

The Distinctiveness of The Steward Leader

Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns, the father of twentieth-century leadership theory, developed the Transformational Leadership theory. Burns sought to define effective leadership by making a distinction between transformation and change.

- Change is the product of transactional leadership brought about by an exchange of value. (facebook as an example)
- Transformation, on the other hand, is “a basic change in entire systems.”

This basic change comes through empowerment. According to Burns, “Instead of exercising power over people, transforming leaders champion and inspire followers.” The result is, “people can transform themselves.” This is done by reconnecting people to the fundamental values that define their society and shaping change or reframing those values. Burns writes that “transforming values lie at the heart of transforming leadership, determining whether leadership indeed can be transforming.” For transformation to take place, there must be a connection between leader and follower around a common need for a change according to their wants, discontents and hopes. Transformational leaders must be able to alter the world, not just the values of their people, and give them hope that their current condition can be transcended. [Rising above the current condition, things can be improved upon].

Leadership and the new science.

Building on Burns's work, Margaret Wheatley has provided a provocative and, in my opinion, very valuable conception of leadership by focusing on applying the changes in the science of physics to a rethinking of organizational life.

Wheatley dismisses the mechanistic view of human dynamics in favor of an organic view that understands that values and freedom of choice are stronger determining factors of human activity and, therefore, of organizational efficiency. Her work has far more implications for leadership than I can cover here, but we will benefit from making a modest investment of our time with her.

[The original Mechanistic physics understanding was that the connection between matter and energy was a fixed relationship; for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Quantum physics is the study of the behavior of matter and energy at the molecular, atomic, nuclear, and even smaller microscopic levels. In the early 20th century, scientists discovered that the laws governing macroscopic [larger] objects do not function the same in such small realms. But there are other factors involved.]

Wheatley paints a picture of effective leadership that is able to "dance" [or Flex and adjust] with the changes that are fundamental in an organization based on the change and flow of relationships. Such a leader provides freedom to his or her followers, believing that when people are freed, they will self-organize in ever more effective ways-a lesson learned from quantum physics. "All life lives off-balance in a world that is open to change. And all of

life is self-organizing. We do not have to fear uncertainty, nor do we have to approach change so fearfully.”

She goes on to warn us: "When leaders strive for balance and stability by imposing control, limiting people's freedom and preventing local change, they only create the conditions that threaten the organization's survival."

Only leaders who are free from the need to "strive for balance and stability can lead such a process. This is a further step from Burn's idea of transformational leadership, for here the change comes through the free interaction of the people in an changing relationship that is allowed to self-organize. It requires a leader who is comfortable with some uncertainty and free to allow this change to occur without any idea of where it is going or exactly how it will turn out. The leader's role is to communicate and implant the values of the organization, so that as it navigates its way through chaotic times, it has these values set as its guide.

When challenges come, it can be difficult to believe that clear principles are sufficient. ... but, we will see that the strength of our organizations is maintained if we maintain clarity about the purpose and direction of the organization. When things become chaotic, this clarity keeps us on course.

Wheatley describes the role of the leader in the midst of this chaos. “In this messy world, we need leaders. But We don't need bosses. We need leaders to help us develop the clear identity that lights the dark moments of confusion. We need leaders to support us as we learn how to live by our values. We need leaders to understand that we are best controlled by concepts that invite our participation, not policies and procedures that limit our contribution.”

Wheatley continues: “The leader's task is first to embody these principles, and then to help the organization become the standard it has declared for itself. This work of leaders cannot be reversed, or either step ignored.

The embodiment of principles is the highest calling of a leader, according to Wheatley. We will see, unfortunately, that she offers no normative [Standard] source for these principles. At best they flow from a humanistic belief in the basic goodness of humanity. This is a fatal flaw that ultimately undermines so much of the good work Wheatley has done. However, I don't want to miss her incredibly helpful construct of an organization as fundamentally relational, evolving and held together by unseen forces.

Servant Leadership.

Servant Leadership, as espoused by its framer Robert Greenleaf, is a philosophy of leadership that many have attempted to quantify into lists of characteristics that range from four to eleven, depending on who you read. These include (1) altruistic calling: the decision to serve others above self, (2) emotional healing: a readiness to listen and to respond to bring about emotional/spiritual recovery, (3) wisdom: an awareness of one's surroundings and an ability to see the coming together of multiple factors, (4) persuasive mapping: seeing the big picture and inspiring others to journey toward them, and (5) organizational stewardship: care of the organization and its assets to build the greater good.

According to Greenleaf, servant leadership "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then intentional choice brings one to aspire to lead. "The difference between servant-first and leader-first styles of

leadership is "the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served."

Servant leaders are distinguished as well by their tendency to seek solutions to the problems of the world by looking first "in here" inside oneself, and then out there." Servant leaders seek personal change before they seek to change circumstances around them. Greenleaf admits that there is no way to tell who is a servant and who is not. Yet he concludes that the only thing that counts is that "able servants with the potential to lead will lead".

- Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- ...there must be a connection between leader and follower around a common need for a change according to their wants, discontents and hopes. What is the common need that could be addressed by Pathway?
- ...must be able to alter the world, not just the values of their people... Why is only transforming a persons values not enough?
- The embodiment of principles is the highest calling of a leader, according to Wheatley. We will see, unfortunately, that *she offers no normative [Standard] source* for these principles. What is the danger here for Christians?
- "the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served." Again, what is lacking here from the Christian perspective.

Romans 12:3-8, 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:12, 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Philippians 2:12-16, 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.