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The Human Art of Leading *A Foreshadow to the Potentiating Movement of Leadership Studies¹*

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In the pages to follow we intend to reveal a potentiating way of leading – to reveal the nature of the *potential leader*. Through this way of *being* the *potentiator* serves to reveal and catalyze the actualization of others while simultaneously actualizing their own innate abilities.. At the core of this potentiating way of leading, this way of *being*, is the belief that creativity and the act of creating are sacred to the human condition; that spirituality is a birthright that holds the soulfulness of possibility shaped by our innate need to create and to be creative; and, that empowerment is a growing inward force of creativity dedicated to the full actualization and expression of human potential.



Deeply rooted in Western philosophy, current and historical models of leadership, while well researched and well intended, too often leave the leader with a haunted wanting and treat the follower as a product to be consumed rather than a potential to be actualized. Creativity is too often not celebrated in such efforts—rather out of fear, it is discouraged. Human potential suffers as creativity is dismissed or is threatened by the ruthless metrics of failure. With these attitudes and measuring sticks we effectively crush the creative way of being for both leader and follower and in the process arrest the growth of human potential within the individual and society. Creativity, spirituality, and empowerment form an inseparable triad that is foundational to a potentiating way of leading. They form and represent the enlivening force common to our innate potential. They are made from *goodness* and together they reveal a *transcendent* intention. Creativity, spirituality, and empowerment are central to the nature of the *potentiating arts*. Collectively they embody and inform the human art of leading.

The notion that potentiating leadership is more an art than a science must be addressed. Foremost in this discussion is the central premise of potentiating leadership as a proactive force over being a reactive one. As this paper unfolds we will demonstrate how historically leadership has been largely a reactive science. Leadership has betrayed its name by almost always following social demands, opportunities, and/or challenges. Over the decades, the purpose of leadership evolved in response to the way society itself evolved. The great ages of leadership each held a unique purpose. The Great Man movement focused upon the leader, the Behavioral movement focused upon leading, and the Transformative movement focused on leadership. These focuses themselves were developed on the heels of the needs of society; The Great Man movement evolved as the society required leaders to explore its frontiers and its possibilities, the Behavioral movement evolved as the industrial revolution required leading men and women in the pursuit of mass production, and the Transformative movement evolved as technology and information required building relationships and social networks.

There was and is a science to these leadership movements designed to address the purpose at hand. Furthermore the types of leadership held by these historical movements are still required today as we continue to need leaders, leading, and leadership. Yet central to the next great age of leadership is the notion of the meta-purpose of fully actualizing the human potentials on the field. We hold that society is still evolving and what is required today is not a reactive modality of leadership science but a proactive movement held by what we are calling the potentiating arts. These “arts” are about creativity, spirituality, and empowerment as a rich and powerful dynamic. Finally and central to this movement, this evolution, they are represented as a set of human practices that will ultimately gain society harmony and stability that will open wide explorations into transcendent life purposes.

As we reveal the nature of potentiating leadership as an emerging force the simplest definition for our purposes would define it as *the leadership of human potential*. To this we would add that potentiating leadership embodies a deeper purpose when leading (potentiating) that is represented by engendering an ethical approach towards the full actualization of human potential. From that perspective potentiating leadership forms a moral imperative that is directly supported and informed by creativity, spirituality, and empowerment. Potentiating leadership engages us in relationships of human potential as we collectively seek the wisdom of a synergistic society. To further understand this emerging force within leadership studies it is helpful to first introduce the nature of these potentiators and second the potentiating practices they engage.

The Potentiator

The nature of potentiating leadership presents an opportunity to evolve a new approach to leading that is embodied by a life guiding philosophical stance. It is this potentiating stance that would reveal the practices they engage and therefore the very nature of the potentiator. In observing the qualities we have seen and felt it became clear to us that these potentiators are self aware. We came to understand that they are able to hold space for acts of potentiation for themselves and others by way of an opening awareness, a welcoming acceptance, an ability to sustain attention, and through setting their intentions on the full actualization of human potential. Potentiators are forever open to learning. As they engage the relationship they ask; “What have you come to teach me?” They are expert listeners, not solely because of discipline and practice, but also due to a deep seated curiosity so present in a life of potential. Potentiators are able to suspend the vector and velocity of their daily activities and thoughts. This means they act on the urgency of the moment – the urgency does not act on them. Their integrity is contagious. They are mindful of their interactions as they understand the nature of human evolution—potentiators understand that we are all self-evolving. They understand that when something evolves everything around it evolves as well. Potentiators adapt themselves to the world and are able to accommodate the evolving gifts of others. They maintain an elegant prejudice. Their super optimism and vision for the full actualization of potential grants them a peace that stems from a belief in the infinite potential for goodness held by the human ecology. Potentiators, as Maslow (1968) would say, approach life with a “second naiveté” or hold the world with an “innocent eye”. They understand as did Socrates that “wisdom begins with wonder” (Hamilton, 1943, p. 100).

In revealing the nature of the potentiating arts and the potentiating paradigm of the potentiator we begin to reveal a different approach to leading, teaching, and parenting. This is an approach that holds the potential of everyone as sacred and possible. It shifts the focus of how we approach leading, teaching, and parenting. We come to a deeper understanding of Robert Frager’s appeal: “It is a greater sin to injure the heart of another human being than to harm one of the earth’s holy places” (Frager, 1999, p. 24). In our searches for human potential we began to understand that if we as teachers continually see our job predominately as the transmission of information (knowledge/skills); or, if we as parents persist in seeing our job predominately as raising (growing/sustaining) our children towards adulthood; or, if we as leaders see our job predominately as a task (objective/goal) to be achieved, then we will consistently mistake important but minor undertakings for our greatest purpose. And then, within this shallow and incomplete approach to teaching, parenting, and leading, we will leave all hope; the very way of seeking and actualizing the greatest potentials of those placed in our stewardship—to chance.

The Potentiating Arts

At first glance it would be easy to assume that the ideal of the potentiating leadership is represented by a fairly high and perhaps rare stage of human development. We want to encourage a different perspective concerning the nature of these potentiators that is in-of-itself potentiating in its purpose. The potentiator embodies a way of being in the world that can be best understood through the practices they keep. The way of the potentiator is not necessarily associated with some distant or farther growth stage accomplishment. Mostly, we would represent the potentiator as someone who holds the will to believe in the possible person with a willingness to engage that possibility. What this signals to anyone wishing to embrace this way of leading, teaching, and parenting is that the way of the potentiator is about practice coupled with the will to believe. Said more directly, this way of being is about faith in action. Therefore, this way of being is within the reach of ordinary people. It's about good people who are full of wonder.

As we unpack the notion of potentiating leadership we examined human growth path theories and various ages of societal development in concert with the evolution of leadership studies. As our inquiry began to reveal what we are calling the next great age of leadership several epiphanies materialized. First and foremost was that once the wellbeing domain, the balance among spiritual, emotional, and functional aspects concerning human growth and development, emerged it became clear to us that this was not at all a stage function, but rather a practice or a set of practices. These practices seemed available to anyone willing to engage the emotional, spiritual, and functional aspects of seeking their highest self. It really did not seem critical to our thinking whether these individuals were metamotivated, self-actualized, or working through lower level deficiency needs (Maslow, 1971). What did appear critical to wellbeing was that they were centered upon a generative awareness, liberating acceptance, calming presence, and a creative intention.

The second epiphany was that leadership science is actually a lagging indicator of societal developments. With the clarity generated by taking a macro look at these developments followed by their corresponding leadership theories it became apparent that three great ages of leadership have preceded this current age. These ages could aptly be called the Great Man Age, the Behavioral Age, and the Transformational Age (Rost, 1993). To be sure there were smaller movements held within or between these great ages of leadership yet these three seemed to hold the central pillars of the evolutionary thought surrounding leadership studies. Although distinct in their responses to societal trends these three ages share common Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical underpinnings. These underpinnings specified how human beings interact with other humans and the natural world. In other words, they formed the axiology of leadership science. With the inhabitability of the planet in question, leaders in the next age must learn to become proactive rather than reactive; they must learn to shed their post-modern views and adopt a new way of relating and managing. Engaging the potentiating arts holds a direct address to this purpose.

These new ways of relating and managing are centered upon that place where the potentiator's perception greets the possibility of this day. Potentiators tend to not lock on to some momentary truth constructed only from what they can perceive as if it were some point of arrival or as a final destination. Truth for them is fluid, emerging and malleable. What is real for them is the potential that might be revealed by employing these malleable truths towards a greater understanding and appreciation of the actualizing soul. They seem more interested in the opportunities for learning than in demonstrations of knowing. As such, they naturally embrace the practices that allow the space for the full actualization of human potential to occur. They appear to hold a grand honesty that understands that everyone is searching for their greatest potential no matter how lost they currently appear or how far they currently have come. The journey remains the same—we are all seeking our greatest potential.

Again we are not speaking here to some developmental process whereby we grow in a measurable fashion toward higher and higher states of consciousness that would yield yet again another personal accomplishment. We are not practicing to become potentiators—a *stage we reach*. We are potentiators practicing the potentiating arts—a *practice we keep*. It is not some later stage of development—it is a way of being. It is a choice and not something that happens by chance. This practice is as alive, real and potentiating as is its intention to

potentiate. In the following pages we will reveal five integrated practices of the potentiator. It is a journey of sorts through the potentiating arts via the practice of deep understanding, critical reflection, maturity, integrity and eco-unity. It is a journey along some upward and possible way of being in this world. Along this upward way we will discover the elegance of possible people.

Eco

As previously stated, a central discovery towards the reveal of the next great age of leadership was that leadership science tended to follow societal trends. The three prior great ages followed distinct shifts in society—expansion, industry, and technology. What is the shift that is occurring now, today, that is driving up the next great age and therefore the demand for the next age leader—the potentiator? Stepping back from our ecological focus we considered the economic aspects that were, in effect, diminishing so much human potential. What does leadership purpose in such moments? How does it build capacity? How does it build relationships? How does it build community? We asked the typical ecological questions—the capacity building, effectiveness generating, process centered, and asset mapping questions. Balance escaped our purpose. As always it seemed impossible to solve the energy equation. We had missed or ignored the economical questions—the sustainability yielding, efficiency generating, product centered, and needs assessment questions.

When we first began to consider the economy and the ecology together the first thing that struck our attention was the common prefix—*Eco*. *Eco*—means house and we discovered that economy and ecology flew out of the nest together. Economics concerns itself with household management, while ecology refers to household relationships. Therefore, ecology took on the environmental aspect while economics took on a managerial aspect. It should be noted that it is only in the modern use of the term that such a separation was warranted as environmental focuses became louder. Economics' original definition as household management later broadened into the management of resources (stewardship – ecology) and as a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Simultaneously, ecology, which originally meant house habitation, became known as the science or study of the interrelationships between organisms and their environment. Human ecology is to be named the interrelationship between human beings and their environment. *Eco* is the house, the container, Gaia. It would follow then that the human art of leading would by sheer necessity honor the *Eco* in its entirety. It would hold the being in relationships (ecology/capacity) and energy in balance (economy/sustainability) as a central flow. *Eco* would hold the heart of this connection through seeking the equilibrium found through harmony and stability. The potentiator, potentiating arts, potentiating paradigm, potentiating leadership...the human art of leading are nestled within the *eco*. It is in essence *Eco-Leadership*.

Figure 1 below is one we will return to time and time again in our work. Ideally, the diagram harmoniously balances ecology and economics or relationships and management. Unfortunately, the current Western model is out-of-balance and heavily weighted on the economics side. Those who attempt to add weight to the ecology side often do so by managing relationships or forcing the ecology into economy. *Eco-Leadership*, in its simplest form, is about the potentiator creating harmony and stability through engaging the potentiating arts. Living, leading, and learning on purpose are achieved when the flows become balanced. Product and process harmonize; efficiency and effectiveness stabilize each other; transactions needed for sustainability are made reasonable by relational transformations; the ability to adapt and accommodate are made clearly possible and artful, as needs and assets are seen as a continuum as the energy of relationships and energy in balance gain their equilibrium. *Eco-Leadership* presents the best conditions under the best of intentions for the fullest expression of human potential.

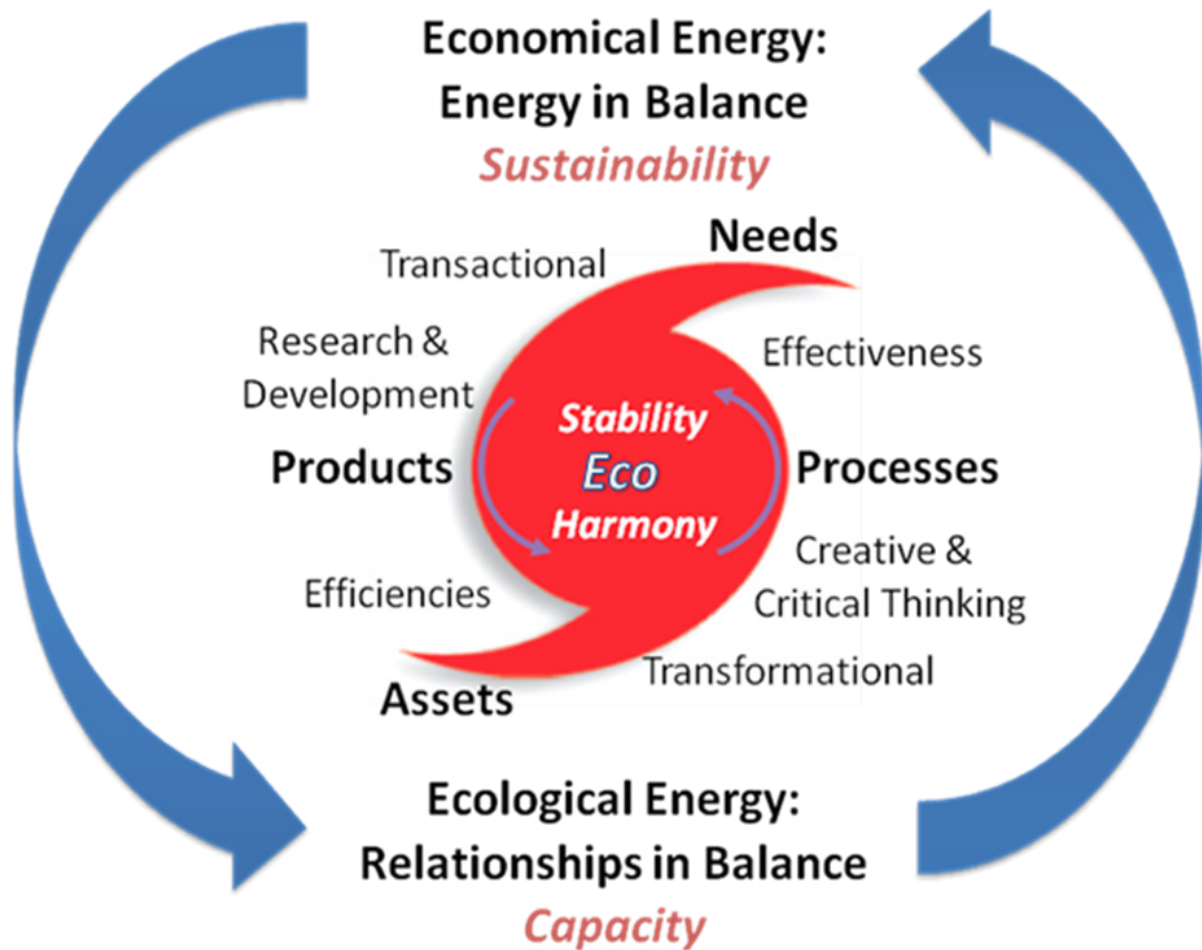


Figure 1: *The Energy Balances of Eco-Leadership*

The Potential Leader

When we first considered a nomenclature for this reveal we considered the nature of *Homo sapiens* in general. The translation from the Latin means *Wise man*. As we then considered this *sapient leader* (wise leader) it struck us, by simple extension, how similar this was to Plato's Philosopher Kings (Bloom, 1969). To that end we nearly fell into the abyss of epistemology – the one we had and will continually try to bridge. We could have made a truth about these leaders – they are wise. Catching our balance, we looked deeply at this notion of the wise leader and asked why we would or should focus on the wise or the way of wisdom? To that we wondered—What was it that made them wise; and further, is being wise another epistemology or was it indeed a way of being? We won't pretend to solve this riddle but we do offer our way across the abyss. For us what made the wise *wise* was not only their love of wisdom—*philosophy*, but also their love of learning—*philomathy*. This was the way of our potentiator—they were certainly wise in a very pragmatic and elegant way, yet what gave them balance was their ability to give it away through engaging another in an ongoing dynamic of learning. Again, they understood, as did Socrates, that *wisdom begins with wonder*. They knew that the way to their greatest potential could not be revealed by standing like Sophist statues on pedestals of accomplishment; they knew that real wisdom was about engaging the world, the other, Providence, and their own unique gifts of potential. They yielded to us a Socratic reality: *It is not about the knowing, it is about the learning*. Potentiators are always willing and ready to learn.

Perspective Taking

Take a deep breath...and another... Look upon this work of Claude Monet with an artist's intent...



Step back...and breathe...look again.

Perspective taking is an interesting human encounter. Trained as we tend to be our imposing logic would have us pull art apart...and life...as a way towards knowing, knowledge and truth. Microscopes have their uses for exploring and exploiting the elements of a thing—for understanding the usefulness of the parts of a thing. Yet sometimes, many times, that view is not useful and can actually produce a hindrance or great harm. Sometimes stepping in denies the greater possibility and as a result misses or denies any real value of a thing or person. In terms of really understanding the evolving nature of leadership studies and its relationship to the gifts of human potential a macro-scope, *stepping back*, would appear to be a much more gentle and useful tool.

Many who have told the leadership story have done so from the perspective of science. This ultimately generates an oversimplification of the nature of leadership and positions leadership as an object—a thing we dissect. We pull leadership apart. What truth about leadership does this tactic produce? In relationship to the full actualization of human potential dissecting the nature of leadership would appear to reveal very few good human purposes. The science of leadership would give us policy, procedures, rules...a static and sterile approach to leading where the bottom line is not so much about people as it is about products of our processes. As a result the science of leadership produced a story of evolutionary failure as one by one the theoretical movements of leadership study are dismissed and replaced by the latest tactic and technique aimed at product and process efficiency. The story of leadership would become a linear progression of what did not work. The microscope failed us. It was the wrong tool. We needed to change our perspective; we needed to *step back...and look again*.

The holistic and creative act of stepping back can be understood by studying the art form of Claude Monet. A traditional approach of a product centered society in studying this art form (our problem to fix) would be to begin reducing it by questioning the process. We might ask scientifically, how does Monet blend colors, brush strokes, and vision to obtain this art form? “At first glance, Claude Monet’s paintings seem rather superficial, a rendering of ephemeral effects of light under diverse weather conditions: sunlight on water, a

breeze stirring the poplar trees, fogs in London, and morning, noon and evening light on Rouen Cathedral or haystacks” (Swinglehurst, 1994, p. 5). So we step forward with our tools looking closely at the truth of our descriptive problem—the truth of the art before us.

Stepping in we can see brush strokes, the pigments of reds, blues, greens and strokes of straight lines and swirls. As we look closer yet we see the texture of the paint, the categories of color, more brush strokes and the texture of the canvass. Moving ever closer we begin to deduce strategies on how to reproduce these combined features, on the microscopic level, in order to reproduce the same quality of the painting. Art becomes reduced to how color affects texture and how brush strokes come together to create the illusion of “haystacks”.

We would wonder, given such an approach, what beauty we are left with upon completing our dissection. How are we now better for all our efforts to pull the art apart? What was the purpose of these efforts... was it efficiency, reproduction, imitation...? Efficiency, given our microscopic perspective, appears logical; and yet from the foundation of creativity, spirituality, and empowerment this reproduction seems shallow and hollow all the while imitation becomes insufferable. We hold the same issues with the science of leadership in that it tends to pull potential apart and in the process becomes very inhumane and/or dehumanizing. It would seem this act of dissecting, of pulling things apart, actually dismisses creativity, spirituality and empowerment while elevating commonness, desecration, and control.

The strategy generated from *stepping in* adequately and quantitatively deduces the mechanics of Claude Monet. What it fails to do is illuminate the intricacies of the observers as they interact with the art. It fails to participate in discussions with others as they express their own feelings about the art form. It fails to question the phenomenon of interest to see if it is missing depth or to search within others in hopes of finding clues to its meaning—to share the beauty of the art. It fails the art itself. It fails at creating any meaningful understanding of the complete beauty of art. It is artless.

Step back and look again...

To gain the necessary depth and insight for revealing a potentiating way of leading we learn and embrace the discipline of stepping back to observe the greater environment. With this we establish a sense of wonder that is required in any authentic approach to human potential. When one steps back and appreciates the art form of Monet, not only do we gather a focus from the whole, but we also see others observing the art form, we see light and shadows, as well as multiple complex and delightful diversities of viewpoints. When we step back we begin to take in the living pulse of a human ecology. The science of the art form is still present within this greater vista yet it is the art of the art we now embrace. From the art of the art we find something deeper and much more meaningful—something real. In this way our potential becomes real—we become real. *Step back...*

As we considered the ‘art of the art’ of leadership studies we stepped back and looked again. It revealed to us a different story emerging from the histories of leadership. It revealed the evolving nature of leadership studies. It revealed the human art of leading.

The Art and History of Leadership

In 1991 the late Joseph Rost revealed what he called the leadership for the twenty-first century. What he was primarily reacting to was the steady, if not somewhat circuitous, evolution of leadership studies. He exposed an evolving post-industrial model of leadership emerging within the field of leadership studies that was grounded in what he termed *influence relationships*. What he celebrated and illuminated was the notion that leadership was a relationship between leaders and those who would follow. From personal conversations and from further writings it became clear to us that Rost’s own thinking on leadership as a relationship evolved much faster than the field in general. He appeared to grow more and more uncomfortable with this leader/follower label and began knocking at ways in which this situational and hierarchical relationship could

be viewed in a more stable and holistic fashion. At the center of this tension, held by this leader/follower dichotomy, was the word “influence”. Rost, however, seemed to focus his attention on the limiting notion and bias given to the word “follower” and attempted to change the meaning of follower to something that held less connotations of ‘power over’ and more towards ‘power with’. From our perspective today he was treating a symptom without drilling into the root of the problem. “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Rost, 1991, p. 102).

Having the benefit of hindsight it would seem the field of leadership studies in general took off on this ‘influence relationship’ and changed transformational leadership into a leader-in-relationships model over what we felt Rost was really knocking at—the notion of leadership as a *transforming* relationship. The word “influence” changed everything; this is particularly true as you consider the field in general was raising on the ramparts this leader-in-relationships banner. In an instant it turned the transformational leadership movement into an epistemology, a truth, a science... a tool and in the process left behind the possibility of *transforming* leadership as a way of being. It locked out the possibility of leadership becoming about the possibilities held by creativity, spirituality and empowerment in relationships of human potentials. It left behind the notion that leadership might become a potentiating art—a human art. We wonder what would have happened to the art of leadership had Rost’s wonderful definition of leadership been changed ever so slightly: leadership is the human art of *potentiating the relationships* between the *potentiator* (leaders, teachers, parents...) and those seeking the actualization of their unique potential (associates, students, children...) who collectively intend to build a *synergistic society*.

Transformational Leadership

In order to give context to Rost’s *influence relationships* leadership theory the following is a brief recent history of leadership studies. The predominant types of transformative leadership in the early 1990’s were represented by Robert Greenleaf’s (1977) model of *Servant Leadership* at one pole and Bernard Bass’s (1985) organizational models on the other. Greenleaf saw the role of leadership as a way to serve the greater good while Bass focused upon the organization itself. In other words, Greenleaf was focused upon the individual as leader while Bass was focused upon the leader within the organization. Collectively transformational leadership has been the predominate leadership movement for the past two decades.

The transformational movement of leadership studies was really born to the world in 1978 when James MacGregor Burns revealed the notion that leadership, at its best, is a transformational process of leaders and followers that raises each to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Leadership is the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978, p. 425).

Leadership was seen as a relationship or referring to Figure 1, ecology was seen as an integral process involving people (leaders and followers), their values, and resources (natural, economic, and political) all competing on some local to global scale. In some ways this theoretical movement is the result of managerial science being unable, after 50 years of interventions, to uncover the holistic nature of leadership. Management is capable of good science and resource efficiency (resources included human beings), but it could not explain the values and aesthetics of leadership, the acts within relationships that include the essential goodness of Greenleaf’s servant model and the intangibles of leadership that now seem to describe and reveal some spiritual or sacrosanct attributes of great leadership. Management science held the microscope. Yet, stepping back, it was the latter descriptors of *essential goodness* that seemed to allow for effectiveness to bloom within these potentiating relationships without necessarily eroding efficiency.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, missed this holistic opportunity mostly because it had become blinded by its own firmly entrenched epistemological process. Leadership was seen more as a concept, a

truth, and therefore was treated somewhat as a ‘fixed’ cost of business, no matter the nature of the business to include all those working in the potentiating arts—leaders, teachers and parents. Leadership became what you did to another in order to gain the goal in mind which was usually geared toward higher and higher levels of achievement and production all slanted in such a way as to seem as if it were *for our own good*. In the end the varieties of transformational leadership became as plentiful as the ecologies from which they emerged. The nature of leadership became diluted and permissive over being empowering and potentiating. All because of one word “influence”.

Taken from the perspective of “what was learned” the transformational movement of leadership studies opened the door towards developing a greater understanding of the ecological aspects of leadership to include the nature of a human ecology or community. It reaffirmed the requirements of the product needs of the community, established the criteria for the processes that would enhance that product development, and quite unexpectedly revealed a third component critical to the development of a holistic theory of leadership, that of participation—held by that leader-in-relationship notion. The transformational movement of leadership studies made it clear that without followers or citizens participating in the process of leadership, leadership itself become nothing more than a myth – non-existent. We learned that effective potentiating relationships are paramount to understanding the nature of leadership as it relates to the human ecology. “Leadership studies itself will be transformed” (Rost, 199, p.187).

The Next Score

The diligent efforts of Joseph Rost and other transformational theorists provided leadership studies with some great music throughout the 1990’s. It really set us upon the pathway towards discovering and writing the next score in the evolution of leadership studies. Leadership within these transformative confines was seen as a transformational process. Burns (1978) directed our attention to the process of leadership; Bass (1985) contributed to our understanding of the product of leadership; Greenleaf (1977) reminded us of the necessity of service in relationships of leadership; and finally Rost (1991) merged these leadership notions and considered the nature of influence relationships in leadership. Collectively their concepts converged upon a commonality of purpose and differ only by the direction of their method. As the discovery and exploration of leadership development continues to unfold it becomes critical to continually emphasize and consider the histories from which it emerged. The debate has brought us to the threshold of a new and emerging way of being a leader, of leading, and of the nature of leadership. The transformational theoretical movement of leadership studies opened the possibilities of gaining insight into the nature of human interaction. We arrived at the gate of a holistic theory where an integration of volumes of leadership thought present us the next opportunity for discovery.

The Emotional Pause

Given the weight of transformational theories one could have predicted the backlash against transformational leadership because of its inability to escape its epistemologies—the single truth approach is and always will be a problem to real people. It transformed itself into something less than a human art born on the ecology side of the “Eco” diagram (Figure 1). Instead it became product centered science based in economics. As time moved on these constructs (truths concerning the nature of leadership) began to seem more and more weighty and out of touch. We began seeing the heavy propositions of manipulation, deception, intimidation, and coercion showing up in the approaches of leaders all dressed up as “influence relationships” and often taking the form of “I am doing this for your own good”. Yet it was never about goodness as it always seemed to be about controlling our innate needs to express our creativity, embrace our spirituality, and to engender our own sense of empowerment. While these heavy propositions were largely something a leader did to a follower their affect was like a smothering avalanche to the full actualization of human potential. The human community suffered. In addition, as leaders modeled the way using these heavy propositions, we found that followers will do as leaders do, students will do as teachers do, children will do as parents do—these “influence relationships” and the use of the heavy propositions became acceptable and cultural.

As it was quantified and measured, the human ecology became heavy. These transformational theories were attempting to force the ecological flow into the economic model dominant in the West. Conflict erupted immediately and polarization grew as the eco was shattered. This shattering should not come as a surprise. In general, beings resist objectification. As philosopher Martin Buber posited, a great crime of modernity was the expansion of purely analytic, material view of existence that transforms beings into concepts. In contrast, true I-Thou relationships are not managed; they are open, authentic and actualize universality (Buber, 1957). Using Buber's "I-Thou" relationship as an ideal for the ecology we see that while ecology and economics share a common root "eco" they are distinct. Leadership in the ecology demands a release of control; or an honoring of being. In contrast, control is necessary in economics. We can control the energy flows of economics not the relationship.

As we began to consider the growth of human potential within these leadership systems we initiated calling them a "set-up" to inevitable failure. It destined the individual leader, and therefore those being led, for a horrible if not fatal crash of a potential lost. It all begins with Burn's transformative motivations, which were easily corrupted into a variety of manipulations. We attract human resources (potential) into our organizations, motivate them to contribute their very best to the purpose of the organization and then push them to ignite and move the organization forward. Yet always there remains a ceiling constructed from uncertainty, the limitations of our current metrics, and revered traditions that inflict restrictions on thought and creativity. These entrenched paradigms bring with them the baggage of fear; fear of the unknown, fear of challenges to our position, fear of change, and the fear of being wrong.

While we desire fully actualizing potentials within our workplaces, schools, and homes we seem unable at the same time to tolerate their unique greatness. What do you do with a fully actualizing potential when in the process of its development it shatters its container? Their unique potentials would bend our rules, push our truths toward uncertainty or debunk them completely. These budding potentials would have us open our minds and hearts to learn more, to become fully present. And they would break apart our hierarchal understandings in order to create a flow that would place the actualization of potential as the greater part of process and product generation. The hierarchal model is after all hierarchal—leaders lead and followers follow; someone is always on top and someone is always at the bottom—human potential therefore remains imprisoned. The epistemologies of leadership only allow a certain level of risk, adventure, and originality as defined by whatever level of greatness the individual leader has achieved. After giving one's *soul* to the organization, we realize too late that our capacity for that next move, that next musical score, is, and will continually be, just out of reach. We reach out nonetheless and what we pull back is always the same: *no creating beyond this truth.* "

The Epistemologies of Leadership

As a result of making leadership a truth about the bottom-line, we watched as the literature of leadership studies wandered around these transformational epistemologies for over a decade. One study simply repeating another with the only real improvements being a better razor for cutting out the human widgets required to feed the leadership machine. We knew at the time that this eviscerating approach to leadership by the simple reflex necessity of survival would open the doors towards a more emotional, personal, heartfelt or axiological construct for leadership—a personal rescue. It became apparent to us from our own biographies that as the individual comes to realize the crushing implications of a transformational way of leading and being led they would begin seeking other ways in which they as individuals could at the very least rescue their own potential.

These axiological approaches held the notion that once I 'the leader' secured my own rescue I could then approach the role of leadership from a position of personal strength and health. From the transformational perspective it was like preventive maintenance. The science of leadership saw this emotional pause as a tactic and an opportunity to get more out of their human resources by way of creating and encouraging the 'super-leader'. The art of leadership, on the other hand, saw this as a way towards personal immanence and transcendence. The super-leader, the scientist, reengaged with these new manipulative tools and soared much

higher before crashing down harder and more destructively than before, corrupting many human potentials, including their own, along the way. The artist, on the other hand, simply checked out not wishing to bear the burden of leadership and began searching for a personal salvation.

The evidence is such that we believe we are already seeing these emotional, personal, and individualistic approaches to leadership in the forms of emotional leadership, resonant leadership, positive leadership and primal leadership. In the context of Ken Wilber's four quadrant model as it applies to leadership, all of these movements signal a return to the individual as a direct rebuke to these collective epistemologies that negated, in the end, our real possibilities—our greatest potential. What we would offer here in the spirit of balance is just how ill equipped the beauty of the individual, which is held sacred in these axiologies, is to address a prevailing and dominate truth informed by the heavy epistemologies of leadership. Truth (it), perched at the top of the hierarchical ladder, will by its very nature inform, reform, deform the nature of beauty—it will crush beauty. “I” (the subject) cannot bear “it” (the object) and “We” the relationship are lost (Wilber, 1995).

We are quite certain that while these emotional movements were predictable they are not sustainable on their own and that as leadership scholars we need now consider the next theoretical movement of leadership studies that can bridge the gap between our personal excellences and our collective needs.

The Theoretical Movements of Leadership Studies

How do we approach this gap? How do we become bridge builders? As we fully believe that history is always evolving, we felt certain that if we *stepped back* and took a wider look at the histories of the field that we would see order emerging from disorder. We were searching for a pattern. At first we took a simple path and began researching and connecting the various historical movements of leadership studies. What materialized is shown in Table 1.

While we gained a great deal of understanding from this exercise it left us with more questions than answers. Our first real ‘aha’ moment materialized as it became apparent to us why certain theoretical movements were so important during the time they were practiced. Consider, for example, the whole of the Great Man Theory. The genesis of this theory, created by Plato's Philosopher King, was that great men shaped the world. Greatness was preordained and exclusive (Bloom, 1968, 473d). This theory was the most widely accepted view of leadership until around 1930 and we have felt its absence in our leaders as the century turned. Often left unmentioned was the environment presented to many of the great leaders of the time. Studies were often conducted on royalty or people of privilege who showed a dramatic propensity for leading as compared to the general population. Perhaps leadership, in this movement, is the beneficiary of good environments stemming from influences of wealth, opportunity, education, and position that somehow produced great leaders.

Although the Great Man Theory proved to be unworkable by the 1930's as the pressures of World War and financial strife pushed for more democratic and productive explanations it still has great relevance. Consider for example the leader who can capture the imagination of the masses, the hero who can make us swell with pride, the leader who brightens our dim world. We need great men and women regardless of their heritage.

The Great Man Theory serves as a beginning point for the evolution of leadership thought. Much of the leadership literature suggests that this theory was unworkable, elitist, egotistical, and aristocratic. At this time, according to many who have told the leadership story, social psychologists, among others, began searching for a more egalitarian approach. Our own deduction is that this thinking is a bit too simplistic and demeaning to many of our great and noble leaders. The attractiveness of the Great Man Theory still has its place today; we need great leaders. It is the nature of these great leaders that needs to be revealed. In retrospect, logic suggests that two theoretical movements began at about the same time to address the then seen weaknesses of the Great Man Theory; the Trait Theory to begin cataloging the ingredients of the great leader and the Group Theory in rebuttal to the great man. In any case they both have their roots in this theoretical movement.

Great Man Theory	Great men shape the world. The theory simply stated that great men (and some women) were born into leadership and that it is a quality that is heritable.
Group Theory	This theoretical movement states that all individuals contribute to the leadership process. It was a very democratic and egalitarian theory. The group leader or facilitator was seen as the key to effectiveness.
Trait Theory	This theory stated that leaders have certain traits that, if understood, could be taught, or, through conditioning, developed. The trait theory fragmented the nature of leadership to the point that it became vague and incomprehensible.
Behavioral Theory	Much of the work was aimed at providing tools and explanations of behaviors of leaders and potential leaders. The movement away from the behavioral aspects was the result of no clear view of leader behavior. As Rost (1991) explained, "There seemed to be no best way for leaders to behave when leading" (p. 22).
Situational/Contingency Theory	Springing from the behaviorist, the contingency/situational theories produced complex models that would predict how leaders would react given a certain situation. The main focus and motivation of theories of this bent appear to be towards the production of products by the most efficient means possible.
Excellence Theory	Leadership in this theory states that it is simply doing the right thing to achieve excellence. Its popularity in press at the time may well have been the desire of people seeking excellence in themselves and others. Its providers offered an endless curriculum of activities and self-help formulas that offered temporary fixes to the wrong problems.
Transformational Theory	This theory states that leadership is a transformational process of leaders and followers that raises each to higher levels of motivation and morality. Leadership is thought of as a relationship.
Emotional Theory	This theory states that leadership is an emotional and therefore personal process. It involves a deep examination of values and truth/value complexes held by the individual for the individual. It is a personal resolution to leadership and reflects our personal values and capabilities. The emotional leader taps into the emotions of the community.

Table 1: *The Theoretical Movements of Leadership Studies*

The Great Man Theory, at least on the surface, did not survive our societal evolution from an agrarian society to an industrial society. As society evolved, so too did the needs of leadership. Of the two competing theories generated in its wake it was the Trait Theory that really held the energy of the day. While we personally would have likely supported the more influential and growth promoting aspects of the Group Theory of pre-humanistic intent (a personal bias), this theory did not hold the readymade societal need for its inclusion as did the Trait Theory. As a result the Group Theory waned and fell into the recesses of institutions of higher education and was largely practiced only in spiritual communities. It did not reemerge in any real recognizable form until the 1970's when social psychologists, empowered by the flower power of the previous decade, became once again more prominent in discussions concerning the nature of leadership. We find it interesting the third force of psychology, humanistic psychology, correlates with the Group Theory's reemergence.

The Trait Theory did, however, seem readymade for the push towards and the stabilization of the industrial age. What industry needed in that time in history were leaders—lots of leaders. The Trait Theory seemed a perfect fit to the mentality of the industrial age—production. In contrast to the pre-ordained qualities of the Great Man, we now believed that if we could determine the traits of leaders we could effectively and efficiently mass produce them. The Trait Theory, largely due to poor studies and weak research designs, failed at delivering its aforementioned assembly line for leader production. One researcher in particular, Ralph Stogdill, effectively destroyed the movement by illuminating the appalling science on which it was based (Bass, 1990). At the same time Stogdill unveiled the next theoretical movement emerging from behavioral sciences.

The Behavioral Theory Movement seemed completely perfect for addressing the prevailing problem of leadership at that time; namely to change the behaviors of independent, practical, creative, and hardworking

farmers and immigrants into a stable and productive work force. The behavioral movement was just in time to address the great human resource needs of the industrial age.

While much has been said about the Behavioral Theory Movement, including a report on its death, we would be wise to understand that its influences are still upon us. If anything the Behavioral Theory Movement has become much more sophisticated. In fact we would hazard a guess that the situational/contingency models represent the top of the arc for efficient managerial approaches to leadership. The predominant needs of the day were still revolving around productivity which meant a need for better machines and better people to man these machines. That the technological age corresponded with these sophistications should really surprise no one. We needed technical savvy leaders and workers willing to swallow their own potential for the greater good of productivity—all we needed to do was modify their behavior.

The arrival of the Excellence Theory Movement only further supports this sophistication of behavioral tools as it attempted to solidify ‘proper behavior for a leader’ by way of holding up industrial icons as manufactured heroes (Great men and women) of the ‘new age’ of leading. It also, quite unexpectedly, solidified its own rapid death as these very same manufactured icons were also the container of so much oppression and dysfunction. This movement began the splitting of the middle class and moved us toward a ‘have’ and ‘have-not’ society. The middle class became much more bi-modal as a result of an erosion of middle incomes formerly generated from industry. To be blunt, middle class America was being selectively eliminated or ecologically being selected against. That we were firmly within the technological age and standing at the dawn of the informational age seemed to correspond completely with this style of leadership.

As the informational age matured in a blink, leadership scholars first gave deep and renewed credence to the previously addressed transformational frames of leadership for their ability to get us all on the same page. A common purpose became a critical issue with information so freely flowing. These transformational models in this moment of renaissance also revealed a need to continually look for ways in which we could grow the individual’s potential for service and contribution. What we failed to realize was this strand of the transformational movement would pull the rug completely out from under the industrial age and advance knowledge as the source of individual capital and power. Welcome the self-actualizing individual into the workforce—we were not prepared.

The Relevance of Human Growth and Development

It was at this point that our concurrent research and thinking on *metagogy* (the art of teaching to human potential) had revealed a relationship between the evolution of leadership studies and the human growth path. We began thinking that our human growth paths must be fully considered as we look at the evolving nature of leadership. It became quite evident to us that what Maslow had held up as fairly rare in the 1950’s, these self-actualizing individuals, were becoming a daily occurrence. From here we began to consider a new approach to leadership and a way to understand its evolution. What if we could correlate the evolution of leadership, the ages of society, and the human growth path? Would we not be in the compelling position to predict the next leadership movement? Could we not use our understanding about where society is heading—its needs, its problems, its opportunities...to begin considering and growing today the leaders needed for tomorrow? As a result of this query we began researching growth stage theorists, growth path educators and humanistic psychologists. At the end of our research it was revealed that the human growth paths we studied all seemed to follow a very similar pattern concerning our relationships with another. We abstracted from our observations the following flow:

Dependent → Independent → Interdependent → Intradependent

We began considering what this meant to the evolution of leadership studies. For us it signaled an emerging notion, perhaps reemerging notion, of the sacred natures of human potential. We began to think that if we were to present the totality of society with an opportunity to become self-actualizing we had better have the leaders needed to greet this potential. If the early days of our country required ‘Great Men’ and the

industrial age required the ‘right traits’, the ‘right behaviors’, and the ‘right excellent role models’, and if the informational age awakened this self-actualizing condition then what must be next was something beyond the leadership models of that day.

Our immediate response, and perhaps the response of all who find themselves on this threshold, was a return to self—a return to our own passions as an individual. What troubled us most about this retreat was that along the human growth path we had discovered that for an individual to fully actualize their greatest potential they indeed needed the “other”—we needed interdependent relationships, or reciprocal relationships between independent parties. Every growth or stage theorist we studied hypothesized or spoke to this stage of interdependence. This led us to make a fundamental discovery that now stands as the philosophy upon which we build this work – *All people have value and this value must be shared, must be announced, or else it fails to actualize or corrupts towards evil*. It became apparent to us that the best these aging transformational theories could do was to bring us to the brink of a new way of being. They could place us upon the slope of this self-actualizing condition and yet they held no way of cultivating the farther reaches of human potential due largely to entrenchment and a fixation with the truth of their epistemologies. They were heavy. Trying to pull the dead weight of these truths up this slope of self-actualization was an exhausting and impossible task. We had to let go. These transformational theorist kept seeking ways to control and predict because they were still toiling within the deficiency domain when in reality society had collectively evolved and now required a new type of leader—a potentiating leader who could lead us through the threshold of this self-actualizing condition and reveal to us the Being Domain and Well Being Domain and the farther reaches of leadership. An overview of the human growth path is given in Figure 2.

Returning once more to the Eco we realized how confining these growth path theories were upon the human art of leading and by default upon the full expression of one’s innate potential. Looking back from the perspective of the *Well Being Domain* we were struck by how natural it was and how complete it felt. And yet we really did not create this domain; it simply revealed itself to us. It was an epiphany, a paradigm shift...a radical reordering of our thinking about the human art of leading. We realized that this notion of Intradependence (the locating of our unique gifts and the value within the Eco) was not at all a stage function but about practicing the human art—the potentiating arts. While we could not have located this without studying these growth path theories once it revealed itself it made these theories at best plastic if not irrelevant to the Eco and therefore to the human art of leading. “The dissipating clouds do not create the moon they simply reveal it” (Unknown Source).

A Composite View

It was at this point we effectively stepped backed again and began looking at the correlatives between the evolution of leadership studies, the social movements, and the human growth paths. Having previously grounded this work within a human ecology we were certain that there must be a connection. The first observation we made was just how oversimplified the Ages of Society were in relationship to human growth and the evolution of leadership. Instead of beginning with the typical ‘Agrarian’ model we saw a precursor in the form of a Frontier or Pioneer Age that more aptly grounded the formation of the Great Man Theory, gave it more stable roots, removed the bias of a Royalty-only development, and explained the stability of this movement across time. We began restructuring and reimagining the connection between the age of society and the evolution of leadership studies. Figure 3 reveals this development.

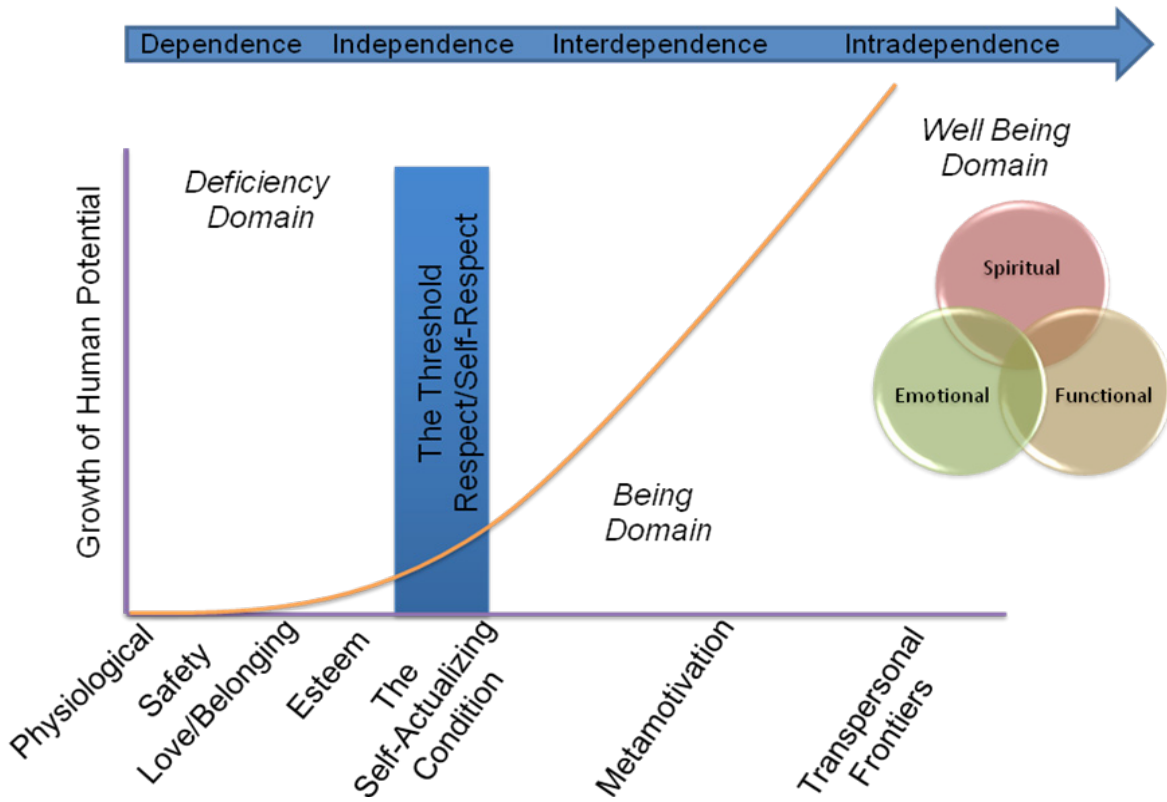


Figure 2: An Overview of the Human Growth Path

Theoretical Movements of Leadership	Age of Society								
	Great Man	Frontier	Agrarian						
Group			Pre-Industrial	Industrial					
Trait									
Behavioral									
Situational/Contingency									
Excellence					Post-Industrial	Technological			
Transformational							Informational		
Emotional								Global	
Eco-Leadership									Well Being

Figure 3: The Evolution of Leadership Studies in Relationship to the Age of Society

We also found it necessary to reveal a Pre-Industrial Age that really generated the first real evolution of leadership studies simultaneously revealing the Trait and Group Theoretical movements. While the Group movement failed at gaining traction in this run-up to the Industrial Age it has persisted none-the-less in the margins through the work of social and humanistic psychologists. One might say it was simply ahead of its time, but the reality of the human ecology of the time was that it was simply selected against as the needs of a growing society demanded a mass production of leadership on the scale that prior to today have not been matched.

Largely based upon the work of Rost (1991) we also added a Post-Industrial Age. This age really signaled the end of ‘power over’ models. The Trait and Behavioral movements seemed largely ineffective at this time. This, however, did not prevent retreatment of these designs that created the dangerous manipulatives we have seen among leaders during the last three decades. One could effectively call the Excellence movement a purveyor of such approaches. To be fair, the Excellence movement did have its value as it was one of the first attempts to generate a holistic leadership theory. It was during this age that the Situational/Contingency models began revealing themselves. These approaches effectively understood that while there may indeed be traits and behaviors that can effectively describe and demonstrate leadership, the possible combinations of traits and behaviors were now seen as useless in that I could display different traits and behaviors than you and still be considered effective. The shift was made to the ‘situation’, which stepping back really signaled the first relational/ecological model of leadership.

At the end of the informational age we observed a globalization that seemed to undo these early ecological models. What seemed to work well with small groups or communities seemed impossible to engage as the sphere of challenges grew towards an overall global awareness. With global warming Earth herself seemed to become an active player by way of reminding us of our connection to and responsibility for an environmental stewardship. We were being pushed to evolve towards ecological sanity or face our mutual destruction. As we stepped back again it became apparent that the philosophical foundation of “*all people have value*” was shifting rapidly to “*all beings have value*”. This shift represents a radical departure from the Western acceptance of Aristotle’s notion that through rationality human beings alone link to the divine (Blackburn, 2001). As previously mentioned, beings rebel against objectification. What if, instead of simply sharing corporeal needs, human beings also share soul qualities with others outside the species?

While one would have thought that leadership studies, too, would have gravitated towards a global/ecological approach what seemed to happen was an effective braking of leadership studies. At the time the full notion of the Eco was not completely comprehensible as we were locked in ‘either-or’ thinking between ecology and economy. Eco-leadership, potentiating leadership, on the other hand is calling for ‘yes-and’ thinking. What emerged from the transformational/servant leadership movement cycles was an aware but too often exhausted leader. Within the framework of the Eco diagram, these leaders spent their resources and energy on building relationships and this energy was not replenished by others in the system. As a result, instead of moving towards this new paradigm of globalization there seemed to be a collective introspection and a movement back towards care of self and capacity building. This collective process appeared very emotional/axiological in that what was being discussed was the nature of the individual and the beauty, values, and possibilities held by an ethical individualism. While many of these introspecting leaders had been corrupted in the past by ineffective leadership processes, crushing pressures to perform, and through their effective use of the heavy propositions, they generally revolted against being a carrier of these heavy propositions into their future life and found no value in overextending their now self-defined capacity. They retreated to find space and a new way of being in the world from which they are now just emerging. Stepping back again, we observed a very interesting phenomenon—this collective introspection seemed to awaken some further reaching aspect of leadership to be called the *human art of potentiating*. It also appeared to signal an emerging global age of moving together ‘on earth’ in a very real and pragmatic fashion. We named this the *Age of The Well Being*.

As it will be our intent to reveal a potentiating way of leadership that is in itself projecting and foretelling over being controlling and reactive, it becomes necessary to step back and look at the interconnected flows

of the evolution of leadership, the ages of society, and the human growth path. That overview is represented in Figure 4.

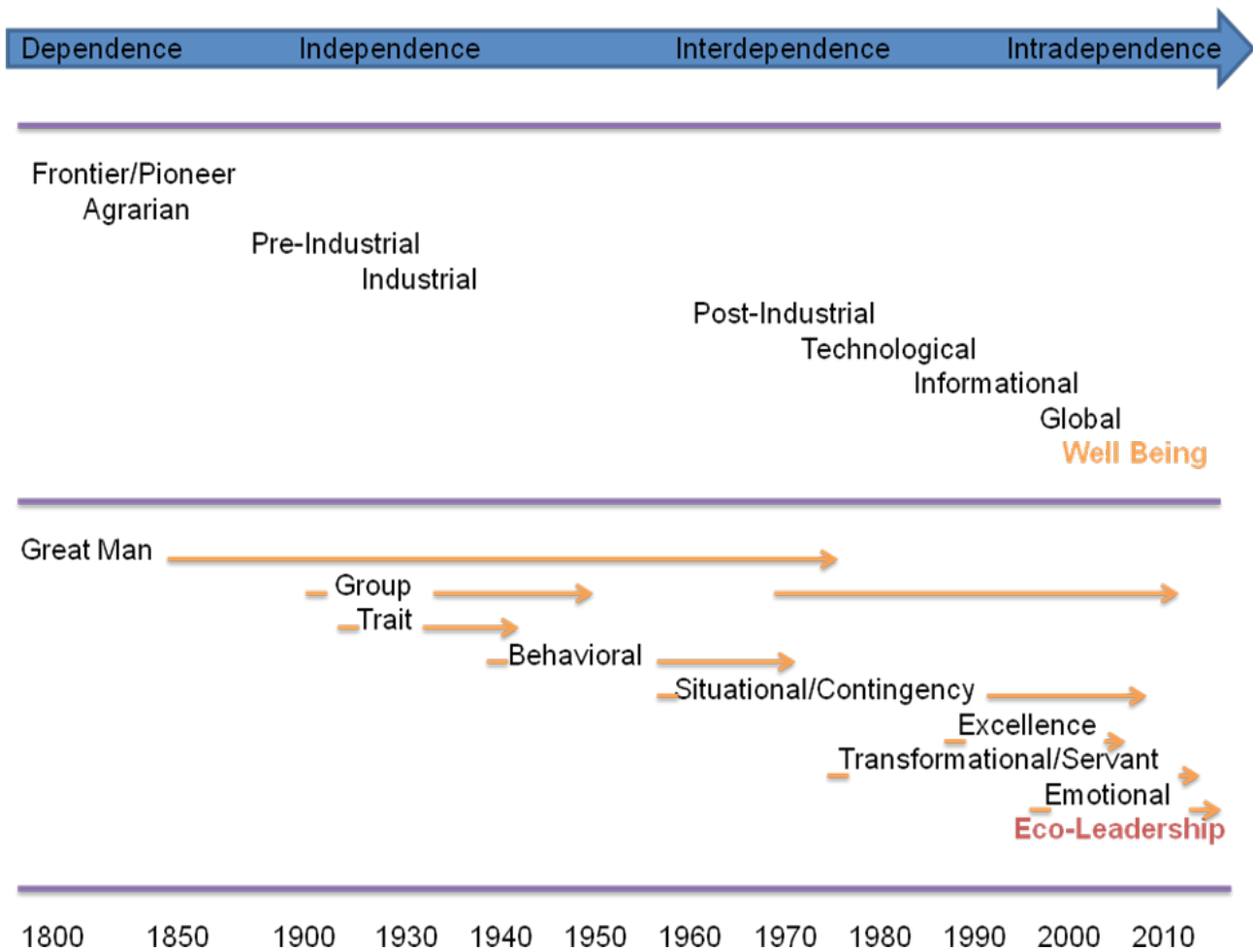


Figure 4: *The Ages of Society as Aligned with the Theoretical Movements of Leadership and the Human Growth Path*

Potentiating Leadership

As shown in Figure 4 it was the nature of the Well Being that provided the platform needed for a potentiating approach to leading. If it were possible to generate communities of potential through this approach then it must be through relationship, through interdependence, through the intersubjective space held by the relational/ontological “We”. We imagined an interconnected flow where the potentiating leader would exist in space and time. This could be seen as the “We” with Providence; the potential that can be obtained beyond our current vistas—through transcendence. This space informed our spiritual relationships, inspired hope and faith, and, the outflows of such relational paradigms seemed to be personal empowerment and equanimity of contagious proportions.

We next imagined an interconnected flow that could be seen as the “We” with others or the “We” in the world—the potentials that can be clarified and actualized as we share our gifts of potential with another or through another. This space informed our emotional potential or our abilities to generate potential with another, and, the outflows seemed to be potentiating relationships that were fed by and feeding our spiritual flows at the same time. We kept thinking “as we lift, we are lifted; as we potentiate, we are potentiated”.

We noticed upon stepping back one more time that what was missing was a pragmatic approach of putting these potentiating wisdoms to work in the world—a key purpose of potentiating leadership. As we considered the whole notion of the functional flow attributes of potentiating leadership came into focus. Here we imagined another flow that could be seen as the “We” from our own potential; the potentials that actualize as we grow and transform towards our greatest possibilities. The outflows of such imaginations were none other than an empowered creativity and a healthy wholeness.

All of these flows seemed interconnected—they felt like a single universal stream of goodness. From an ecological perspective we first called this interconnected space a sacred habitat only to realize what it was really forming was a container from which to develop a community of potential. As it was in constant flux, always growing and moving, we recognized it as radiant and alive. This radiant dynamic is shown in Figure 5. The central key to this reveal is that any community of potential would hold the space for the emotional, spiritual, and functional ways of being in the world in order to collectively actualize our potential. It forms a sacred habitat where all human potentials seek to actualize their greatest possibilities.

As a result, we came to understand that the next evolution of leadership studies was emerging from the other side of what we called the threshold held by the self-actualizing condition (See Figure 4.). So this evolution of leadership towards the human art was represented by a three-part shift. First, it was a shift from leadership as an epistemology (a truth) to leadership as an ontology (as a way of being in the world), which corresponded with the second shift, a shift from idiosyncratic notions of leadership to the emotional or relational notion of leadership, which corresponded perfectly with the notion of leadership as a potentiating art.

“I have known true alchemists,” the alchemist continued. “They locked themselves in their laboratories, and they tried to evolve, as gold had. And they found the Philosopher’s Stone, because they understood that when something evolves, everything around that thing evolves as well.” (Coelho, 2006, p. 137)

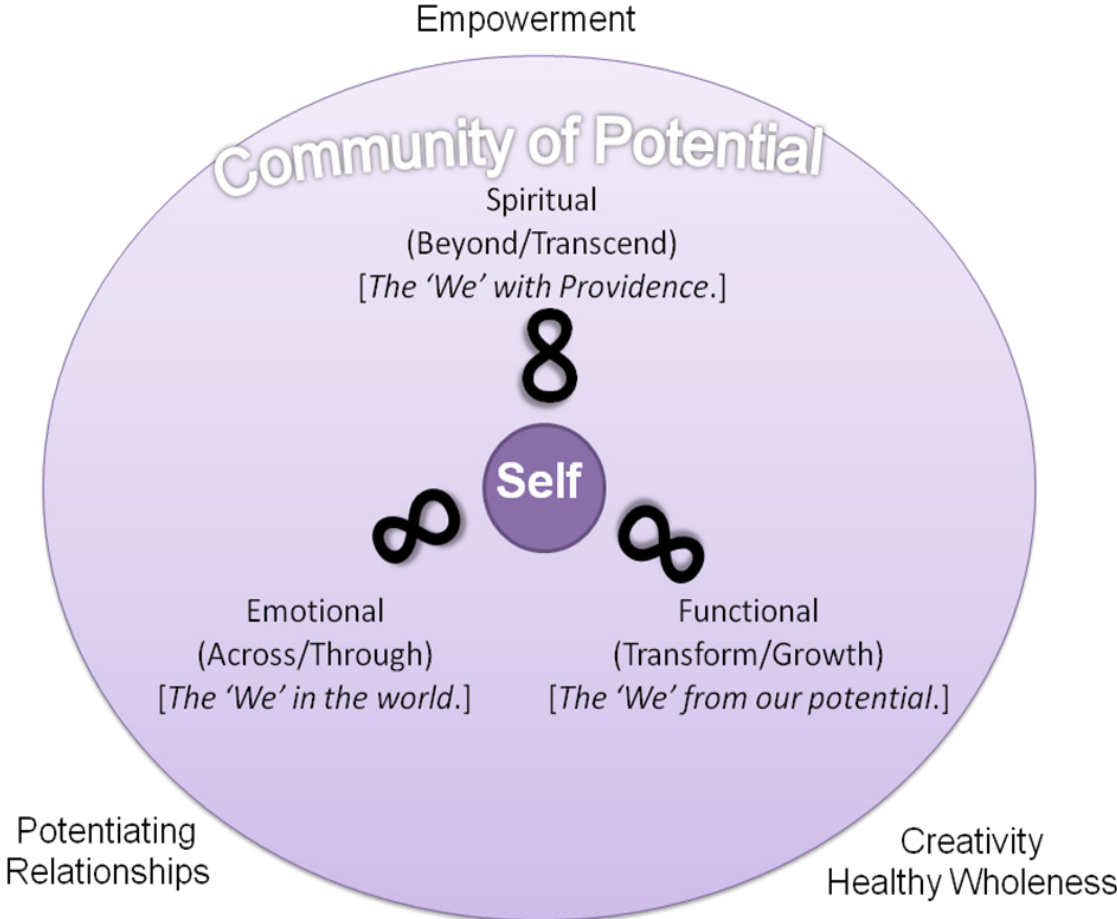


Figure 5: *The Radiant Dynamic of Human Potential*

The Evolution of Leadership Studies

What now remains to be revealed is the next evolution of leadership studies. This is the purpose of this article and those to follow. Given the evidence and the confluence of these three streams of thought; the ages of society, the evolving nature of leadership and the relationship held by the human growth paths, we would risk a projection that the next evolution of leadership studies will be in tune with a good society and embrace a development towards intradependence, well being, and ecological stability. To that we would offer a leadership approach aimed at the full actualization of potential that is in itself ecological, pragmatic, and potentiating. We would introduce the Potentiating Movement of Leadership Studies or Eco-Leadership. We would illuminate the potentiating arts and reveal the nature of the potentiator as a way of leading in this age of the well being. We would present the human art of leading.

The evolution of the purposes of leadership would appear to parallel the needs evolving within the age of society. This relationship between the evolution of leadership and society is significant from an historical vantage point as it reveals why some approaches to leadership were embraced while others were denied. The difficulty with historical studies of leadership towards generating a forward leaning approach to human potential is that they are always reactive. Given that we are only able to empirically measure human potential after it actualizes, it does our purposes little good to embrace an approach to leadership that is built from a reactive stance. A reactive leadership approach will always see human potential as a realized product and not as an always developing possibility. It is not difficult to locate potential after it actualizes. The genius of Eco-Leadership is that it sees the gifts of human potential in the seed.

Stepping back we can conclude that society is evolving. There is clear evidence for this evolution revealing itself in the various ages of society. As a species we would say we have ecologically adapted and accommodated over time to our environmental conditions forming stages of human community succession. The laws of ecology would suggest that these stages of succession are all moving toward a climax human community. We can only make the supposition that this climax human community is none other than Maslow's synergistic society.

The difficulty presented for understanding the nature of human potential from examining the evolution of society and the evolving nature of leadership practices is an inability to construct a projecting and foretelling approach to human potential. Human potential is ever emergent while the current relationship between leadership and society evolution is ever reactive. The best we can do in this system is to react to the nature of human potential after it emerges. This leads to the conclusion that our set of abilities and skills are seen as products to be consumed instead of potentials to be actualized. Without a way to triangulate the evolution of society and the evolving nature of leadership we cannot project and foretell the emerging nature of human potential.

Historically, it appears certain that society and leadership have evolved over time. Just as certain is the notion of individual human growth across the lifespan. We all seem to hold the capacity to grow through various stages of human development. Given the nature of this pathway Vygotsky's central question becomes directly relevant: How do humans, in their short life trajectory, advance so far beyond their initial biological endowment and in such diverse directions?

Are we Self-evolving?

The answer for us (and it is a principle held by the work) can only be yes—humans evolve across the lifespan *far beyond their initial biological endowment and in diverse directions*. What we hold to be true from this observation is that over time the individual evolves, society evolves and the nature of leadership evolves. Each of these evolutions, like human potential itself, can only be seen and measured after the fact—after it actualizes. How will this understanding yield clues for clarify the way of the synergistic society? How do we transform our understanding concerning the nature of human evolution in order to create and welcome the synergistic society?

Perhaps these questions are solvable only by stepping back once again. Consider for a moment the nature of Maslow's (1971, p.7) big problem:

It is now quite clear that the actualization of the highest human potentials is possible—on a mass basis—only under “good conditions”. Therefore, the good person can only be actualized within a good ecology or a good society.

It is equally clear that the *good society* is completely dependent upon the *good person*. Therefore, the *good society* can only be created by *good people*.

Maslow was not the first to wrestle with these questions. The Buddha insisted that individual and social virtue were linked through the doctrine of dependent co-arising. This doctrine affirms that the quality of society is the result of the virtue of its members, and as each individual influences others for good or for evil, he or she will reap the reward of living in the community that results from these influences (Sizemore & Swearer, 1990). It would appear that we create the good society by creating the good person and the good person can only be created by the good society. This paradoxical reveal appears useless for our purposes. Useless unless we for a moment step away from the individual (the good person) and consider collective stages of evolution.

Standing where we are today we could look back and hypothesize that there were collectively more dependent growth needs (deficiency domain needs—physiological, safety, belonging and esteem) among the populous of the year 1900 than there will be in the populous in 2050 given the current evolutionary vectors. One could observe the downward trend of dependent growth needs as the populous collectively evolved towards a more central independence (the self-actualizing condition). The human collective would show a general upward trend in developing independence until such time that a critical mass evolves toward interdependence (metamotivation/the being domain). This evolution would also reveal an upward vector towards intradependence (well being domain).

Figure 6 reveals this pattern. We would note that this figure is both historically relevant while projecting and foretelling in its intent. That is to say, it is supported by history but the numerical values are all predictive and therefore fictitious in a finite sense, yet real in the pattern they produce.

Taken as a dynamic, these three evolving forces—the evolving nature of leadership, the evolution of society and the self and collective evolution toward intradependence and a synergistic society—makes it easy to project and foretell the next theoretical movement of leadership studies that we are calling Eco-Leadership. It also reveals the emergence of the next evolution of leadership likely to emerge through the next human evolution. We are tenderly referring to this as the *deep leadership* movement. We can only intuit this *deep leadership*, but happily we can fully embrace and embody the nature of the potentiating leadership of Eco-Leadership. What we find fascinating now is the emerging evidence of a collective evolution towards intradependence. Where interdependence involves relating with others in order to share and potentiate our own gifts of potential as well as those potentials in which we relate with towards actualizing their own greatest potential. Intradependence is a return to self from a deep and meaningful flow. Intradependence is a place of peacefulness and completeness. This is the realized being “whose very presence creates a feeling of peace.” (Baba Hari Dass)

Leadership is a human relationship—it evolves. Society is a collection of human potentials—we evolve. The human being is a potential to be actualized not a product to be utilized—we evolve. How do we create the good person? We do so by evolving towards our greatest potential. How do we create the good society? We do so by ways that collectively evolve the full actualization of human potential. A pattern forms and with it an upward vector for generating leadership movements that are both projecting and foretelling. How do we build a synergistic society? We do so by adapting and accommodating all the while embracing creativity, spirituality, and empowerment. We evolve.

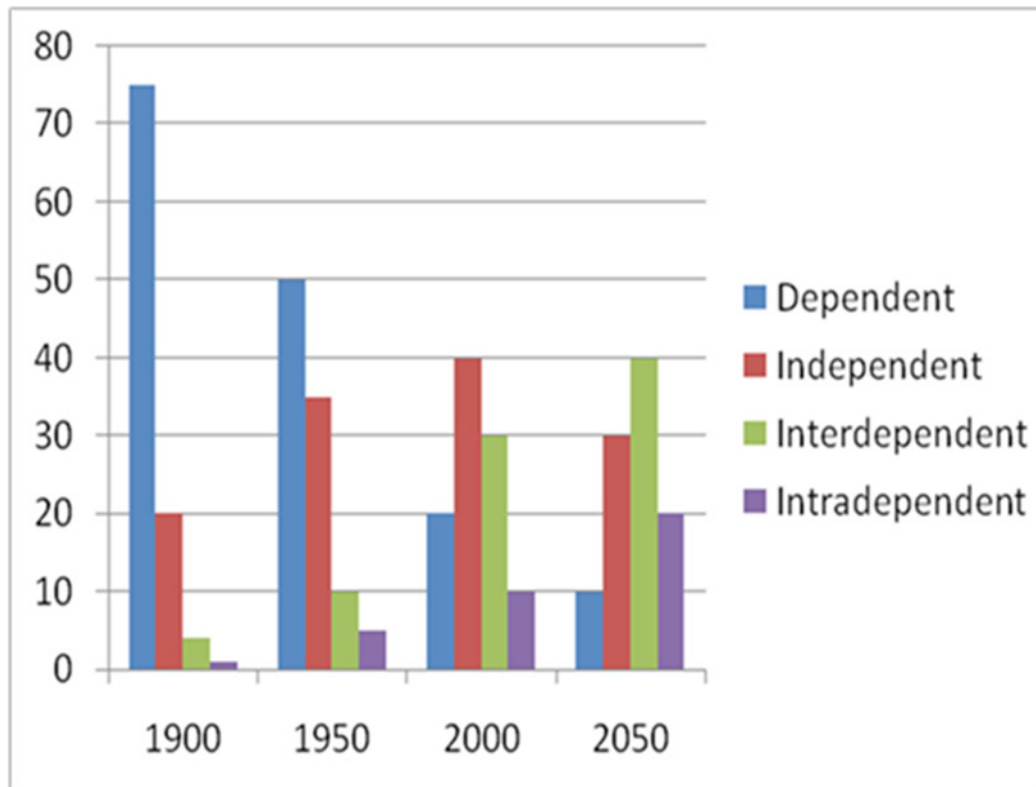


Figure 6: *The Evolving Nature of Human Populations*

Practicing the Potentiating Arts

As we conclude this reveal of the next great age of leadership—this potentiating eco-leadership—we offer up an introduction to five basic practices that form the center piece of the Potentiating Arts. Each of these practices will be revealed more fully in future articles. For now we simply invite the reader to consider how these practices, taken singularly or together, would aid in our abilities to become potentiators and, therefore, well beings. Figure 7 is a graphical representation of these practices and their flow. What follows is a brief overview of the potentiating practices of Deep Understanding, Critical Reflection, Maturity, Integrity, and Eco-Unity.

Practicing Deep Understanding

The *practice of deep understanding* begins with one simple question: *Are you ready to learn?* It embraces a conscious movement away from prejudgment towards a truer understanding of the gifts of potential held by another and self. It is deeply rooted in empathy. It is not a directive or controlling stance but a purposeful probe into the meaning of the experience shared with another. It supports of the full actualization of human potential without a need for defining or confining—without the need for violence. It is foundational for empowering creativity, curiosity, and wonder.

Searching for human potential within the family, school, community or organization is like searching for hope. What does that mean to those now serving as a leader—a potentiator? For us the search for human potential sets in motion the “why” and, following that, the “how” of the potentiating arts. It introduces the highest purpose of leadership, because at its very best leadership is a potentiating art. As leaders we are potentiators (the “why”) and we are learners (the “how”). The hope we hold for potential (ours and those we are in relationship with) firmly anchors *deep understanding*, the first practice of the potentiator, as a central approach to human potential and introduces the complementing practice of *critical reflection* as the second practice of the potentiator.

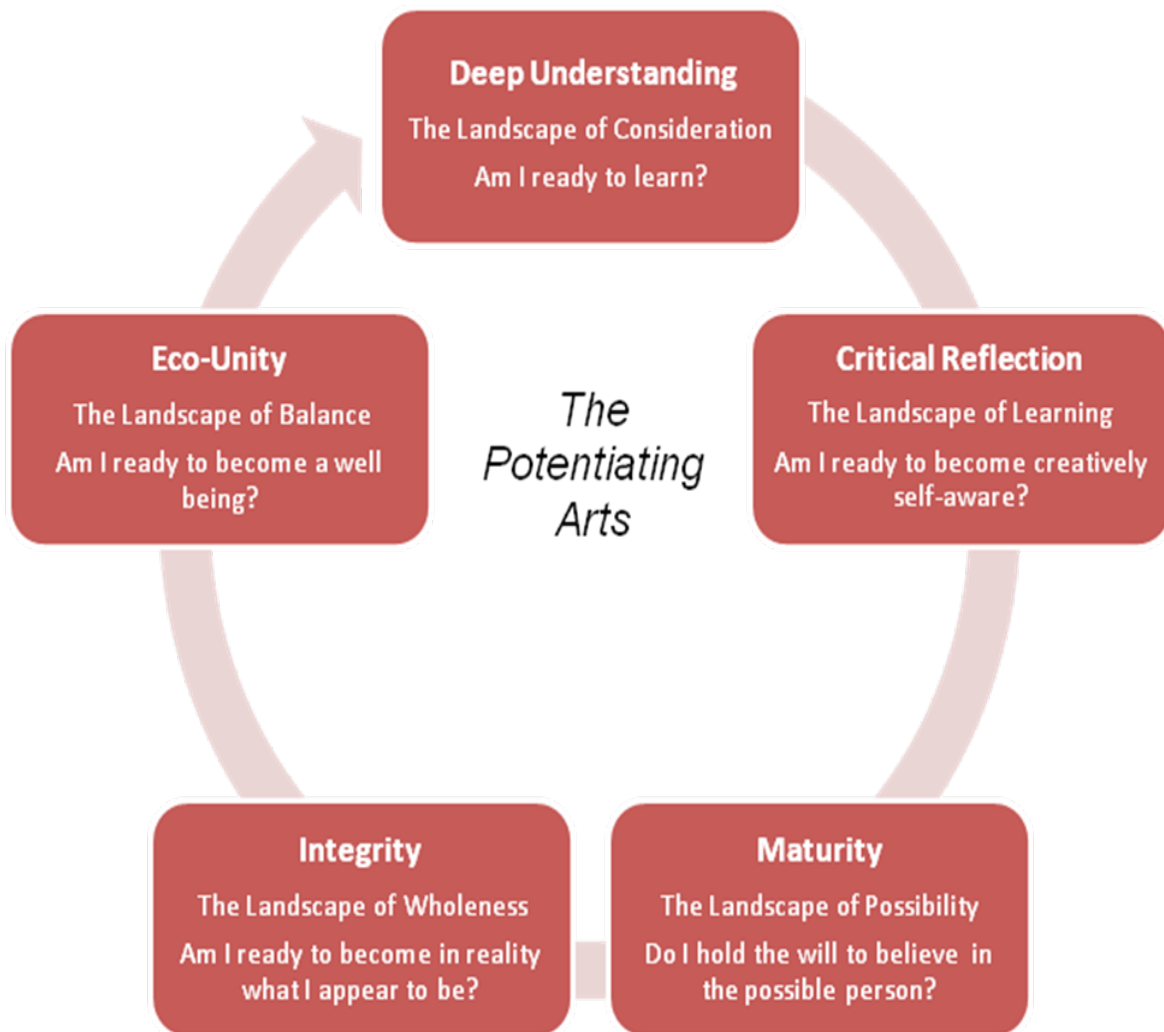


Figure 7: *The Potentiating Arts*

Practicing Critical Reflection

Practicing Critical Reflection is the purposeful act we take to deeply connect with where we are as learners within any human ecology. To put it simply, through critical reflection we become more deeply aware of our purpose, place, and of the impact our interactions are having on other people and our environment. What separates critical reflection from other types of learning or reflection is held within its intention to pry deeply into our individually held assumptions concerning how we interact with others. Critical reflection is a very personal practice aimed at revealing a deeper self-awareness. *Are you ready to become creatively self-aware?*

Deep understanding and *critical reflection* taken together lead us toward a sensitivity for all human potentials and reveal to us perhaps the greatest skill required by the potentiator—the ability to learn from and about the way of the learner. In truth, leadership does not rest beyond that point, but within it. This is the way on which the potentiator must act. They must not only act and serve as an ally to our creative nature, they must also somehow undo the source of the phrase; “I’m not very creative.” Because the direct interpretation of that phrase is “I’m not very human” or “I’m not natural”..., “I’m not normal”. Embracing the force of potentiation is to wade joyfully into the universal stream of goodness. Not only does this require the practice of *deep understanding* and *critical reflection*, it also requires *maturity*—the third practice of the potentiator.

Practicing Maturity

Practicing Maturity can be seen as the ability to recognize and then come to an insightful and authentic appreciation for the creative efforts of another. Through practicing maturity we come to recognize the *good person* in another even when they are shrouded in the fog of self-doubt, self-deception, self-destruction and self-reproach—to hold the wisdom to know that beneath these exteriors that there is always a better explanation and deeper meaning for a person's poor and/or unhealthy behavior than what is readily apparent on the surface. To reach through the mire into the very heart and soul of another and to lift from it the possible person—this is what it means to potentiate, this is true courage. This is maturity.

Maturity in potentiating embraces an ability to adapt and accommodate. We adapt ourselves to the evolving nature of human potential and accommodate the multiply varied ways in which a human potential may manifest itself to the world. The practice of maturity complements the earlier practices of deep understanding and critical reflection in that it provides a way for us to become more graceful in the way we are now able to hold space for the actualizing soul. Potentiators promise the hope of wisdom. All else, all other ways of conducting the ways of wonder and wisdom, leads to open warfare within the human ecology. *Deep understanding, critical reflection* and *maturity* then must stand in perfect relationship with one another. *Maturity* is about presence, the presence to reach through the mire into the very heart and soul of another and to lift from it the possible person. This is the practice of *maturity* and it is fully supported by the fourth practice of the potentiator—*integrity*.

Practicing Integrity

Practicing integrity is essentially a way towards cultivating and sustaining the authentic self. The practice of integrity concerns itself with integrating our inward and outward selves. Through this practice our thoughts, words, and deeds come into alignment. The harvest waiting those practicing integrity is a greater reach into the gifts of potential within our own being as well as others. It is essentially a way towards our highest self that is presented by a willingness to explore our own being, inwardly and outwardly, as it relates to the human ecology. Integrity is fundamentally a skill centered upon self-exploration and emotional intelligence. Integrity requires a setting of intentions. It asks: Are you ready to become in reality what you appear to be?

The *quintessential* has been described as the fifth and highest element in ancient and medieval philosophy. In relationship to alchemy the *quintessential* permeates all nature and is the substance composing the celestial bodies. The *quintessential* contains the essence of a thing in its purest and most concentrated form. The practice of Eco-Unity can be represented as being quintessential. *Deep understanding, critical reflection, maturity, and integrity* relate well to one another. They form the cornerstone of the potentiating arts. The practice of integrity leads us to the quintessential fifth practice of *Eco-Unity* binds them all together as one central way of being in the world.

Practicing Eco-Unity

Eco-Unity is energy in balance. This is the path toward a synergistic society. Are you prepared, within and without, to become a well being? The practice of the potentiating arts creates an opportunity for potentiators to become balanced and whole. This practice creates and maintains the sacred habitat in which human potential actualizes. The practice of Eco-Unity is not about becoming or creating environmental or economic zealots. It is about creating harmony and stability along the upward way of actualizing the potentials held within the present community and larger society. Therefore developing a sense of Eco-Unity is simply practical.

All life transforms. As potentiator engages the practice of Eco-Unity they are celebrating life. Eco-unity is centrally about the relationships and sustainability in balance. Since all life transforms these relationships must concern themselves with acts of becoming. When a human potential evolves within the ecology every human potential around it evolves as well. Regrettably the reverse is equally true—as a soul dissolves, every human potential, even if it is only in a small way, dissolves as well. What this means to the potentiator is that

all our efforts toward creating the good being and the good society will be well received. Given the choice human beings—human potentials will reach for *well being*.

Endings and Beginnings

The art of potentiating places no bearing on the extent of our knowing or lack thereof. Yet potentiators hold an openness to learn as a way of approaching people and things. The art of potentiating does not shift in its meaning because of the letters we place after our name or because of our age, gender, cultural heritage or religion. The potentiator does not stand in relationship to some hierarchical flow of power – they don't stand above us but with us. The potentiators we have known have been real, alive and open to learning. They seem able to flavor their own measure of accomplishment with a knowing humility that understands not all is known or can be known. We have found them to be curious in an exceptionally creative way. They seem able to produce sparks of insight as they connected things and people with possibility and potential. The potentiators we have known demonstrated a way of being in the world that did not concern itself with any static truth of our limitations. They seek to reveal the goodness of our possibilities. Therefore, this way of being *is not a stage we reach but a practice we keep*.

Before enlightenment chop wood and carry water
After enlightenment, chop wood and carry water.

~ Wu Li²

The practice of the potentiator would lift a gentle wisdom from the poem by Wu Li—the wisdom of *everyday transcendence*. The practices potentiators keep are centered upon that place where their perception greets the possibility of this day. Potentiators tend to not lock on to some momentary truth constructed only from what they can perceive as if it were some point of arrival or as a final destination. Truth for them is fluid, emerging and malleable. What is real for them is the potential that might be revealed by employing these malleable truths towards a greater understanding and appreciation of the actualizing soul. They seem more interested in the opportunities for learning than in demonstrations of knowing. As such they naturally embrace the practices that would hold the space for the full actualization of human potential to occur. They appear to hold a grand honesty that understands that everyone is searching for their greatest potential no matter how lost they currently appear or how far they currently have come. The journey remains the same—we are all seeking our greatest potential.

In concluding this article we would make it known that it is not possible to undertake and practice the potentiating arts without suffering a paradigmatic shift of consciousness. But deeply, this shift is about the uncovering of a beautiful personality, a deep goodness within, and an enduring truth of self. These are the good things that await us on the path. This is the human art of leading.

Endnotes

1 There are many ways to tell the story of leadership. Some have told it from the perspective of what was broken; some from the perspective of what was possible; some were linear-like marches into the future; some were holistic; and, some contain a little of this and a little of that. In the end they are all histories – biographies – case studies of some form or fashion. The qualitative nature of such stories is inescapable and so too then are the realities of representation and post-representation. This is our representation – our reality concerning the evolution of leadership studies. In revealing this story our purpose was to cast no disparagement upon those other ‘real’ stories; our purpose is to reveal this story – this is where we were able to hold the light.

2 Wu Li; 1632-1718 was a Chinese landscape painter and poet during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).

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As a research methodologist Mark has taught quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches to research. He has published several articles on research techniques and approaches. In direct connection to his interest in full actualization of human potential he is developing an ontologically centered approach to research called transformative inquiry. Transformative inquiry applies itself at the intersection of disciplines, namely; eudaimonistic philosophy (the philosophy of human potential), transpersonal psychology (the psychology of human potential), and transformative teaching and learning (the learning of and about human potential). Transformative inquiry is co-situated as the inquiry into the natures of human potential and into the characteristics of human goodness.

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