Article

Leaning in and Leaning Back at the Same Time: Toward a Spirituality of Work-Related Learning

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Abstract

The Problem.

The spirituality of work movement placed emphasis on the importance of meaning and purpose in work and the workplace. However, the spiritual dimensions of work-related learning remained largely undeveloped. Given recent economic developments that threaten to undo any gains achieved by this movement, it is important that human resource development (HRD) help individuals and organizations learn to engage in the inner learning that creates deep meaning and purpose in our work.

The Solution.

This article locates work-related learning within the spirituality of work context. Using Jungian and post-Jungian psychology, the article provides a theoretical perspective for thinking about meaning and purpose in work-related learning and the key features of educational and organizational environments that foster such learning and development.

The Stakeholders.

The perspective developed in this article will be helpful to teachers, trainers, and HRD practitioners involved in formal work-related learning programs, as well as coaches and developmental managers who seek to foster learning and development among their workers.

Keywords

work-related learning, spirituality of work, meaning of work, emotions in learning

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Earlier this year Sheryl Sandberg, the chief operating officer for Facebook, made the talk show circuits, promoting to women in the workplace the idea of "leaning in" as a means to achieve their full potential and to break through the corporate glass ceiling. In pushing back on this approach to a woman's career, Erin Callan the former chief financial officer for Lehman Brothers, encouraged women, on a recent edition of NBC's Rock Center, to consider "leaning back," not trying to do it all and to decide what really matters and is really important in one's life. Both women underscore the importance of work as a context for realizing one's sense of self, but they provide sharply differing accounts of what our relationship with work evokes in our lives.

This idea of realizing meaning and one's self through work, as it relates to organizations, has been a major focus of the meaning of work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Morin, 2004) and the spirituality of work literature (Brown, 2003; Butts, 1999; Ottaway, 2003) over the last two to three decades. This interest resulted in a large, interdisciplinary corpus of literature that reflects a wide variation in worldview, definition, purpose, theory, method, and context. The work ranges in approach from the deeply thoughtful and thought provoking to the highly prescriptive and dogmatic, from a kind of all-encompassing secular spirituality to a fervent alignment with particular faith-based expressions. Reasons given for its importance in the workplace also vary, from improving organizational performance to creating vital workplaces that foster individual learning and development.

The economic downturn of the last 5 years, however, has served to focus employer concerns to more immediate issues of productivity and efficiency. Preoccupations with work now reflect putting the millions who are unemployed or who have stopped looking back to work, creating economic environments at any cost favorable to "job creators," and adapting to doing more with less (Kalleberg, 2011). For example, recent newspaper articles described how "innovative" technologies are being used to track where workers are in the workplace, what they are doing or not doing, and how fast they are doing what it is they are expected to do (Semuels, 2013; Silverman, 2013). While these technologies are resulting in improved productivity for employers, they seem to be at the cost of worker satisfaction and stress.

Implementation of these "new" technologies has resulted in a new round of demoralized and stressed workers who are expected to produce at or exceed levels of production formerly associated with larger workforces, which have been substantially trimmed as a result of the efficiencies associated with these technologies (Semuels, 2013). This recent emphasis on performance and productivity threatens to reduce the worker once again to a passive player in a pervasive and overarching concern for the corporate bottom line. These developments in the workplace should encourage us to revisit and reflect on the spirituality of work, a reminder that "debilitating aspects of work are a challenge, a summons to deepen involvement and commitment . . . to the work of reorganizing, re-patterning the structures of work" (Kolbenschlag, 1981, p. 72).

The spirituality of work movement reminds us of the integral role that work plays in our lives, "about bringing life and livelihood back together again" (Fox, 1995, p. 2). Certainly, one aspect of this orientation to work reflects aspects of personality. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) in describing his concept of flow argued that some persons

seem able to find meaning and purpose in whatever they are doing. Yet, a spirituality of work perspective indicates that finding meaning and purpose involves, as Whyte (2001) and others suggested, a process of learning. Work provides context for the expression and transformation of "the learning self" (Tennant, 2012). Little attention, however, has been given to the implications of a spirituality of work for work-related learning at either the preservice or inservice levels. A few authors have explored holistic learning theory as it may relate to work-related learning and its spiritual dimensions (Gallagher, Rocco, & Landorf, 2007; Yang, 2003, 2004).

While there are numerous threads to the spirituality of work literature (Brown, 2003; Butts, 1999), a consistent theme in much of this scholarship is the importance to individuals of meaning and purpose in their work (Budd, 2011; Meilaender, 2000). As Budd (2011) suggests, the meaning of work literature reflects numerous, differing understandings of the meaning of work. The argument presented in this article is grounded in the related ideas of work as personal fulfillment, as identity, and as vocation.

The purpose of this article is to discuss how work-related learning programs and those who work in them can help individuals recognize and learn to foster the meaning and purpose that is inherent in their relationship with their work. Specifically, I will discuss the process through which one learns to engage in the inner work that characterizes our deeper relationships with work, the organizations through which the self of the worker gives voice to itself in the broader world, and the implications of this view of work-related learning for human resource development (HRD).

Work and Sense of Self

As I indicated earlier, the literature on the spirituality of work reflects a diverse array of foci, contexts, and concerns. Much of this literature, building on a rich tradition that is hundreds of years old, seeks to address the question of leading lives that matter (Bass, 2006). Cutting across this diverse scholarship, however, is a growing concern for fostering meaning and purpose in work and the centrality of meaningful work to the human condition (Lips-Wiersma, & Morris, 2009. As Fox (1995) argued, "We cure the crisis in work by treating the root meaning and purpose of work" (p. 3). The central importance of meaning and purpose in our work was underscored by Freud, who is often quoted as saying that to be happy, we need "to love and to work." There is no clear record of this often-quoted phrase. However, in his book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud (2005) referred to love and work as the twofold foundation of communal society. Tolstoy once wrote, "One can live magnificently in this world if one knows how to work and how to love . . . " (Troyat, 1967, p. 158).

The post-industrial era has left behind the idea that work is primarily about industries, factories, and assembly lines (Fox, 1995). The loss of this work identity has cleared the way for an alternative relationship with work, one that stresses the importance of meaning and purpose in our work lives (Moore, 2008). The dislocated worker literature (Dirkx & Dang, 2009), as well as the work of philosophers, poets, and novelists (Meilaender, 2000), documents the sense of dissatisfaction, fragmentation, and

alienation many workers feel about their work, and the corrosive impact on one's psyche and relationships of not being able to work.

In a study of adults, Merriam and Clark (1991) demonstrated that adults reflect three key themes in their lives: loving, working, and learning. Work provides a context for identity formation through the realization of our birthright gifts, the expression of our God-given talents and skills (Palmer, 1990). Our work life reflects a kind of pilgrimage through which we come to better know ourselves and our relationships with others and the world (Whyte, 2001). This pilgrimage represents a process through which we mature in our work through a commitment to discovery and cultivation (Whyte, 2001). Central to this identity formation is a kind of "firm persuasion" (Dirkx, 2005), when we find that what we do is right for ourselves and for the world at the exact same time.

This inner work is intimately bound up with an orientation to the outer world as well, not only to earning a living but also contributing to others and to the world. Sinetar (1987) reflecting on her experiences as an organizational consultant argued that doing what one loves can and often does result in earning what one needs to sustain the lifestyle desired. Fox (1995) wrote that "all work worthy of being called spiritual and worthy of being called human . . . contributes to the growth of justice and compassion in the world; it contributes to social transformation" (p. 13). In a workshop for individuals in Tanzania who have recently started or want to start their own small business, Jeff Hoffman, the head of Colorjar, told the group of 200 plus people to not be in it just for the money, but to "find a life of purpose and passion" (personal communication, May 8, 2013), an idea shared by Marsha Sinetar (1995) in her book on entrepreneurship.

The perspective on the meaning of work developed here is consistent with the experience of work as vocation or calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Fox, 1995; Moore, 2008). Meilaender (2000) points out that explicit reference to this meaning of work can be traced to the Protestant Reformation, when people "came to think of their everyday life in the world as God's call that sanctified their work and gave significance to it" (p. 10). This way of thinking about the meaning of work transformed, through the call of God, the drudgery of work into an experience of the divine. Emphasized in more contemporary literature, the idea of work as vocation suggests that "work is a social activity contributing in some way to the common good of all" (2000, p. 12), and the idea that "work is integral to human identity and fulfillment" (p. 13).

But how does one come by this relationship with one's work, of finding one's work as meaningful and purposeful, and as experiencing work as a sense of vocation or calling? How do we realize our work as a process through which we give voice to our birthright gifts and contribute to the greater good at the same time? In her interview on NBC, Callan advised women to "follow your heart, follow your passion." But what is one's heart, one's passion? How do you know what your passion is, what your heart is telling you? As Chalofsky (2010) pointed out, everyone is giving us this advice these days. We need to learn to listen to the expressions of the heart or the soul in our work and learn to work with these messages. I refer to this process as a kind of inner work or inner learning.

The Inner Work of Work-Related Learning

A key premise of the current argument is that work-related learning experiences provide opportunities for individuals to learn about themselves and what in work is deeply meaningful and purposeful for them (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Morin, 2004), to learn what they are called to do (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Fox, 1995; Moore, 2008). Work is not just about coping with the demands of an outer reality, of performing and producing. Through one's work, it is also possible to learn about the deeper dimensions of one's self and its relationship with others and the broader world (Whyte, 2001). Fox (1995) suggested that work "comes from inside out; work is an expression of our soul, our inner being" (p. 5). A spirituality of work essentially consists of two kinds of works: (a) an inner work that allows us to connect with our souls or selves and (b) an outer work that springs from and gives voice to the fruits of our inner work. In their book, *Presence*, Senge, Charmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) urged us to develop new ways to think about learning and to consider the "inner work" that is needed to develop more authentic presence and relationships in work.

A spirituality of work reflects attention to both the inner world of the self and the outer world of work and service to others (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). For purposes of this article, I will focus primarily on the inner form of work (Fox, 1995; Senge et al., 2004). This perspective stresses the inner processes and dispositions reflected in a spiritual approach to the workplace. Connecting and giving voice to the inner work of our work worlds implie a self that is engaged in a continuous process of learning, growth, and change (Tennant, 2012). Although there appears to be an aspect of personality that contributes to the ability to engage in these meaningful dialogues (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), sustained and deeply meaningful and purposeful relationships with work do not just happen. To realize good work, workers of the future need to cultivate that which matters. The spirituality of work literature mirrors this position, suggesting that developing meaningful relationships with one's work involves a kind of learning. Such learning is possible when emphasis is placed on the importance of meaningful work experiences, and the dynamic integration of the inner lives of the individual workers with the outer realities of the workplace, the demands of the particular occupational skills needed in one's work, and that which is needed by the broader community.

The nature of the self has been characterized in numerous ways across a wide range of disciplines. In developing the ideas here, I take a psychodynamic and, in particular, a Jungian and post-Jungian perspective (Hillman, 1975, 2000; Semetsky, 2013; Watkins, 2000) of the self. Among scholars who have applied this theoretical perspective to the world of work are David Whyte (2001, 2009) and Thomas Moore (1992, 2008). Central to Whyte's preoccupation of the interrelationship of the self with work is the development and elaboration of one's sense of identity. Whyte (2009) argued that our sense of who we are reflects what he refers to as three marriages. As we develop our identity, we enter more deeply into relationships with our selves, with others, and with our work. He used the notion of marriage because, in a very real sense, these relationships involve vows and commitment and are

expressed through and within our ongoing conversations and dialogue, with ourselves and with others. These vows and commitments require constant attention, care, and nurturing. At times, for us to proceed with meaning and purpose, they require of us inner work, a deep reworking, and transformation of our sense of self (Tennant, 2012).

The Process of Inner Work Within Work-Related Learning

My argument here is that work-related learning evokes at least implicitly inner processes that inform our sense of meaning, purpose, and identity, our sense of vocation or calling. Inner work implies a process of learning about one's self, about developing self-understanding and self-knowledge (Moore, 1992, 2008). This form of inner learning is intimately bound up with the outer adaptation to the reality demands of one's occupation or that which one is preparing to join. In this sense, meaningful learning is viewed as arising from the dialogical relationships between the self, the content of one's learning, and the context of that learning. By content, I refer to the knowledge and mastery of the skills necessary to adapt to the demands of one's outer reality or context. Contexts suggest the various dimensions of this outer reality, such as the physical or structural organization of one's work, the individuals with whom one works, the culture of the organization in which one works, and the perception of the power and authority relations that characterizes one's work environment.

What it means to the individual to know certain information or to be able to perform certain skills is shaped and influenced by the dynamic interactions and relationships among these three components of the learning environment. The inner work of work-related learning experiences reflects an ongoing dialogue of the self with the content or the knowledge and skills one is learning and the context in which this learning is taking place. The individual learners bring to the learning setting an internal working model (Stapley, 2006), informed by early life experiences, educational backgrounds, and recent work experiences. Within this internal working model is also hidden or unconscious content that reflects emotionally powerful experiences. As the learners enter the learning settings, certain aspects of the content being studied or the context in which this studying is occurring may evoke within them some version of these emotion-laden experiences and these experiences serve to influence the meaning the learners derive from this situation.

This dialogical view of work-related learning is reflected in integrated or holistic understandings of identity formation. For example, Palmer (1990, 1998) suggested that deeply meaningful work involves the personal exploration of our relationship with the broader context of our work life. Whyte (2009) framed this issue within the context of the relationships that constitute our lives—self, work, and others. While Whyte and Palmer work primarily from a personal perspective, Chalofsky (2010) presented an approach to developing and sustaining meaningful work that stresses the importance of integrating the needs and interests of the individual with the nature of the workplace.

Such views implicitly suggest that meaningful work arises from a deep integration of the inner and outer aspects of our work. Furthermore, these views imply that meaningful work is relational and realized through learning and development at both the individual and the organizational levels. Developing meaningful relationships with one's work engages individuals in the formation and reformation of their identity as a worker (Moore, 2008, 2008; Palmer, 1998; Whyte, 2001).

Adult learners whom we have studied in formal and informal settings reflect this meaning-making process (Brockman & Dirkx, 2006; Dirkx & Dang, 2009; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003). The content and context of work-related learning often evoke within the learner thoughts, images, emotions, and feelings that provide important information or messages about what the learner is finding or not finding purposeful or meaningful within the learning experience. In a study of dislocated workers (Dirkx & Dang, 2009), a middle-aged, single mother, who was a laid-off factory worker, told us she looked forward to this opportunity to pursue a career in legal profession. However, because this area of work was not supported by the program in which she was participating, she was assigned to a training program in medical records. Although somewhat promising in terms of possible employment opportunities, she soon discovered that she hated the health care environment and, in particular, the medical records work. Another woman, pursuing a graduate degree in education, reported in class one day that she was absolutely thrilled with her readings in adult development theory because these theories helped her better understand her own career trajectory and some of the things she, at mid-life, was experiencing.

In addition to the content, the context of work-related learning can also evoke similar feelings and emotions. By context, I am referring to the interpersonal relationships and communications that comprise the learning setting, the group-as-a-whole, relationships with the teacher or facilitator, the physical space, and the broader social and cultural context of the work-related learning program. While aspects of this context might go completely unnoticed by some learners, others will be profoundly affected by them. Some learners will enjoy and strongly resonate with working on ill-structured problems within a learner-centered environment, while others may experience deep-seated frustration and anger toward the instructor for what they perceive to be a lack of structure, guidance, and direction within the learning environment (Dirkx & Smith, 2003).

In these studies (Brockman & Dirkx, 2006; Dirkx & Dang, 2009; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003), individuals reported processes of learning in which their sense of self was informed by both the content of their work and the contexts in which this work was performed. In each of these quite different contexts, workers described relationships that, at one level, are quite similar to the three marriages described by Whyte (2009). In a fundamental sense, their meaning making involved their sense of who they were, what they found fundamentally of value in life, and the meaning, direction, and purpose of their work lives. Their descriptions of learning in their work contexts indicated implicit or subtle processes that were ongoing and continuous dimensions of their lives. In these descriptions of learning, development, and change, the self of the worker was in dialogue with the nature of the work and the context in which that work was performed.

An Imaginal Approach to the Inner Work of Work-Related Learning

From a post-Jungian perspective (Hillman, 2000; Moore, 1992; Watkins, 2000), the inner work of work-related learning engages the learners with the emotion-laden images and experiences that arise within their learning experiences. In both formal and informal learning settings, aspects of what individuals are learning or the particular contexts in which they are learning can potentially evoke or bring to consciousness images or experiences that may inform their evolving sense of self relative to the work they are doing or learning to do. These inner aspects are often reflected in affective or emotion-laden images and feelings (Moore, 1992) and represent messengers from deeper, less conscious dimensions of our being. These messengers actually represent various aspects of our inner selves. They provide us with valuable information about what aspects of our work context are resonating with our inner beings, and what aspects are frustrating or alienating this deeper, inner sense of purpose and meaning. To receive their assistance in our search for meaning and purpose in work, however, we need learn to recognize, interpret, and work with these ephemeral messengers and use them to develop a deeper, more differentiated and integrated sense of our inner selves.

For example, Sara,[1] a dislocated worker who had no prior experience with computers, was initially quite frightened with the prospects of needing to learn computer applications as part of her re-training program. But as she learned how to turn the computer on and off, and to start a few basic applications, she found herself growing increasingly excited about this new world she had discovered. Surprised by her reaction to the computers, she wanted to learn more about them and to be able to do more things with them. While it is hard to know clearly what engagement with computers meant to her, these emotional-laden experiences suggest that the content of learning about computers and some applications touched within her parts of herself with which she was not familiar.

In a workshop for Vietnamese teachers in higher education, participants were learning about inquiry-based teaching and how they might use instructional strategies to more actively engage their learners in the learning process. Thuy, a middle-aged woman with about 10 years of experience as a university teacher, regarded herself as a good teacher who provided well-structured and organized lectures for her students. Like many teachers, however, with years of experience, teaching had become less and less interesting for her. As she participated in the inquiry-based activities that made up this workshop, Thuy began to think about herself as a teacher and to question her heavy reliance on this form of teaching. She found herself increasingly excited about not only using inquiry-based strategies in her teaching but also using inquiry as a method to study and improve her own teaching. Again, it is hard to discern just what these experiences meant for Thuy, but she clearly experienced a shift in her attitude toward her own teaching and, as she left the workshop, she felt re-energized as a teacher (Palmer, 1998).

The stories of Sara and Thuy reflect how the content and contexts of a learning experience can evoke hidden or unknown aspects of the self of the learner. They are

examples of what I call emotion-laden experiences. The emotional or affective dimension of the experience suggests that the learning engages deeper or inner aspects of the learner's self in the learning process. These experiences may indicate that some part of the learning experience, at one level, touches or awakens the learner's birthright gifts (Palmer, 1990, 1998), resulting in a surge of interest and affect. That is, the learning experience seems to be helping the learner realize an aspect of his or her identity, of who he or she is as a worker. In addition to the content of training, learners also learn about what is purposeful and meaningful to them. Their experiences of the learning setting can be seen as helping to awaken or clarify their sense of vocation or calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

We can contrast these stories with the experiences of Otto. He was a late middle-aged man participating in a reading class that was part of a workplace literacy program offered through the company for whom Otto worked as a welder. The curriculum of this program was supposedly designed to be contextualized within the content of his work as a welder. In this class, much of the experience was controlled by the teacher, who directed the students through various work-based contents and activities intended to help them learn to read better. At break, I asked Otto how he liked the class. Without much energy, he replied that he thought it was okay but he really wasn't learning anything new. "Now," he told me with raising excitement in his voice, "if they were teaching me to read to my grandchildren, that would be something!" In Otto's case, his sense of vocation was being fueled by aspects of his life not directly related to his work, in this case, his emerging relationships with his grandchildren. However, if this sense of vocation were integrated into his experiences in learning to read, it is likely that the effect would also be an improved ability to read and interpret welding manuals as well.

In these cases, from an imaginal approach, we are listening to the affective tone of students' experiences. This dimension of their experiences reflects the voice of the soul (Dirkx, 2012), the expression of the inner work that constitutes their deeper engagement with the process and content of learning. In effect, they are giving voice to aspects of the learners' selves that are seeking to become a conscious part of the learner's self-identity, conferring a sense of meaning and purpose.

In the final section of this article, I explore some of the implications a spiritual perspective on work-related learning holds for HRD practitioners charged with fostering work-related learning among their learners. These implications involve how we might think about the planning of such learning experiences, and how we might facilitate them through both formal and informal contexts in our work as teachers, trainers, developmental managers, and coaches.

Implications for HRD and Work-Related Learning

A substantial body of the literature exists around the topic of work-related learning, addressing the different levels and sectors in which this learning occurs, including on-the-job and informal workplace learning experiences. The perspective that has been developed in this article is not intended to replace or add to these various forms of

learning. Rather, as others (Gallagher et al., 2007; Yang, 2003, 2004) suggest, this perspective calls for a more holistic understanding of work-related learning, one that admits, recognizes, and works with the inner dimensions of the worker's life. This perspective raises the following question: How might those of us charged with fostering the learning and development of learners or workers integrate this way of thinking about learning into our programs for and interactions with them?

Thinking about work-related in this way is a little like group process work (Stapley, 2006). As a facilitator of group process and interaction, one must keep one eye on the manifest content and interactions of the group—its outer life—while at the same time have another eye on that which is "beneath the surface" (Stapley, 2006). Work-related learning reflects both a literal or explicit focus and a more symbolic or implicit focus. While we seek to understand the former with a more literal interpretation, the latter requires a symbolic approach. For example, we might interpret Otto's lethargy about his reading program as perhaps his feeling that it is not relevant to his work as a welder, and that we need to make the relationship more clear and direct. On the other hand, from a symbolic perspective his comments suggest that the reading instruction has sparked an interest in him, a connection for which he might not have previously been aware. Of course, both interpretations could be true, but they hold different implications for helping Otto develop a deeper relationship with the meaning of his work.

Work-related learning that fosters the deeper, inner work described here shares many of the characteristics attributed to learning-centered approaches to teaching and learning. The emphasis needs to be on how the learner is construing and making sense of the learning situation. Such meaning-making extends beyond the mastery of specific skills or bodies of knowledge to understanding what such mastery means to the learner. These environments also emphasize dialogical approaches. The teacher or trainer needs to be in dialogue with the learner, the learners with each other, and with themselves. This dialogical focus is often fostered by encouraging students to journal. Much has been written about the use of journals in adult learning and many different approaches have been suggested. However, with its emphasis on pilgrimage, Rhode's (2012) guide for students using journaling on study abroad trips seems particularly useful.

Along with the learning-centered and dialogical approaches, it is also important, in fostering the kind of inner work described here, to create environments or climates that invite and encourage openness to the expression of feelings and emotions. These represent the language of the soul, and to hear its voice, our learning environments need to be conducive to their expression. Moreover, it is also important that such openness is characterized by a receptive attitude. As Palmer (1998) suggested, learning communities that foster inner learning should metaphorically reflect our hands cupped together, holding gently the soul as it prepares to take flight. Environments heavy on analysis and critique tend to send the soul back into hiding.

These learning environments should also reflect the integration of head and heart, outer and inner, body and mind. That is, the learner and the learning process should be regarded holistically (Gallagher et al., 2007; Yang, 2003, 2004). Teachers, trainers,

and facilitators adopting these perspectives need to be particularly sensitive to the voice of the learner's inner self, and to the many ways in which it expresses itself, including speech, affect, and embodiment.

One of my favorite authors, Saul Bellow, once remarked in an interview with a reporter, "Socrates said, 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' My revision is 'But the examined life makes you wish you were dead'" (Gussow, 1997). Bellow underscored the difficult nature of the journey that characterizes the inner work associated with cultivating more spiritual relations and dimensions within one's work life. While deeply meaningful, such approaches to work-related learning can also be deeply painful. In addition to our own inner demons we may confront, Fox (1995) also warned us that doing inner work can create resistance or opposition from others in the workplace, even a dark night of the soul. When faced with such difficult experiences, it is important that learner/workers embrace this darker or negative aspect of inner work. Teachers, trainers, and facilitators who seek to foster inner work in work-related learning must be prepared to immerse themselves, at times, in challenging and difficult interactions and relationships, in what some have referred to as difficult dialogues.

There is also a potential dark side to the workplace spirituality movement and, thus, to working with similar issues in work-related learning contexts. As Lips-Wiersma, Dean, and Fornaciari (2009) pointed out, "Many have argued that instead of being helpful, WPS (workplace spirituality) may be in fact harmful, particularly to employee well-being, and may be a negative force for hegemony and misuse" (p. 288). As teachers in work-related learning programs and HRD practitioners consider integrating a spirituality of work perspective into their relationships with learners, they will need to engage in their own inner work as part of their own professional development (Dirkx, 2008). The model presented earlier of how we might conceptualize the learning of workers or would-be workers equally—as arising from a dialogical interaction of the self with the content and the context—applies equally to the learning of the teachers and practitioners in work-related learning as well.

Fostering a spirituality of work-related learning involves learning to live and work with opposites and paradox. Can we both lean in and lean back at the same time? The path described here to help our learners engage in learning that helps them foster and deepen their sense of vocation or calling is not easy and not one that should be entered on lightly. Work, however, is so central to what it means to be human. To further the deep meaning-making that characterizes spiritual approaches to work, work-related learning processes need to attend to the voices of the heart.

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1. The three examples given in the article are derived from observations made within my practice as a consultant for various educational institutions. The names used here are pseudonyms.

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