

SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

Oh, hooray for Zoom! But wait: not so fast! I'm a human being, with a body, and feelings. I have a voice. I move. I sing, dance, use my hands, walk, work, make lunch, clean the sinks, act the fool, make serious comment, philosophise, talk rubbish, weed the garden, drive my car. I do have a face but it's nothing like the tiny little image you see on screen. And when we meet in the street and you hear me speak you hear my words fully synchronised with the movements of my lips.

There was a rich man who asked Picasso to paint a portrait of his wife. Picasso agreed and invited the rich man's wife to sit for him. Some weeks later he invited the rich man to come and see the portrait. The poor rich man was shocked. "She doesn't look like that!" "Oh", said Picasso, "and what do you think she looks like?" The rich man thought for a while, then pulled out his wallet and drew out a little photo. "Like that!" "A bit small, isn't she?" said Picasso.

So it is with Zoom. I'm not like that. When I speak you don't fully get the intonation or the feeling. It is a wonderful piece of technology but I am not a robot. I'm not a machine. It works because it is relying on a very human capacity that before the pandemic we have met and conversed and supped together. In those sweet times, and in those times when we have argued, we have got to know each other. You've seen my good points and my shadow. Over many such meetings, trusting each other, offering each other love and compassion, we have built up spiritual capital.

Our human world depends on this: traders, parents and children, husbands and wives, business partners, charity trustees. Everyone. We live in a material world, social animals dependent one upon the other. Communication is far more than writing a newsletter, tweeting into a void or showing my video and unmuting myself. Communication at root is creating a union together, a union in the image of the spirit. The material world is dependent on the spirit.

We are living on the spiritual capital that was created, assembled, reinforced through our meetings body to body, person to person, face to face. It is impossible to do this with Zoom. Do not be bamboozled. A good friend told me today that for several months she has been in a zoom group and just recently they had the opportunity to meet together in person. It was a shock. She did not recognise anyone. It was as if the people she had seen on her iPad screen were not real. They were like ghosts and here they were in the flesh with profiles and rounded faces.

Zoom is a fake, a con trick. It makes us believe we are communicating, seeing each other as real. It's not true. It works for the most part because we have met together before zoom, before the pandemic. What we see on the zoom are simply memories. To make zoom work we are using up the spiritual capital. Like money as capital you can spend it but once it's gone, there's no way to get it back.

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