Wisdom, Dignity and The Intellectual Shaman

Sandra Waddock
Boston College
Say I am You
Rumi (13th Century)

- Say I am You
- I am dust particles in sunlight.
  I am the round sun.
  To the bits of dust I say, Stay.
  To the sun, Keep moving.

I am morning mist, and the breathing of evening.

I am wind in the top of a grove, and surf on the cliff.

Mast, rudder, helmsman, and keel,
I am also the coral reef they founder on.

I am a tree with a trained parrot in its branches.
Silence, thought, and voice.

The musical air coming through a flute,
a spark of a stone, a flickering in metal.

Both candle and the moth crazy around it.

Rose, and the nightingale lost in the fragrance.

I am all orders of being, the circling galaxy,
the evolutionary intelligence, the lift,
and the falling away. What is, and what isn't.

You who know Jelaluddin, You the one in all,
say who I am. Say “I am You.”
Shaman (Tungus-Manchzhur, Siberia)

Sham = knowledge
Man = ‘liker’ (per Igor Gurkov, personal communication 2016)

Thus, Shaman = Lover of knowledge
Lover of learning

Three core functions of today’s shaman
- Healer
- Connector
- Sensemaker
- In the service of a better world

Shaman as sensemaker (spiritual leader-Frost/Egri)
- Changes cultural mythologies to heal them when they are dis-eased and dis-ordered
Shamans Today...

- Bring order and ease to cultural myths that are diseased or dis-ordered
- A new story must be told
- Sensemaking
- Order/ease restored
- Connections need to be made
  - Across disciplinary, conceptual, scholar-practice, theory-practice boundaries of all sorts
- If someone/thing is sick...need a new myth (story or narrative) to heal
  - Creating new memes and narratives

Shamans...

- Experiences of insight, knowings, intuition...
- To heal relationships
- Create new cultural mythologies to heal old broken ones
- Address issues and problems holistically
- Answer their ‘call’ to healing, connecting, and sensemaking

The world needs more of us to take on the healing mantle of the shaman...

- The lover of knowledge!
The World is Different Now

- Enter the Anthropocene
  - Climate change and sustainability crises
  - Planetary boundaries exceeded
  - Potential for a ‘great disruption,’ even collapse
  - 6th great extinction

- Growing inequality
  - 62 individuals controlled as much wealth as half world’s population
    - Oxfam, 2016

- Kate Raworth’s ‘Doughnut’ argument
  - 9 ecological boundaries
  - 11 social foundations for healthy planet
Raworth’s ‘Doughnut’

Social boundary conditions for a safe and just space...
Dignity and the Shaman

- **Dignity**
  - Quality of being worthy or honored just because...
    - (Hicks, 2010)
  - People as ends not means
  - Respect must be earned
  - Dignity is granted

- **A Shamanic Perspective**
  - Spirit in All → Dignity in All
    - Dignity: intrinsic worth
    - For all humans
    - For all living beings
    - For all manifestations of nature (Earth as Gaia)
  - Creates a different ‘story’ for humankind
Today’s ‘Western’ Story

- Today’s dominant economic memes/narratives
  - Neoclassical economics, neoliberalism
    - ‘Free’ markets and free trade
    - Individual responsibility (no collective)
    - Maximize shareholder wealth
    - Exploitation of nature for ‘man’s’ [sic] benefit
    - Growth at all costs
  - Who benefits from today’s system? (.001%)
    - New meme: the 1% and the 99%
  - To change the system, we need to change memes and the narrative...then act in accord with the new story
    - We need a dignity-for-all-based (shamanic) perspective
A Dignity for All
Narrative/Perspective

- Extends dignity to Gaia and all of her manifestations
- Would dramatically shift business and other institutional practices
- Congruent with new ‘theory of business’
  - Donaldson & Walsh, 2015
  - Businesses create ‘collective value’ with no dignity violations (of people...extended to planet)
Imagine:
Dignity-Based Business Practice

- Business shifts
  - ‘Managing,’ efficiency, growth goals shift toward wellbeing and dignity for all
  - Workplace conditions, standards improve as people are treated with dignity
    - Decent work at living wages

- Industrial practices shift
  - Animal husbandry honors animals as sacred
  - Agricultural production of all sorts honors Earth (organic and biodiversity approaches, reduce fertilizer and pesticides)
  - Mining and energy production practices change
  - Rivers, streams, oceans, lakes forests, plains, mountains honored for themselves, not extractive purposes
Not a ‘Return to Nature’
...An Honoring of Nature’s Gifts

- Create virtuous circles and circular production systems
  - Move away from unsustainable linear practices that deplete soil, oceans, lakes, streams, forests, minerals, and other resources without regard to sustainability
  - Think circularly:
- Restoration, replenishment, resilience, and renewal
  - Organize/biodynamic agriculture
  - Dignity-based working circumstances
  - Biomimicry
- Collective value (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015)

- Wellbeing and dignity for all (Leading for Wellbeing)
  - Not financial growth
  - Measure and think holistically
    - Recognize limits to growth (finite planet)
    - Life cycle analysis and full cost accounting
    - Cradle-to-grave design thinking
    - Measures of wellbeing (collective value) (not GNP)
    - Full cost pricing
    - Design for durability, quality, and upgradability (not replacement and churn)
    - Decreased consumption
Bring the wisdom of elders to bear on our global situation

- Wisdom is the integration of...
- Moral imagination (the good)
- Systems understanding (the true)
- Aesthetic sensibility (the beautiful)
- In the service of a better world

- Dignity and wellbeing for all
Thank you!