

A New Spirit in Business

From
Fear and Need
to
Love and Abundance

Hans Jecklin Martina Köhler

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Foreword

When I met Hans Jecklin at a seminar at the Lassalle-Haus near Lucerne, I became acquainted with the head of a music company whom I had known both by reputation and from personal experience. In my earlier life as a concert pianist, I had played on concert grand pianos supplied by his company and would sometimes go to his store to practice. I was pleasantly surprised to find the owner of this highly reputed firm at a seminar dealing with global issues from a spiritual and ethical perspective.

However, I was not prepared for the much greater revelation that this book held. Hans Jecklin is not just a manager who is interested in world and spiritual affairs (fortunately, these days there are a number of such people around); he is also an extraordinary person. He embodies the ideal of being both a competent manager and a complete human being—a feeling, thinking, rational, and intuitive person.

This book by Hans Jecklin and Martina Köhler is about the problems of the modern enterprise in the modern world. However, *A New Spirit in Business* is not a sober scientific treatise, but rather an account of a consciousness change through which the new concepts we so badly need come to light. Their book is both informative and autobiographical—and it is a revelation.

Volumes have been written on companies' social responsibility, stakeholder strategy, corporate ethics, and the need for new company cultures and wider visions. This book addresses all these issues, but not as abstract intellectual considerations or even as smart business strategies. It views them from the perspective of a human being who has the courage to ask questions and dares—though often with misgivings that he is honest enough to admit—to take the answers he finds and apply them first to his own person and then to those around him.

In this book, Hans Jecklin and Martina Köhler explore a great many—perhaps all—of the ways in which intelligent, honest, and open people can develop themselves, not for the selfish purpose of becoming richer and more success-

ful, but for the remarkably enlightened goal of benefiting their companies, their families, and everyone with whom they come into contact. This is not altruism—which would be an abstract intellectual attitude—but the recognition that one’s own growth is only possible with and through the growth of everyone around oneself and that such growth will ultimately benefit all the collaborators, partners, clients, and stakeholders whose lives are touched by the activity of the enterprise.

Writing a foreword to this book is an almost impossible task. It is too rich, too diverse, too full of humility and daring, fears and courage, introspection, exploration, and action joined with thought. Fortunately, a foreword is not really necessary. Here is the book itself; it can and *should* be read—indeed, there is no substitute for reading it. I can recommend doing so and promise that it will be an experience that could change your life.

We must be grateful that there are people like Hans Jecklin who take the time and trouble to share their thoughts and experiences with us in this way.

Ervin Laszlo
January 2003

Introduction

We first met at a seminar on the topic of economic globalization and the opportunities it offers. Martina Köhler, a journalist, was conducting some research for a radio program. At that time, I was still working as an entrepreneur. We instinctively discovered a common need to understand the present shift in consciousness, to contribute toward making it better understood, and in doing so to examine more closely a development that calls on us to change, both within and outside ourselves.

In Martina, I discovered a person who perceived the worlds of business and finance from a perspective that was then still foreign to me. A person who had learned early on to be wary of external safeguards and as a result had found faith in simply being. A woman who, already at a young age, had pursued her ideals without first asking herself about the extent of the potential sacrifice. For me, as someone whose understanding of life and external well-being had never been seriously questioned by harsh circumstances, this represented a real challenge—being genuine.

Without this fruitful exchange and Martina's agreement to render it in written form, this book would never have been possible. What was originally planned to be a review and summary of the life of an entrepreneur developed, as a result of our different viewpoints, into something much deeper—mutual reflections about the way in which internal and external change is connected with present-day global economic processes. The work on the individual themes that presented themselves during my journey through life also posed the question of the meaning of our individual existence in the overall context of the community and Creation. Whether commercial endeavors have a meaningful or destructive effect cannot be divorced from the inner values of a single economic player. Our own experiences helped to answer questions about the state of consciousness with which we bring abundance or shortage into the world.

In our part of the world, freedom is generally defined as material independence. However, if this longing for material freedom degenerates to become

simply an end in itself and its purpose is no longer contemplated, we suddenly find ourselves dependent solely on material values. If personal freedom really were to be reduced to this level, this would mean that all the affluent people in the world would be enlightened masters—which is clearly not the case.

So where is the meaning and the vision that we—over and above our own personal gain—link with the way in which we act? Since we senselessly shackle an inexhaustible creative potential, this book sets out on the quest to find a way to link inner and outer abundance.

Both Martina Köhler and I are confident that the integration of inner values and external behavior will also lead to new, life-enhancing perspectives in the spheres of business and politics. The responsibility for this process cannot be morally justified. It rather calls on each and every individual to take his longing for happiness seriously and to pursue it far beyond the shallow need for superficial status symbols.

Hans Jecklin

The Vision: A Global Economy for the World Community

Hans: If we were to regard Creation as a living organism and imagine ourselves to be tiny cells within that organism, I wonder what role each individual cell would play. Their existence cannot be an end in itself, for that would exclude synergetic growth.

Martina: Perhaps life does not serve a specific purpose; perhaps it cannot do anything other than develop ever more complex structures and increasingly differentiated forms of consciousness.

Hans: But then this larger being, of which we are an integral part, also has to take its own course. And that is what arouses my curiosity. In what way does the universe change, and what purpose does my own change—the transformation of one minute cell—have within this creative process?

Just imagine an economy whose profits are the result of the well-being of the community and its environment rather than the lack of it! Imagine an economy whose task and purpose is to produce and distribute goods and services to the benefit of all of humankind, and one that understands profit to be the result of this service rather than an end in itself.

In view of our current empirical knowledge, seen on its own, the idea of an economy that works for the common good may seem little more than wishful thinking. But what if we see this idea as a vision? In terms of time categories, desires are mental constructions, products of the past and present. Visions, on the other hand, are notions from the future.

A vision is always inspiration drawn from the unknown. It points beyond the level where we presently find ourselves and opens up a new dimension of consciousness that is not comprehensible against the backdrop of past experiences alone. Such a transition into a more extensive awareness is not a linear development, for otherwise we would be able to consciously think it. It is a quantum leap within evolution.

A vision becomes reality when our wishes and desires approach the boundaries of our ability to implement them. A vision is the point at which the boundary is transcended. A vision is an expression of evolution and its pulling force. It is, so to speak, the seasoning that gives the soup new flavor, the impulse that is absorbed by the collective consciousness and begins—more or less intentionally—to develop into a trend.

If we can already conjecture that the next leap in consciousness will manifest itself as the ability of autonomous individuals to function as a community, it is because we know that individualism, misconstrued as egoism, has assumed forms that are life-threatening for us all. Experience has taught us that such a leap is preceded by crises and the collapse of old values. But have we not already arrived at such a point? And should we now not ask ourselves which new forms of the community we are already able to anticipate and implement?

In the early 1990s, I produced two videos in collaboration with Swiss television. The first was a recording of choral excerpts from Handel's *Messiah* together with interviews with the Dalai Lama, while the second comprised two television discussions, one with the Dalai Lama and the other with the Jesuit priest and Zen master Niklaus Brantschen, on the theme of Buddhism. In the course of these discussions, the notion of a much-needed directional change in the spheres of politics and the economy was brought up. It was then that I

first heard about Brantschen's idea of founding the Institute for Creation of Spiritual Consciousness in Politics and Economy (ISPW, now known as the Lassalle-Institut Zen-Ethik-Leadership).

Filled with enthusiasm for this idea, I wrote Father Brantschen a letter, expressing my eagerness to have new experiences in both my professional and private lives. I offered to work with him at the ISPW. During our first meeting, I became acquainted with the cofounder of the institute, Pia Gyger. She related her experiences in Ibayo, a slum in the greater metropolitan area of Manila where Sister Pia's Greenhouse School, an institution set up by St. Katharinawerk, a Catholic secular institute in Switzerland, was teaching Westerners about new perspectives in global contexts. At the same time, she endeavored to increase the self-esteem and creativity of the slum dwellers. Her account left a deep impression on me, and I immediately decided to make a trip to Ibayo at Christmas with a group from the ISPW.

At that time, I had no idea what I was letting myself in for. I had been forewarned that for a sheltered entrepreneur from Switzerland, such an experience could easily turn into a nightmare. But we were about to move into a large, new house in Autigny, and I felt the need to travel to Asia to view my privileged life from the other side. I wanted to learn something about myself—although I knew neither exactly what it was nor where the journey would take me.

When we arrived in Ibayo, the poverty came as less of a shock than I had originally assumed. Instead, I was occupied with dealing with all the things to which—to put it mildly—I was unaccustomed. For example, we were constantly surrounded by the noise of seven different television channels and the disco and techno music blaring out of a car parked next to our thin-walled hut at four o'clock in the morning. It was never quiet. On top of that, the whole place stank of fish; the local people buy fresh fish, gut them, and hang them up on metal grids to dry. Another even fouler stench emanated from Ibayo's refuse. On the edge of the slum, the city authorities had dug out a huge rubbish pit, to which heavy trucks drove at night to empty their loads. It almost felt as if the trucks were thundering right through our hut. The garbage that they unloaded caught fire and enveloped the slum in dense clouds of black smoke.

In the Philippines, imitation of Western consumer behavior, coupled with a careless throwaway mentality, has led to the costly production of ecologically harmful packaging, which the country is poorly equipped to dispose of. The overcrowded cities can no longer cope with their toxic mountains of rubbish

and simply dump their refuse in the outlying districts at the back of the slum, causing countless diseases to spread among the inhabitants.

A shift in perspective causes the character of whatever is being perceived to change with it.

I was shocked. It was also painful, but I was determined to see things as they really were, without averting my eyes. A decisive factor in this was, without doubt, that I felt very secure within the group. Our day was clearly structured. In the morning, we rose in silence, a ritual that was also maintained during breakfast. This was followed by the first of our daily “we rounds,” during which we exchanged thoughts and, from the very beginning, examined ourselves from different perspectives: How are things for me as Hans? How are things for me as a Swiss national? And how are things for me as a citizen of the world? I perceived this shift of perspectives as being extremely instructive because the character of whatever is being perceived changes with it.

We met for these “we rounds” several times during the day, as well as whenever we had guests. In the course of these talks, the pain caused by our immediate surroundings was consistently traced back to our own inner suffering, which was reflected all too plainly by the slum. The suffering we experienced as a result of seeing the abject poverty of the slum children made us ask about the inner child within ourselves. And by opening our hearts to our own pain in this way, we were also able to assimilate the deprivation of the slum areas without it triggering an emotional crisis within ourselves.

I was the eldest of the three men in the group. I had taken on the task of cleaning the men’s accommodation every day and carried out this work with great devotion and enthusiasm. The men lived in a wooden hut, and we could see the slum through the cracks in the walls. At least the windows had glass panes. There was even a toilet, which, although it had to be flushed using water from a bucket, at least had a drainpipe. If it was not cleaned properly, the cockroaches would climb out of the drain and up our legs. To wash, we stood in the shower and poured water over our bodies using a small vessel, a method I had encountered during my travels in India.

I fetched our water from the communal pump. Seeing a man—and particularly one of my age—performing such work caused great astonishment among the slum dwellers, for the men there seem to leave all the work to the women.