

Urban Putty
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A new book arrived this week, entitled, *Managing Upside Down* by Tom Chappell.

For those who might not be familiar with the author, he and his wife, Kate, have operated **Tom's of Maine** in Kennebunk where they produce natural products such as deodorants, soaps, shampoos and now a new line of wellness products.

At The Acorn Centre, we are especially excited by this new text, since it takes even further the thoughts in his earlier work, *The Soul of A Business* (1993) In Chapter 1, Mr. Chappell answers the inevitable question, "What exactly is managing upside down?"

It is putting your social and moral responsibilities at the centre of your business enterprise. It's putting your own ego aside and listening to your employees, collaborating with them, encouraging their creativity, all the while being guided by your values. Above all, *Managing Upside Down* is never making a move without consulting your values, and then sticking to them heart and soul.

Chappell continues:

"But how can you follow your heart without getting your brains battered in the marketplace? It is not easy. Managing by values is a revolutionary way of doing business, and it won't happen by half measures. If you are serious about learning to manage by values, you will have to throw a lot of what passes for conventional wisdom in the business world over the side. You

will have to create new habits. In fact you will have to change your whole mindset toward the marketplace. Above all, (and here's the really hard part), you must learn to do two apparently contradictory things at once: follow your values and still make money. Instead of being focused only on profit, market share incentives, dividends and building wealth, you must start thinking about doing some good for others. More difficult still, leading by values requires successful managers to set aside their pride as masters of their domain and turn themselves into servants of their ideals and values. *Managing Upside Down* is not just a job; it's a vocation."

In another, earlier portion of the text, Chappell writes:

"A decade ago we were known for our natural toothpaste. Today we're known for our great products and for our corporate values. **We began by encouraging our employees to spend 5 percent of their paid company time volunteering in the community and by committing 10 percent of our pretax profits to nonprofit organizations.**" (p.3)

In *Urban Putty*, we will be making references to this text in the future; for now, let's focus in on his two chapters about the leader knowing him/herself and the "destiny" of the company.

After explaining the Socratic ideal of "know thyself" and its background in a historical context, Chappell then writes these prophetic words:

"As essential as self-knowledge might be, it is amazing how many of us stride through life without admitting our deepest values and passions to ourselves, never mind to others. We are all bundles

of secret dreams, desires and talents. How many times have you been amazed to find out that a friend or colleague (or even a close family member) is a passionate collector, musician, car mechanic, gardener, cook, animal lover, you name it? We all care about something, many things, in fact; trouble is, too few of us have been able to, or allowed to, integrate those deep interests into our work life. The result is misery. 'There are three things that are extremely hard,' wrote Benjamin Franklin, 'steel, a diamond and to know yourself.'"

Chappell continues:

"How do we come to know ourselves? Self-knowledge does not come in some kind of lightning-like moment of revelation. It is not about being knocked off your horse, like Saul on his way to Damascus, suddenly seeing what your role in this life must be. Coming to know yourself is, as Socrates was the first to explain, a neverending process, a lifelong journey, and an accumulation of moments, teachings and decisions. That is where your values come from, and the scars often count more than the triumphs."

And then a little later he writes:

"It takes a lifetime to figure out what your gifts (and your deficiencies) are. Acknowledging your talents is easy. Coping to your defects takes real self-knowledge and no small measure of courage.

Examining our personal values, gifts and talents is better done in a group, than exclusively in a journal, or in private self-talk. The interactions with friends and colleagues will provide valuable insight into your estimate of who you are."

Chappell then links self-knowledge, for business leaders, with the "destiny" of the company they may create.

(From the text) *Envision Your Destiny*,
"Envision your future with your head and your heart: Your values in today's world call you to serve. How? The answer is your destiny, and as soon as you hear it, this destiny makes total sense."

Chappell dubs this "Intention #3" in his book of seven intentions. *The Upside Down* approach, writes Chappell, is to allow your business goals to emerge from who you are as a company, your essence, your reason for being. Instead of letting the market drive your decisions, you must put the marketplace out of your mind for a moment and ask instead, "Who are we, what do we stand for and how do we serve?"

(Chappell) is not suggesting you ignore the marketplace. The key is to listen to its call and figure out your unique place in it. What do your customers need, and what is it about your company that can fill and satisfy those needs? What is the role that can be served only by your company? What is unique about you as a competitor?

The answer to these questions is what I call a company's destiny.

(Chappell continues):

"Destiny, in my sense, is not being at the end of a puppeteer's strings, waiting for fate to strike and thus letting your business simply happen. My notion of destiny is an active, purposeful, free (as opposed to pre-destined) planning process—to take who you are, a company with certain values, to where you ought to be, your unique place in the

marketplace. Destiny, as opposed to a mission or goals, suggests a connection between the cultural and competitive values of our beliefs, the particular gifts we possess, and our opportunity to become something that will make a difference in the world.”

Now let’s turn to some words from James Hillman’s writing in *The Soul’s Code* about similar stuff, from a different perspective. Writing to men, and fathers, in a chapter entitled “The Parental Fallacy”:

“Dad! Are you home? Is anybody here? No. Dad is out to lunch. And he should be—as I shall claim. His job is elsewhere—as I shall explain—because his fundamental value to the family is maintaining the connection to elsewhere. Maybe Dad’s true task is not knowing about coffee, bleach, and mouthwash or how to resolve pubescent dating dilemmas and maybe his dumbness shows that this is truly not his world. His world is not shown in these sets, it is offstage, elsewhere and invisible...Fathers have been away for centuries: on military campaigns, as sailors on distant seas for years at a time; as cattle drivers, travelers, trappers, prospectors, messengers, prisoners, jobbers, peddlars, slavers, pirates, missionaries, migrant workers. The workweek was once seventy-two hours. The construct “fatherhood” shows widely different faces in different countries, classes, occupations and historical times. Only today is absence so shaming, and declared a criminal, even criminal-producing behavior. As a social evil, the absent father is one of the bogeys of the remedial age, this historical period of therapy, recovery, and social programs that try to fix what we do not understand. Rather than

blaming fathers for their absenteeism and the concomitant unfairness of loading extra burdens onto mothers, mentors, the schools, the police and taxpayers, we need to ask where Dad might be when he’s “not at home.” When he is absent, to what else might he be present? What calls him away?”

Rilke has an answer:

Sometimes a man stands up
during supper

And walks outdoors, and keeps
on walking,

Because of a church that stands
somewhere in the East.

And his children say blessings on
him as if he were dead.

And another man, who remains
inside his own house,

Dies there, inside the dishes and
in the glasses,

So that his children have to go
far out into the world

Toward that same church, which
he forgot.

Hillman continues:

“Rilke accounts for the father’s absence. What about the quality of his presence—that anger, that hatred? Why is Father such an abusive, brutal family destroyer?

What is his rage?

Is it really his wife he hates, his children he wants to beat because no one does what he says and they cost so much? Or might there be another factor,

less personal and more demonic, that has him and doesn't let up?"

I have come to be convinced that the parental fallacy itself has harnessed Father's spirit to a false image, and his daimon (genius, angel) turns demonic in kicking against the traces. He is trapped in a construct called American fatherhood, a moral commandment to be the kind of good guy who likes Disneyland, and kid's food, gadgets, opinions and wisecracks.

This bland model betrays his necessary angel, that image of whatever else he carries in his heart, glimpsed from childhood into the present day (and which we would confirm for him). The man who has lost his angel becomes demonic, and the absence, the anger, and the paralysis on the couch are all symptoms of the soul in search of a last call to something other and beyond.

Father's oscillations between rage and apathy, like his children's allergies and behavior disorders and his wife's depressions and bitter resentments, form part of a pattern they all share—not the "family system" but the system of rip-off economics that promotes their communal senselessness by substituting "more" for "beyond."

And so his absences—physical, mental, spiritual—call him away from the cage of American delusions that crush the angel's wings. Without inspiration, what's left is bare, aimless ferocity. Without desire for an ideal, what's left is lustful fantasy and the seduction of free-floating images that find no anchor in actual projects. Present in body and absent in spirit, he lies back on the couch, shamed by his own daimon for

the potentials in his soul that will not be subdued.

He feels himself inwardly subversive, imagining in his passivity extremes of aggression and desire that must be suppressed. Solution: more work, more money, more drink, more weight, more things, more infotainment, and an almost fanatic dedication of his mature male life to the kids so that they can grow up straight and straight up the consumer ladder in the pursuit of their happiness.

If you have read this far, and would like to reflect on the content of these two pieces of writing, please consider taking a few minutes of your time to respond to the questions that follow.

Opinion Survey

1. Have you found what Chappell calls your "destiny" in your work/professional life?
Yes ___
No ___
2. What turning points in your life helped to clarify your comprehension of your discovery of your destiny?
(Circle those that apply to you!)
 - a) some kind of failure
 - b) a dismissal
 - c) a firing
 - d) a bankruptcy
 - e) a trauma
 - f) a divorce
 - g) a death
 - h) a loss, abandonment
 - i) the "corrective words" of others
 - j) a repeat of any of the above
 - k) a significant accomplishment

- l) a winning medal, award, applause
 m) an athletic "personal best"
 n) an important relationship
 o) a gradual volume increase to an inner voice
 p) _____
3. Can you choose the words which best describe your emotional response to finding your "destiny"?
- a) perplexed
 b) anxious
 c) astonished
 d) annoyed
 e) disappointed
 f) bemused
 g) excited
 h) ecstatic
 i) other _____
4. Do you work with others who have found their "destiny"?
- Yes____
 No____
5. Have you ever had a conversation about the subject of one's "destiny" or purpose, or daimon, or acorn with a close friend, colleague, spouse, parent, teacher?
- Yes____
 No____
6. Do you believe that such a conversation is a genuine form of mentoring?
- Yes____
 No____
7. Have you ever thought of yourself as a potential mentor?
- Yes____
 No____
8. Would mentoring be a potential component of your "destiny"?
- Yes____
 No____
 Undecided____
9. Is the place in which you work supportive of the business of mentoring?
- Yes____
 No____
 Undecided____
10. What is the kind of evidence that supports the view that your workplace culture supports mentoring of colleagues?
 (Circle all that apply)
- a) coaching training
 b) work time set aside
 c) a library in the workplace
 d) a collection of video/CD resources
 e) informal conversations with supervisors about YOUR life
 f) memo's of commendation for your "special contribution"
 g) any genuine attempt to get to know who you are, in addition to your performance skills
 h) other _____
11. Do you know anyone who is struggling with a "rebel's" voice who seems to be at odds with the corporate culture?
- Yes____
 No____
12. Do you know anyone who is "different" by being "creative" who does not fit into the culture and may be at risk?
- Yes____
 No____

and disseminate them. Please include your name, address, phone and e-mail for verification purposes.

13. What is the tolerance level of your workplace culture toward “different” and “creative” if also “isolated” individuals on a scale from 1-10:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. What steps do you believe could be accomplished to make the level of acceptance of such “eccentric” individuals rise?
(Choose one)

- a) staff training
- b) staff field trips
- c) brainstorming sessions
- d) informal exposure to stories of the contributions of those who are different
- e) formal steps to shatter the stereotype of “difference” as “unacceptable”

15. What conversations, experiences have you had which pointed in the direction of uncovering your “daimon” or “angel” or “acorn”?
(Circle all that apply.)

- a) parent
- b) teacher
- c) coach
- d) dating partner
- e) spouse
- f) supervisor
- g) friend

16. Would you kindly write your story about your relationship with your “acorn” or “daimon” or “angel” or genius” for the purpose of others who might also be searching?

NOTE: We will respect the confidentiality of each “story” but would request permission to collect

Feedback?

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