who are toiled into the grave, for the most part silently pine and die."

Marx analyzes the situation of labor, capital, and monitoring. His storytelling points to greed of Vampires and Were-Wolfs of capital sucking the last drop of blood out of labor. His is a theory of performativity, how to stretch the working day, and make it a 24-hour day. The average motivation theory is an extension of the same conditions.

A storytelling about Transcendental Situations

SCENE 1: The Question

Narration: David is usually busy, too busy to notice things like the rhythm of time. But, this once, after facing lots of rejection at UCLA. It was 1982, and he just decided to slow down, do nothing, read his bible, and figure out a path for his life. It can all be about taking time, to do some reflexivity, to tune into something transcendental, something quite spiritual may happen.

David: (Trying to decide between doing story or more quantitative kinds of research)
“OK God, what do you say? I could do either. Be quantitative or do the qualitative story research...”

God: (no answer).

David: (Opens NIV Pictorial Bible, 1978; picks a page at random, opens to pp 10-11, begins to read: He decides to substitute the word ‘story’ for passage

Stage 1 UNDERSTAND: what does the story actually say?

Setting (When and Where)

Purpose (Why written)

Form (What type of writing)

Context (Theme surrounding it)

Words (Meaning of particular words)

Stage 2 EXPLAIN: What does the story mean?

What does story mean to original readers?

What is main point of the story?

How does story compare with other stories?

Is there principle that still applies?

Stage 3 APPLY: What does the story mean today?

What is equivalent situation today?

Specific teaching?

Warning or promise?

What action to take in light of the story?

Can we make writer's words or expression of feeling our own?

SCENE 2: The Miracle

David: "OK God, it seems to me, if this is a sign, that story research is the way to go. Yet, I am kind of a skeptic. I therefore humbly request a sign. Not a lightning bolt, but a definite sign."

God: (no answer)

David: (takes a break, goes from 5th floor to 1st, to the Potlatch (coffee & snack room. David puts in 35 cents, and clicks A12, for some Potato Chips. The chips and candy hang in the machine on metal spirals. The spiral turns and a bag of chips drops into the slot. But, the spiral keeps turning, 11 more times).

David: (speaking aloud to himself) "It can't be. There are *12 bags of chips in the bin.*"

IN ELEVATOR

David: (hands bag to student) "I prayed to God for an answer to a question. I put in my money and got 12 bags of chips. Here have one!"

Student: "You think it's a miracle?"

David: "Don't know. Does God work through machines."

Student: "My guess is God can do anything in any way."

David: (going to each secretary on 5th floor) "Can you believe it? I put a question to God, asked for a sign. I put in 35 cents and got 12 bags of potato chips."

Secretary 1: "12 is a biblical number."

David: "There are 12 apostles."

Secretary 2: "The 12 tribes of Israel."

David: "I think there are 12 angels."

Secretary 1: "12 gates"

SCENE 3: Dénouement

David: "Thanks God. I'll take the chips as a sign that story is the path I will take from here on out." (to himself, 'guess a machine miracle is the kind that takes some faith to believe in.')

The next day. David is in the Potlatch (1st floor coffee & snack lounge)

David: (to man serving the machine) "May I ask you a question?"

Serviceman: "Sure, what is it?"

David: "Is there anything wrong with this machine?"

Serviceman: "Not that I know of. Why do you ask?"

David: "I was in here yesterday, and I put in 35 cents, and 12 bags came out. The thing just kept spitting them out."

Serviceman: "No cannot be. You see you put in the coins, and it will only allow this here thing to turn just once. Its part of the safeguard of the mechanism..."

David: "So you are sure, that the machine cannot just keep turning out chips?"

Serviceman: "No way."

3 APPLICATIONS TO CHAPTER

1. **Careers and Organizations have a rhythm** – Boje has been studying storytelling since his grad school days in 1975 to 1978. But in 1982, he dedicated himself, picked his direction and set out on the snail's pace. The rest of the field of culture studies moved ahead like the Hare at the start of the race. But after 20 years, Boje the Snail was setting the pace, fighting back the Hare rhythm. Culture the Hare had fallen away, and the race now goes to the story people (and narrative ones too). By picking his direction, and letting the world turn, the world came around to this snail. A snail does not do a workaholic-rhythm. A snail slows down, seeks a balanced pace.
2. **Normann** argues (following Selznick) that leaders are chosen at particular time periods. Boje as entrepreneur in the story, was not needed when the culture people were in charge. But as the culture (Hares) fell by the way side (exhausted from the culture wars), then Boje's innovative ways grew in currency.
3. **Spiritual Leadership** – Where does inspiration come from? Slowing down, meditation and prayer, worked for me. Spiritual leaders tune in, and respond.

And every once in a great while, miracles do happen. I've had several. Orienting your leadership on a spiritual place, is another way to go.