



RE-IMAGINING POWER IN LEADERSHIP: REFLECTION, INTEGRATION, AND SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

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Leadership is imbued with the idea of power. Think about leadership, and soon after you will think of power as well. This is because power is a compelling aspect of leadership. Think about power—and you evoke several images. Power is a different and an independent phenomenon. It surrounds our everyday life in a ubiquitous and pervasive way—physical power, solar power, social power, spiritual power, and so on. It elicits impressions of greatness and grandeur, strength and stamina, energy and engagement. It evokes ideas like force, control, persuasion, authority, influence, impact, and charisma.

It is, therefore, not surprising to see that power is perhaps one of the most studied phenomena in the world. There is a preponderance of literature on power from several disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational studies. Power is defined by a multiplicity of perspectives, making it a concept that is idiosyncratic, “essentially-contested” (Wrong, 1995), and highly “privileged” (Wartenberg, 1990). The several theories that explain power indicate a variety of usages of the term, each usage carrying its own unique “language game” (from the philosopher Wittgenstein), making the search for a single concept of power elusive and “intrinsically illusory” (Haugaard, 2002).

Power is thus defined in ways differing in complexity and scope. Pfeffer (1997) notes that we are “profoundly ambivalent about power, and that ambivalence has led to recurrent questioning of the concept and its definition” (p. 137). The simplest definitions I found most acceptable are the following: “Power is the potential one individual has to change the thinking



and behavior of other people” (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985, p. xiii); and Bertrand Russell’s definition of power as “the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others” (Wrong, 1995, p. 10). These definitions allow us to see power generically in the diversity of its applications, like political power or mental power, social or organizational power.

How has the field of leadership studies framed the phenomenon of power? Taking Rost’s (1993) definition of leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102), power becomes part of the process of influence that is integral to leadership (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Power is involved in the relationship of leader and follower, primarily in terms of the power of the leader over the follower. According to the often-quoted French and Raven’s 1959 study (Yukl, 2002), the leader’s power is mainly derived from and based on the leader’s position (legitimate authority, reward, coercion, information, environment) as well as the leader’s very person (referent, expertise).

Power is also seen as a psychological orientation, need, or motivation that drives leaders toward its use and misuse (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1978; Kets de Vries, 1993; Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985). The problem and potential power of leaders in different settings like politics and business have intensified interest in rethinking and recasting leadership power in terms of follower and organizational empowerment (Appelbaum, Hebert, & Leroux, 1999; Hardy & Clegg, 1996; Gordon, 2002), sharing and distribution (Hollander & Offerman, 1990; Bass & Stogdill, 1990), stewardship (Block, 1996), and transformation (Burns, 1978).

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND THE QUESTION OF POWER

Robert K. Greenleaf’s (1977) servant-leadership proposes a new paradigm of power in leadership. As early as the 1970s Greenleaf discerned an emerging trend toward a rethinking of the idea and practice of power in leadership and in institutions. Power is reinvented from its highly perva-



sive, coercive nature toward the servant-leader's power of persuasion and example. This "legitimized" form of power has become an ethical imperative in our times (pp. 5, 41). It challenges the traditional conception of power as status, manipulation, control, and domination. It re-appropriates the concept of power as a moral principle that can imbue a leader with a deeply respectable "servant stature."

A fresh critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways. A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who choose to follow this principle will not casually accept the authority of existing institutions. *Rather, they will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants.* To the extent that this principle prevails in the future, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant-led. (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 10)

Addressing the Gap

Scholars have pointed out the insufficiency of research and literature on power in the social sciences in general (Pfeffer, 1997) as well as in the field of organizational studies (Pfeffer, 1997; Hardy & Clegg, 1996; Mumby, 2001). There has also been recognition of limited research on power in leadership studies, particularly in terms of in-depth exploration of the dynamics of power in leadership processes (Yukl, 2002; Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Hollander & Offermann, 1990). Gordon (2002), in a major leadership journal, observes that leadership theories have largely failed to address the phenomenon of power, particularly at the level of what he calls "deep structures." He describes "deep structures" as codes of behavioral order that are typically covert and implicit, but have profound influence in organizational relationships and outcomes. Such deep structures may be



manifested in perceptions and actions of participants in the diverse settings of leadership—organization, community, society, and culture. How these participants in these settings experience and understand the phenomenon of power in leadership situations presents an important area of development—a gap—in leadership studies (Gordon, 2002; Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Ryan, 1984).

I would like to address this gap in leadership research and reflection. I notice the breadth and depth of thought given to power in socio-political and psychological theories. Very little, however, has been done in terms of integrating them with the phenomenon of leadership. In light of this, an exploration into socio-political and psychological conceptions of power can be useful to leadership. The essay presents a re-imagining of conceptions of power in the following ways: one, by looking at the context of leadership from the prism of socio-political understanding of power; two, by looking at the leader's self and person from the prism of psychological and philosophical understanding of power; and three, by integrating these perspectives through the challenge of reflection, integration, and servant-leadership.

"Power Without": The Power Dynamics of Leadership

The phenomenon of leadership does not exist in a vacuum; it operates in different domains, settings, or contexts. It may be the group, organization, society, environment, or culture. It embraces realities like relationships, structures, systems, and institutions. Power is embedded in these contexts and realities. Leadership, through the aid of social theory, is challenged to understand the dynamics of power at work in the diversity of settings and contexts in which it finds itself. These social realities constitute the external environment of leadership. Thus, leadership needs a "power without" perspective.



Power as understood in context

How can leadership develop this perspective of looking at the dynamics of power in settings and contexts? Perhaps a fundamental step is to ask an ontological question: How do we look at social reality? Berger and Luckmann (1966) provide us with a classic thought in contemporary sociological theory. Their theory of social construction looks at social reality as a human product. Social order is not derived from “laws of nature.” The social order is a product of human activity through a process called “externalization.” This theory explains how institutions arise. Human activity repeated frequently is cast into a pattern of actions and decisions, which Berger and Luckmann call “habitualization.” For example, habitualization of the activity of learning results in institutions of learning—the educational system. Habitualization of the activity of decision-making results in political institutions. The world of institutions then becomes experienced as an objective social reality.

The institutions, as historical and objective facticities, confront the individual as undeniable facts. The institutions are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not. He cannot wish them away. They resist his attempts to change or evade them. They have coercive power over him. . . . The objective reality of institutions is not diminished if the individual does not understand their purpose or their mode of operation. He may experience large sectors of the social world as incomprehensible, perhaps oppressive in their opaqueness, but real nonetheless. Since institutions exist as external reality the individual cannot understand them by introspection. He must “go out” and learn about them, just as he must to learn about nature. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 60)

This ontological understanding of social reality frames our first fundamental perspective: leadership needs to “go out and learn” about its setting. Focusing on human activities connected with power, a purposeful discernment accompanies leadership and creates an opportunity to more fully



understand institutions, systems, and structures of power. Leadership needs to be sensitive to the dynamics of power in its environment.

Power as situated

Discerning leadership imagines power as existing in what Wartenberg (1990) describes as a “social field.” Wartenberg imagines this social field as constituted not merely by a dyadic power relationship between two agents (the power wielder and the one affected by power), but also by a “broad social context” consisting of a “vast field of social forces” of structures and processes of power. Conceiving power in terms of persons A and B, in an equation like: “power of A over B is equal to maximum force which A can induce on B minus the maximum resisting force which B can mobilize in the opposite direction” is criticized by Burns (1978) as a formula that is “more physics than power.”

Wartenberg (1990) gives an example of the power relationship that characterizes the teacher and student in a small classroom setting. While the exercise of power may be localized in the dyad, the whole power dynamic extends beyond it: into the broader social field consisting of power structures in the grading system, into the academic profession, and into the school environment as a whole. Hence, educational leadership confronting the issue of power becomes aware of this picture of power as situated in a broader social matrix of power relationships at different levels of social reality.

Power as heterogeneous

With this view of power as situated in a social field, the next level of imagination is to see the heterogeneity and diversity of these power relationships and institutions existing in this field:

Situated power does not reside exclusively in a single site or institution of society. The situated conception of power shows that social power is a



heterogeneous presence that spreads across an entire set of agents and practices, although its exercise depends upon the actions of the dominant agent. Such heterogeneity is constituted by a complex coordination among agents located in diverse sites and institutions, all of whose presence in a social alignment is necessary to constitute a situated power relationship. (Wartenberg, 1990, p. 151)

This view can be used in analyzing the power behind the act of grading that exists in Wartenberg's (1990) example of the dyadic relationship of teacher and student. The teacher's power over the student through the power of grading affects and is affected by diverse social forces surrounding this central dyadic relationship of teacher and student. These include not only the students' parents, who might be expecting high grades from their child, but also the principal, an honor society, an athletic club, or a fraternity. Poor grades will affect prospects of entrance into law, business, or medical schools, as well as future careers. Even a romantic relationship may affect or be affected by the power of the grade.

Leadership is challenged to see the diversity of these settings, and the diversity of the power dynamic in each of these settings. Diversity of power dynamics may come in many forms, depending on the peculiarity of the leadership context. Diversity may be in terms of type or nature of organizations. There are power dynamics inherent in groups or "tribes" within an organization (Schmookler, 1994). There are power dynamics in family systems. The organization is a vast arena for the exercise of power, and the leader or executive in an organization is always challenged to see the inherent and inescapable power dynamics in organizational life (Kotter, 1985; Morgan, 1997; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992). In a business organization, for example, executive power relates with other power centers like the board, labor, suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders, through influence and power strategies like negotiations, conflict management, alliances, and networks (Greenleaf, 1977; Morgan, 1997; Pfeffer, 1997).

Power in different organizational forms is studied by different academic disciplines: political science tends to focus on government and politi-



cal organizations, management studies on business organizations, and sociology on community and other social organizations (family, church, indigenous groups).

Aside from understanding the diversity of power in different organizational forms, leadership must also see the dynamics of power framed in specific terms by interest or cause-oriented groups. A great deal of thought has been given to looking at power from the perspective of marginalized and oppressed social classes, and specific disciplines focus on issues of power as expressed by specific sectors in society. Feminist theory focuses on gender relations and the power of women. Marxist and critical theory focuses on empowering marginalized social classes and transforming power structures of economic and political domination. Cultural studies explore the dynamics of power among African Americans and other race-based and ethnic societies or cultures. Liberation theology reflects on the power of the poor and their struggle for freedom. The discourse on power is as diverse as the sectoral groups who grapple with it in their lives in two ways: one, as the recipients of power that is exercised as coercion and domination through structures of hierarchy and control; and two, as wielders of power exercised for transformation through structures of empowerment. The first function of power has been imagined as “power over,” and the second one, as “power to” (Hinze, 1995; Wrong, 1995).

Greenleaf (1977) speaks of essentially two types of power embedded in institutions, coercive power and the power of persuasion and example:

In a complex institution-centered society, which ours is likely to be into the indefinite future, there will be large and small concentrations of power. Sometimes it will be a servant’s power of persuasion and example. Sometimes it will be coercive power used to dominate and manipulate people. The difference is that, in the former, power is used to create opportunity and alternatives so that individuals may choose and build autonomy. In the latter, individuals are coerced into a predetermined path. Even if it is “good” for them, if they experience nothing else, ultimately their autonomy will be diminished. (pp. 41-42)



Greenleaf's vision of servant-leadership encompasses a deep concern for institutional quality and integrity. Caring for institutions includes sensitivity to the dynamics of power within them, the potential to abuse it, and the need for "countervailing power" which is "a necessary condition of all human arrangements" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 85). A new basis of trust among stakeholders in the institution can be founded on this renewed vision of power that is shared, a power that is nurtured by persuasion and example. As Greenleaf said, "No one should be powerless!"

"Power Within": The Inner Dynamics of Power in Leadership

We now shift our attention from the external environment of the leader toward the interiority of the leader. Just as power can be situated in the complex setting of leadership, power can also be located in the inner life of leaders. The need, desire, craving for power—a human tendency that is all too familiar to us—resides within the interior life of the individual leader. Psychology helps us understand this phenomenon, as well as the motives that drive it. It helps us imagine how individuals can be oriented or disposed toward power. Leadership has to be informed by this process of imagining power as a motive and as a capacity of individual leaders.

Power as desire

Leadership can benefit from empirical research done on personal power, particularly on the phenomenon of power as a need or motive. Early studies by Adler in 1927 and Horney in 1942 developed the concept of the "will to power," a craving, almost neurotic need for power due to one's feeling of inferiority and anxiety (Lips, 1981). The striving for power is central to Alfred Adler's (1966) psychology:

To be big! To be powerful! This is and has always been the longing of those who are little or feel they are little . . . Whatever men are striving for originates from their urgent attempts to overcome the impression of deficiency, insecurity, weakness . . . Our guiding ideal is concretized as



power over others . . . The striving for personal power is a disastrous delusion and poisons man's living together. (pp. 168-169)

In his book *The Power Motive*, Winter (1973) argues for recognition of this powerful driving force in people. He speaks of the tendency of individuals, especially those in public life, to mask their desire for power with more noble virtues like "service," "duty," and "responsibility." To acknowledge the existence of the power motive is essential in today's power-preoccupied world. Some psychologists have concluded that "just as sexuality was repressed and denied during the nineteenth century, so today power strivings are repressed and achieve only disguised expression through defense mechanisms such as distortion, displacement, projection, and rationalization" (p. 3).

How is the power motive manifested in action? Through projective tests that Winter (1973) developed to measure a person's level of need for power, or *n* Power, he drew out themes and imagery that indicate powerful actions and dispositions. Lips (1981) summarizes these themes and imagery as including

forceful behavior such as assaults, threats, or insults; sexual exploitation; taking advantage of another's weakness; giving unsolicited help, support, or protection; trying to control another person by regulating behavior or living conditions or by seeking information; trying to influence or persuade another; and trying to impress some other person or the world at large. (p. 27)

David McClelland (1975, pp. 10-12) builds on Winter's (1973) work by identifying four main actions correlated to men with high power motivation. These actions include: (1) power-oriented reading, or reading about sex, sports, and aggression; (2) accumulating prestige possessions like guns, cars, and credit cards; (3) participation in competitive sports; and (4) belonging to organizations and holding office in them. Men get power in different ways, but the same effect holds: a feeling of power.

McClelland (1975) further proposes a classification of these power



actions into “power orientations.” He makes the following distinctions: (1) the source of power as one’s self or others; and (2) the object of power as one’s self (to feel stronger) or others (to influence). He then identifies four stages in power orientation, which are synchronized with the psycho-sexual and psycho-social development framework originally proposed by Freud and Erikson. McClelland describes the four stages as follows: Stage I: “I strengthen, control, direct myself”; Stage II: “Others (God, my mother, my leader, food, etc.) strengthen me”; Stage III: “I have an impact on others”; and Stage IV: “It (religion, laws, my group) moves me to serve and influence others” (pp. 13-21).

McClelland (1975) frames the power motive within a continuum that describes levels of personal maturity and development. Stage I to Stage II moves the individual from external control to internal control. Stage III to Stage IV moves the person from self-assertion to selfless service to an ideal. The desire for power, therefore, exists at these different stages of psychological growth from self-centeredness to selflessness. Maturity, however, is seen not much in terms of progressing through the stages, but in terms of the “ability to use whatever mode is appropriate to the situation.” McClelland continues:

The developmental model we have in mind is not like the Freudian one in which early learnings are left behind or, if they persist, are viewed as immature abnormal fixations. Rather, the modes of experiencing power are learned in succession, more or less in the order given, each depending on the successful experiencing of the earlier ones. Yet the earlier modes should remain available to provide the opportunity for a richer, more varied life. (p. 24)

He gives the example of a young man who appropriately develops Stage II behavior to break his dependence on his mother, then gets married and develops a new sense of personal power in a Stage I manner. When he plays tennis and talks politics he assumes Stage III competitive behavior, and in church he lives out the service orientation of Stage IV (p. 24).

These empirical studies on the power motive in the mid ’70s still have



relevance today in terms of reflecting on the extent to which a leader needs and desires power. New studies may be needed to re-contextualize these questions on the power motive to the exigencies of the contemporary situation. New modes of power orientation and action need to be observed. One such observation is that of imagining power as a potential pathology among leaders.

Power as pathology

Organization specialists Abraham Zaleznik and Manfred Kets de Vries (1985) wrote about the psychodynamics of leadership and power in organizations. They studied the phenomenon of leaders' using power not only constructively, but destructively as well. Unconscious motivation determines the actions and dispositions of leaders, and their positions can be used "as a stage for acting out their personal conflicts and insecurities" (p. xi). To study this unconscious motivation of leaders is to look into what Kets de Vries (1993) calls the leader's "intrapsychic theater." Clinical, psycho-analytical perspectives are used here:

People who aspire to power frequently operate on a borrowed ego, a corporate mind in place of a cohesive self and an awareness of who one is in the flow of history and time. Busily reaching for power, the individual attempts to cast off unacceptable self-images and remains divided and ill at ease. The orientation to power then becomes defensive, as a means for uniting a divided self and as a substitute for a sustaining ego ideal. (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985, p. vii)

The psychoanalytical lens can help in understanding how and why leaders deal with power. Early childhood experiences, relationships with parents and family, defining moments of identity and individuation—these and other factors influencing individual growth and development can assist in understanding the power dynamics within a leader's interior life. One factor that influences a leader's disposition toward power is the sense of individual potency, which is an attribute of leadership (Kets de Vries, 1993,



p. 16). This feeling of individual potency, or personal power, is nurtured through childhood experiences:

The degree of encouragement and frustration children experience as they grow up. . .has a lasting influence on their perception of themselves and others and the relationships they form throughout their lives. Any imbalance between their feelings of helplessness and the degree of protective nurturing they receive from their parents will be felt as a psychological injury. . .[and] will feed their natural sense of impotence. . .they will commonly respond with feelings of rage, a desire for vengeance, a hunger for personal power, and compensatory fantasies of omnipotence. This dynamic continues throughout life, and if it is not adequately resolved within individuals as they grow up, it is likely to be reactivated with devastating effect when they reach leadership positions and learn to play the game of power. (Kets de Vries, 1993, p. 16)

These psychological injuries render these individuals vulnerable to the pathologies of power and leadership. They develop narcissistic, grandiose, addictive, and compulsive patterns of behavior. They become power seekers, entering the arena of leadership and politics “to compensate for feelings of low self-esteem, unimportance, moral inferiority, weakness, mediocrity, and intellectual inferiority” (Post, 2004, p. 17). Greenleaf (1995) observes that common corruptions of power include personality distortion, arrogance, and impairment of imagination, or the sheer incapacity to form ideas and good judgment.

Leadership roles become the stage for acting out and reinforcing these personality disorders at the expense of others. The glitter and glamour of power and prestige blind them to their intoxication with and abuse of power. They sink into a spiral of ego-indulgence, self-perpetuation, and power arrogation, enacting Lord Acton’s dictum of absolute power corrupting absolutely. The world’s history of war, violence, and aggression is filled with leaders who have fallen into this pathological trap of power and leadership.



Power as being

The inner dynamics of personal power include many other things aside from looking at power as desire and as pathology. Power resides in the very constitution of the person: mind, body and spirit. Hence, to imagine power from within is to imagine the power inherent in these faculties of a person's being. Power has been described in such terms: power of intelligence and imagination, power of soul and spirit, power of character and charisma, power of emotion and empathy, power of values and vision. Extensive research shows how emotional intelligence can unleash powerful energies that build resonance in the practice of leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Power can thus be imagined as a reality that encompasses the totality of a person's being. Power is the ontological reality of *being* itself. Power is not nothingness. To possess power is to be. To be, or to exist, is to possess power. This metaphysical, ontological description of power has been proposed by Paul Tillich (1954), an influential twentieth-century theologian, in his classic book, *Love, Power and Justice*. For Tillich, power is most fundamental to love and justice, "since being itself is the 'power of being,' a power ultimately identifiable as God" (Hinze, 1995, p. 187; Pasewark, 1993, pp. 245-246; Tillich, 1954, pp. 35-40). Power drives the essence of being, of reality as a whole—without which love and justice cannot exist. He calls for an integrated understanding of love, power and justice; a disconnected view of these three reduces love to pure emotion, and power and justice to compulsion (Tillich, 1954, p. 12).

Greenleaf (1977) lends credence to the same inner power of the person's being. The servant-leader's power originates from within. This power resides in the servant-leader's own humanity:

Servants, by definition, are fully human. Servant-leaders are functionally superior because they are closer to the ground—they hear things, see things, know things, and their intuitive insight is exceptional. Because of this they are dependable and trusted, they know the meaning of that line



from Shakespeare's sonnet: "They that have power to hurt and will do none. . . ." (p. 42)

Hence, Greenleaf shows that in the servant-leader's inner self is his or her "functional superiority" or power. This power includes distinctive qualities like intuition, empathy, acceptance, foresight, healing, creativity, and faith. The servant-leader has a "sense for the unknowable," and is able to "foresee the unforeseeable." This leader has a "feel for patterns" and is able to "listen *first*." These powers give leaders their "lead," as they are able to know with "discerning toughness" how to "go out ahead" and "show the way" to others.

Integrating Inner and Outer Power Dynamics: The Challenge of Reflection, Integration, and Servant-leadership

I have explored the inner and outer dynamics of power in leadership. In the "power without" perspective, power is situated in the leader's setting, which is socially constructed, heterogeneous, and diverse in its forms and manifestations. In the "power within" perspective, power is fulfilling a desire, motivation, and need in leaders. Unmanaged and uncontrolled, it becomes a pathology that makes for dysfunctional and destructive leadership. From an ontological perspective, power can be grasped as descriptive of the very constitution of human existence, as *being* itself.

Leaders are challenged to have both of these power perspectives: "power without," or *exteriority*, and "power within," or *interiority*. The sense of exteriority challenges the leader to know and comprehend the power dynamics of his or her environment and setting. Sociological and political tools of understanding are useful here. The sense of interiority challenges the leader to grasp and grapple with power within the self through psychological, philosophical, and spiritual frames of understanding. The leader needs *both* exteriority and interiority. Not to have one or the other leads to a limited view of power and reality that is bifurcated and



disjointed. A leader is called to attend to both internal and external realities, to both self and environment.

The challenge, however, goes beyond just *having* both perspectives, but also toward *integrating* both perspectives. The leader's tools and capacities are not only for awareness and analysis, but also for integration and action. Leaders have to make sense of power as manifested in complex structures of organization, society and culture, and integrate it with their personal psychology and spirit, within an equally complex reality of their interior life or self. We have glimpsed the complexity of these processes, and what is called for is a leadership that has the capacity to make sense of these through a process of reflection. Such reflective leadership would have the following characteristics: a deep understanding of the self, a relational view of power, and an inclination to work for change and transformation.

A deep self-understanding

The first challenge is a process of self-understanding among leaders. Leadership research has emphasized the need for self-awareness and understanding, as well as for other related themes like self-management and self-evaluation (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Yukl, 2002). Some leadership theories view the leader's values and principles as the very foundation of leadership (Covey, 1992; Greenleaf, 1977; O'Toole, 1996). Others call for a process of reflexive self-reflection on the very practice of leadership, a process which Heifetz (1994) calls "getting on the balcony" (p. 252). This habit of self-examination deepens self-knowledge, and increases capacity for the regulation and management of leaders' "hungers" and needs for "power and control, affirmation and importance, as well as intimacy and delight" (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002, p. 164). Such processes of deep self-understanding can integrate the dimension of power within the psyche and spirit:

As a precondition for acting on other people, the would-be leader must engage in self-reflection in order to heal the rifts within the psyche, tame



the urges of power and aggression. . . There is no greater need for self-understanding today than in the people who achieve positions of power. (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985, pp. xiii, xv)

Greenleaf's (1977) servant-leader develops such self-understanding by moving through life from two levels of consciousness. One is the actual, real world of activity, where the leader is "concerned, responsible, effective, value oriented." The other is on another level, where the leader is "detached, riding above it, seeing today's events, and seeing oneself deeply involved in today's events, in the perspective of a long sweep of history and projected into the indefinite future" (p. 26). This practice of detachment, withdrawal, and self-examination builds and clarifies values. It serves as "armor" against the stresses, uncertainties, and distractions of life situations. It safeguards the center and perspective of one's life, and provides constant grounding to what matters most: "Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener" (pp. 27-28).

A relational view of power

The second challenge is to have a relational view of power that integrates the internal and the external, the subjective and the objective, interiority and exteriority. According to process theologian Bernard Loomer (1976), relational power is the alternative to what he calls "unilateral or linear power":

Linear power is the capacity to influence, guide, adjust, manipulate, shape, control, or transform the human or natural environment in order to advance one's purposes. This kind of power is essentially one-directional in its working. . . [Relational power] is the ability both to produce and to undergo an effect. It is the capacity both to influence and be influenced by others. Relational power involves both a giving and a receiving. (Loomer, 1976, pp. 8, 17)

According to Loomer, linear power negates the relational context of



power. Linear power has dominated Western thought and culture, and its effect is dominance, competition, curtailment of power over the other, and inequality in the relationship. Relational power affirms the communal dimension of power, along with its values of mutuality, accountability, equality, and interdependence. These values imbue relational power with a stature of integrity, strength of character—it is, then, a power which redefines the notion of “size.” Loomer, as cited in Keller (1986), says,

By size I mean the stature of a person’s soul, the range and depth of his love, his capacity for relationships. I mean the volume of life you can take into your being and still maintain your integrity and individuality, the intensity and variety of outlook you can entertain in the unity of your being without feeling defensive or insecure. I mean the strength of your spirit to encourage others to become freer in the development of their diversity and uniqueness. I mean the power to sustain more complex and enriching tensions. I mean the magnanimity of concern to provide conditions that enable others to increase in stature. (p. 143)

The “stature” here may very well be the same “servant stature” Greenleaf (1977) envisions in leadership. The power of servant-leaders is gauged in terms of their “net influence” on our lives. The “net influence” may be neutral, or it may be one of enrichment, or one of diminishment. The servant stature enriches, rather than diminishing or depleting our lives (pp. 42-43). Servant-leaders enrich us by their sheer presence. This is where the relational power of the servant-leader comes from.

Leaders are thus challenged to reflect on power and re-imagine it in terms of relationships and community. To conceive of power this way is to see one’s self as deeply connected to one’s matrix of relationships. To imagine power this way is to see one’s self as integrated with, and accountable to, one’s environment, thereby magnified in spirit and love. Part of this integration and accountability is the openness to work for change and transformation, the third challenge.



A consciousness for change

A leader who reflects on her self and her environment realizes the necessity of change occurring both in her self or consciousness, and in her environment and culture. The process of change happens internally, within one's self and consciousness. Leaders can sort out their personal "power issues" (Horner, 1995)—their motives and desires for power, their psychological dispositions for potential misuse and abuse of it. Reflective leaders then become aware that power can be both a problem and a potential to them, an energy that can be both corruptive and constructive. Such awareness is the foundation for changing their consciousness toward power.

Externally, leaders reflect on their setting and see how power can be used as an instrument for domination and oppression, and also as a means for transformation and empowerment. In this aspect leaders are called to take the role of change agents, aware of and acting for necessary changes in the structures and systems of power that govern their environment at different levels: relationships, groups, organizations, societies, and cultures.

A type of change that is called for is that of moving from compulsion to "centeredness" in power, as proposed by Tillich (1954). Leaders with power, as we have seen, are prone to compulsion and corruption. This downfall, however, can be avoided through the discipline of being centered in power as being, as integral to the self. Concretely, this idea entails a process of "self-integration, self-creativity, and self-transcendence." Leadership facilitates this process of achieving centeredness:

For without the centeredness given by leadership, no self-integration and self-creation of a group would be possible. . . The leader represents not only the power and justice of the group but also himself, his power of being, and the justice implied in it. (Tillich, 1963, p. 82)

The challenge of changing both consciousness and culture is the ethical imperative of power in leadership. It inspires leaders to integrate not just their sense of power, but also their entire selves consisting of mind,



body, and spirit. It commits them to the work of transforming culture and society toward building relationships and communities of justice and love. These are the strivings that nurture a new, spiritual, and transformative sense of power among reflective leaders.

The Vision of Servant-Leadership

This picture of the reflective leader is integral to Greenleaf's (1977) vision of the servant-leader. The servant-leader embodies and integrates the aforementioned challenges of deep self-understanding, relational view of power, and consciousness for change. We can discern from this vision the essence and core of servant-leadership: leaders with the capacity for both interiority and exteriority, leaders who embrace the phenomenon of power as responsibility and service, and leaders who have the courage to face the imperative of personal and social transformation.

With these qualities, leaders not only will internalize the "servant stature" but also will be encouraged, and empowered to actually *lead*. This is the imperative of our times, as Greenleaf (1977) concludes in his seminal essay on servant-leadership:

The real enemy is fuzzy thinking on the part of good, intelligent, vital people, and their failure to lead, and to follow servants as leaders. . . *the enemy is strong natural servants who have the potential to lead but do not lead, or who choose to follow a non-servant*. They suffer. Society suffers. And so it may be in the future. (p. 45)

With a re-imagined, reinvented understanding of power in leadership, these leaders will choose to lead. They will be motivated, strengthened, and inspired to take on the cudgels of servant-leadership. They will lead from a platform that comes from within and flows toward the demands of change and transformation around us. These leaders will lead with integrity, authenticity, and spirituality.



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