

Swing

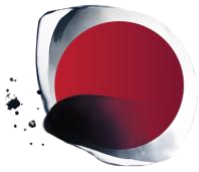


And it never winds down.

Kabir-Swing

“Between the conscious and the unconscious, the
mind has put up a swing;
All earth creatures, even the supernovas, sway
Between these two trees,
And it never winds down.

Angels, animals, human, insects by the million, also



The wheeling sun and moon;
Ages go by, and it goes on.

Everything is swinging: heaven, earth, water, fire,
And the secret one slowly growing a body.
Kabir saw that for fifteen seconds, and it made him a
servant for life.”

— Bly, 1971, p. 11

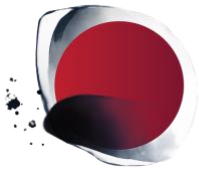
Consider:

“One day when [I was] a child, I stood beneath a swing frame that towered above me. Another child, older than me, told me of the time a girl had swung and swung until, finally, she looped over the top. I listened in silent awe. She had done what we only dreamed of doing, swung so uncontrollably high that finally not even gravity could hold her.

I think of this apocryphal story as I sit now in a small playground, watching my youngest son run from one activity to another. He has climbed, swung, and jumped, whirled around on a spinning platform, and wobbled along a rolling log until, laughing, he loses his balance. Now he is perched on a teeter-totter, waiting to be bumped high in the air when his partner crashes to the ground. Everywhere I look, there are bodies in motion, energies in search of adventure.

It seems that the very experiences these children seek out are ones we avoid — disequilibrium, novelty, loss of control, surprise. These make for a good playground, but for a dangerous life. We avoid these things so much that if an organization were to take the form of a teeter-totter, we’d brace it up at both ends, turning it into a straight plank. But why has equilibrium become such a prized part of adult life? Why are we afraid of what happens if our boat gets rocked? Is it that we prefer balance to change? Does equilibrium feel more secure?

Sometimes, to clear up a confusing concept, it helps me to return to the accepted definition of the word. So I open the American Heritage Dictionary to learn about equilibrium:



“Equilibrium. 1. A condition in which all acting influences are canceled by others resulting in a stable, balanced, or unchanging system. 2. Physics. The condition of a system in which the resultant of all acting forces is zero. . . . 4. Mental or emotional balance. . . . poise.”

I am surprised by the negativity of the first two definitions. A condition in which the result of all activity is zero? Why, then, do we desire equilibrium so much, or use the same word to describe mental and emotional well-being? In my own life, I don't experience equilibrium as an always desirable state. And I don't believe it is a desirable state for an organization. Quite the contrary. I've observed the search for organizational equilibrium as a sure path to institutional death, a road to zero trafficked by fearful people. Having noticed the negative effects of equilibrium so often, I've been puzzled why it has earned such high status. (Wheatley, 1994, pp. 75-76)”

Image courtesy of: [Noah Silliman](#) [@noahsilliman](#)

Reference:

Bly, R. (1971). *The Kabir book: Forty-four of the ecstatic poems of Kabir*. Beacon: Boston.

Wheatley, Margaret J. (1994). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

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