

**POWER AND LOVE:  
A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE**

**by  
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**DRAFT**

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. This collision of immoral power with powerless morality constitutes the major crisis of our time.”

Martin Luther King

“Power is the drive of every living thing to realize itself, with increasing intensity and extensity... Love is the drive towards the unity of the separated.”

Paul Tillich

“A system expresses its power through individuation and differentiation, its love through homogenization and integration.”

Barry Oshry

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper grows out of conversations and exchanges of papers with Adam Kahane. It was stimulated by Adam's reflections on what he described as his more and less successful efforts in working with some of the world's most complex challenges, among them: child malnutrition in India, implementing the peace accords in Guatemala, responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa, tensions between ultra-orthodox and secular Jews in Israel, health care reform in the United States, and the shift to a low carbon economy in Canada. Adam's reflection was that success was more likely when the process was "bilingual," that it incorporated both power and love. "Love is what makes power generative instead of degenerative. And power is what makes love generative instead of degenerative." (From a speech to the Systems Thinking in Action Conference, Boston, November 17, 2008.) The question that intrigued me about this was: What contribution to this exploration could be made by examining power and love through the lens of whole system processes?

In this paper I describe four fundamental whole system processes, processes by which systems interact with their environments:

differentiation (the difference process) and homogenization (the commonality process), individuation (the separateness process) and integration (the togetherness process). Systems express their power and love through the elaboration of certain of these processes and the suppression of others.

In Power systems individuation and differentiation predominate while homogenization and integration are suppressed, whereas in Love systems homogenization and integration predominate while individuation and differentiation are suppressed.

I will demonstrate how Power and Love systems develop, sometimes by blind reflexive responses to their immediate environmental conditions and sometimes by ideological choice; and I will demonstrate how both systems are limited in their effectiveness and ultimately self-destructive.

I will demonstrate how system sustainability requires *both* Power and Love, a condition that is realized in the Robust System.

I will demonstrate how the key ingredient to avoiding the limitations and destructiveness of Power and Love systems is system awareness, that is, our ability to see, understand, and master the whole system processes of which we are a part.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **SEEING THE WHOLE: FROM THE OUTSIDE AND INSIDE**

For over thirty-five years, in my work with both the Power Lab (1) and the Organization Workshop (2), I've had the opportunity to study whole systems. Both of these programs have been created as settings in which participants can deepen their understanding of empowerment in social system life. Although they are primarily educational experiences for others, they have at the same time been rich learning opportunities for me to deepen my understanding of systems. Central to both programs are whole system experiences.

In the Power Lab, participants are "born" into the Society of New Hope, a total immersion three class social system with sharp differences in wealth and power. At the top are the Elite who own or control the bulk of the society's resources, among them its money, housing, food, court, and work opportunities. At the bottom are the Immigrants who enter the society with little more than the clothes on their backs. And between the two are the Middles who manage the institutions of the Elite.

In the Organization Workshop, participants are "born" in a system in which there is an organization composed of Tops, Middles,

and Bottom groups that interacts with Customers and potential Customers.

**The outside perspective.** As an “anthropologist”<sup>1</sup> I have been able to stand on the outside of each system and observe the processes of the whole: how each part of the system adapts to the unique conditions of its local environment, how the parts interact with one another, and how the whole interacts with its environment.

**The inside perspective.** In both the Power Lab and the Organization Workshop there are intensive total system debriefing sessions in which participants share their experiences – *What has life been like for them as Tops, Middles, Bottoms, and Customers? What are their worlds like? What issues have them been facing? How have they been experiencing other parts of the system? What feelings have they been experiencing?*

**Insight #1: The view from the outside is quite different from people’s experiences within.**

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<sup>1</sup> I am not a trained anthropologist. Anthropologist is the name we give to staff members whose role is to document the history of a system and at the end of its life to interact with participants helping them see and understand the life of the whole of which they have been a part.

One observation I made early on had to do with the very different perspective one had when inside a system as a participant as contrasted with the perspective from the outside as an observer of the whole.

Inside systems people have what feel to them to be unique experiences of themselves, others, and their conditions. Experiences seem to be specific to these particular people and to the particular conditions they are facing. Events follow events without people experiencing any particular pattern to these events.

The view from the outside is quite another matter. Although each system has its unique cast of characters, there are consistent patterns that recur from system to system independently of who the characters are. From the outside, we can see processes of the whole – what the whole *does* - and how these processes shape individuals' experiences. So the challenging condition we systems creatures are in is this: our experiences are shaped by system processes, but we do not know this; we think that our experiences are the way they are because of who we are, and who other people are, and the nature of our particular situation. As we shall see, that is an illusion of system life, *an illusion that can take us down destructive pathways and*

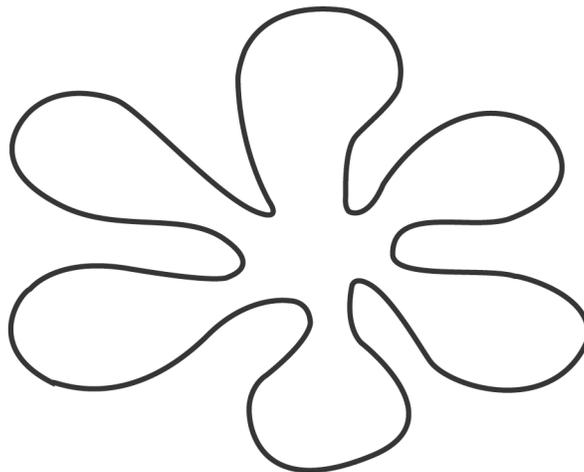
*sharply limit our ability to create sane, healthy, and productive social systems.*

## **THE PROCESSES OF THE WHOLE**

In time I came to identify four whole system processes that shed considerable light on system life, processes that in combination seem closely aligned with Tillich's definitions of love and power.

### **Differentiation: The difference process**

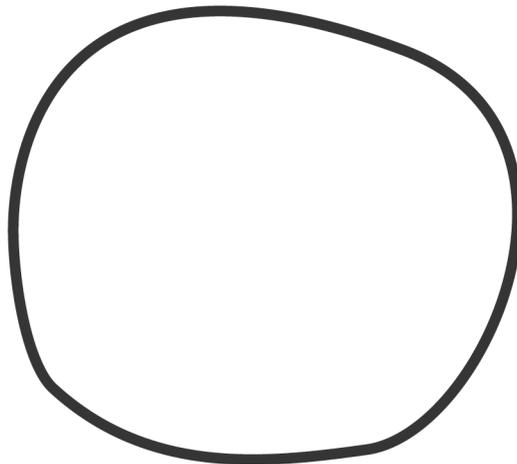
Systems differentiate, that is, they develop complexity in form and function. Organizations, community groups, family couples, health care systems, belief systems, intelligence agencies, they all develop a variety of forms, structures, processes, and specializations. The more a system differentiates, the more different its parts become from one another.



**Systems differentiate**

### **Homogenization: The commonality process**

Systems homogenize, that is, the systems' information, knowledge, and capacity are distributed across the system. The more homogenized the system, the more widely distributed these are. In the extreme form of homogenization, any part of a system can perform the functions of any other part of the system. The more a system homogenizes, the more similar its parts are to one another, the more common information and capacity they share.

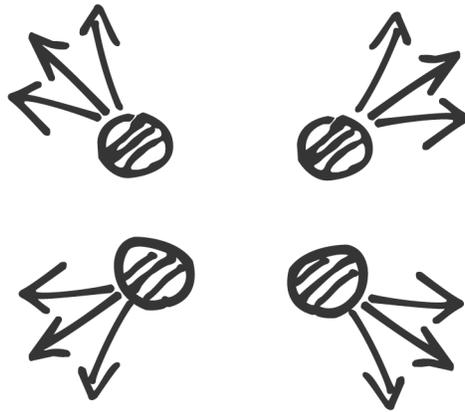


**Systems homogenize**

### **Individuation: the separateness process**

Systems individuate, that is, their parts function independently of one another, thus enabling system parts to operate independently, to

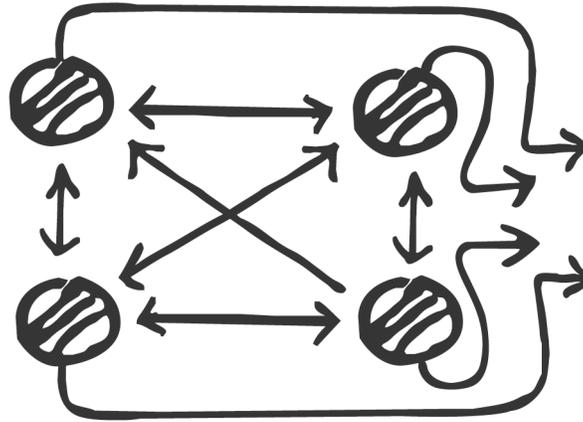
make separate forays into the environment. Individuals within the system individuate, and differentiated parts (units, departments, functions,) of the system individuate. When a system individuates, the parts are wholes unto themselves.



**Systems individuate**

### **Integration: the connectedness process**

Here the system parts feed and support one another and modulate their behavior in the service of the whole. When systems integrate, parts are components of the whole and each contributes to the functioning of the whole.



**Systems integrate**

Each of these processes has its *potential* contribution to system survival and development:

**Differentiation** enables the system to deal complexly with its environment – developing a variety of forms and processes for coping with dangers, prospecting among opportunities.

**Homogenization** provides for shared understanding, knowledge, and capacity across the system and the possibility of interchangeability among system parts.

**Individuation** enables system components to function independently, moving out, exploring new directions, collecting information, experimenting.

**Integration** enables the parts to come together, support and be supported by one another, and operate as a coherent whole with

a mission or function separate from (and potentially greater than) the functions of the parts.

In the next chapter, we will examine the part these processes play as systems express their power and love.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **POWER SYSTEMS AND LOVE SYSTEMS**

*"Power is the drive of every living thing to realize itself, with increasing intensity and extensity... Love is the drive towards the unity of the separated."*

*Paul Tillich*

In this chapter, we will examine the systemic equivalents of power and love, that is, what the *form* of the system is when it is exerting power, and what its form is when it is exerting love. We will also describe the experiences of system members in Power systems and in Love systems. We will examine the interactions of Power systems and Love systems with their environments; how effective these systems are in coping with the dangers in their environments and prospecting among the opportunities; how capable are they of sustaining themselves over time. And, finally, we will present the concept of Robust Systems, systems that exert both power and love.

#### **POWER SYSTEMS: DIFFERENTIATION AND INDIVIDUATION.**

The system exerts its power through **differentiation** – that is, by developing a variety of forms and functions both for the internal use by its members (variety of services, products, housing, food, entertainment, sports, health, arts, etc.) and for interacting with its

external environment as it copes with the dangers it faces and prospects among the opportunities. And the system expresses its power through **individuation** – that is, by freeing up system parts (individuals and groups) to operate independently, exploring, testing, elaborating their full potential.

### **LOVE SYSTEMS: HOMOGENIZATION AND INTEGRATION.**

The system exerts its love through **homogenization** – that is, by developing commonality throughout the system, sharing common information, language, knowledge, and capacity. And it exerts its love through **integration**, that is, by the system parts working together in common purpose, supporting and being supported by one another.

### **THE EXPERIENCES OF MEMBERS AS THEIR SYSTEMS EXERT POWER AND LOVE**

Power and love are systemic process of the whole that affect both the experiences of system members and the capacity of the system to interact with its environment.

**The internal experience in Love systems.** When the system is homogenized and integrated, members feel their unity, their oneness; they feel collaborative, engaged in common venture. Hierarchy is

reduced or eliminated. Stress levels are low. At the same time, the Love system can be experienced as arid, dull, limited, confining and unstimulating.

**The internal experience in Power systems.** When the system is differentiated and individuated, members are energized, stimulated by variety, free to explore and compete. At the same time, given their experiences of difference and separateness, relationships among members can be tense, competitive, cautious, and protective.

## **THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SYSTEM LOVE AND POWER**

**The external expression of Love systems.** Love systems are a weak force in their environments. With minimal differentiation, the love system is limited in its repertoire for achieving whatever are the system's ends – *It doesn't do much*; and with minimal individuation, there is limited outward action on the environment. Members are cohesive and aligned internally, but externally they are a weak force. Groups that are ideologically committed to Love are especially vulnerable to self-destruction through their indifference to or suppression of the power that difference and separateness could provide.

**The external expression of Power systems.** Power systems are a strong force in their environments. Differentiation results in a wide repertoire of forms, tools, and processes for achieving the system's ends, and individuation results in widespread independent action. Internally there may be tension, misunderstanding, and conflict, but externally they are a strong force. Yet it is the internal tension that weakens and can destroy the Power system. Most complex production or service organizations are Power systems; they are strong forces in their environments, yet their internal dynamics – difference without commonality, separateness without connectedness – weakens them and potentially can destroy them.

### **ROBUST SYSTEM: POWER AND LOVE**

The robust system expresses *both power and love*. It is robust both externally and internally.

**Power in the Robust System.** Internally, differentiation provides rich and varied experiences for its members; externally it provides the system with a varied repertoire for coping with the dangers in its environment and prospecting among its opportunities.

Internally, individuation provides members with the freedom to test, challenge, and enrich themselves; externally, it makes possible the discovery of new information and resources that can enrich the system.

**Love in the Robust System.** Internally, integration provides members with supportive peer relationships and the experience of being connected with one another in a cause greater than themselves; externally, integration creates a coordinated system in which parts work together to feed and support one another in the service of the system's goals.

Internally, homogenization provides members with the experience of oneness and egalitarianism in which all members are equal; externally, homogenization creates mutual understanding leading to cooperation across the system.

The zest of this system comes from the interplay of processes that appear to be conflicting but which are in fact mutually enhancing. Homogenization provides the secure base out of which differentiation can develop: *We can zestfully pursue our differences so long as we are assured of our underlying commonality.* Integration – the coming together and sharing of information and resources - strengthens the

power of subsequent individuation which then enriches the integration process.

Life inside a robust system is one of creative tension: the tension between elaborating our differences while maintaining our commonality, the tension between encouraging independent action while functioning as a team. In the robust system, we are specialist and generalist, independent actor and team player.

In the next chapters, we will examine sources of systemic dysfunction, conditions that take systems out of the possibility of robustness.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**SYSTEMIC DYSFUNCTION I:**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL POWER WITHOUT LOVE**

**INTRODUCTION**

Systemic dysfunction comes in two forms: power without love, and love without power. Love systems fail because they are too weak to achieve their ends; and power systems self-destruct with internal conflict and destructive competition. In this chapter we will examine how organizational systems regularly fall into patterns of power without love.

There are two sets of causes of systemic dysfunction: one is blind and reflexive, and the second is seeing and intentional. In the first, the system reacts to its environment in ways that are initially adaptive but then rigidifies into forms that limit its effectiveness, drawing it away from robustness toward the more limiting forms of either power or love. The second cause of dysfunction stems from intentional choices system members make based on political ideology or belief systems.

In this chapter, our focus will be on dysfunctional power patterns stemming from systems' reflexive responses to their environments.

## **SYSTEMS WITHIN SYSTEMS**

Complex organizations consist of systems within systems, and each component systems has its own *local* environment to deal. Both the Power Lab and the Organization Workshop have given me numerous opportunities to study three uniquely different systems within the single system of the organization: the Top, Middle, and Bottom systems. Each of these systems exists in its unique local environment: Tops in an environment of complexity and accountability, Middles in a tearing environment, and Bottoms in an environment of shared vulnerability.

In what follows, we will study each of these systems in its environment, noticing how each reflexively adapts to the unique conditions of its environment, and how these initially adaptive responses then harden into dysfunctional patterns of power-without - love. And all of this happens without awareness or choice: blind, reflexive, inertial reactions.

## **SYSTEMS FALLING INTO PATTERNS IN WHICH POWER PREDOMINATES OVER LOVE**

All systems – Top, Middle, or Bottom – have the potential for being Robust Systems. As Robust Systems they can maximize their ability to cope with the dangers in their environments and prospect among the opportunities. As Robust Systems they exert both power and love; they differentiate and individuate, and they homogenize and integrate. However, just as each of these systems exists in its unique environment, so also is each vulnerable to falling out of robustness in its unique way.

**Top systems falling into territoriality (internal power**

**struggles).** A Top system is one in which system members are collectively responsible for the larger system of which they are a part: the top executive team within the organization, the parent couple within the family, the partners within the business. Top systems exist in environments of complexity and accountability – numerous complex, difficult, and unpredictable issues to deal with; matters that aren't handled elsewhere in the system float up to them; there are strategic issues to be faced: the future of the system, the culture to be created. And members of the Top System are collectively responsible for their systems, whether the organization, the family, or the business.

The reflexive survival reactions to complexity and accountability are differentiation and individuation. Complexity becomes more manageable when the system differentiates, when members divide up areas of responsibility, and when it individuates, when members operate independently of one another managing their separate areas.

Differentiation and individuation is the reflexive part of the process; these are adaptive responses to complexity and accountability. The inertial part of the process follows when members deepen their investments in their differentiations; they become increasingly knowledgeable about them and increasingly responsible for them. And they grow increasingly separate from one another and others' differentiations.

So the system becomes increasingly differentiated and individuated, *and, in this process, homogenization and integration are submerged*. Commonality and connectedness are lost causing a deterioration of relationships among the tops and diminished system effectiveness.

Members of the Top system fall into a "Mine" mentality in which they are protective and defensive of their territories. Relationship tensions develop around such issues as relative significance (who are the more and less important members of this system), respect

(members feeling they don't get the respect they deserve for their contributions), trust (members not trusting that other members are holding up their fair share of responsibility), support (members feeling they are not supported by others or even undermined); and polarizations develop regarding issues the larger system is facing (grow quickly or slowly, expand in new directions or stick to what we know, be democratic in our relationships with system members or maintain our hierarchical relationships). The issues among Tops have their effects for the larger system: sending confusing messages, creating silos with redundant resources, reduced cooperation and lost potential synergies across silos.

It is when power totally dominates the relationship – when all traces of commonality and connectedness are lost – that the Top system self-destructs in bitterness, hostility, recriminations, costly separation packages, and divorce.

In summary, Top systems are vulnerable to falling out of the potential for robustness and into a power pattern that is destructive of both members' relationships and the larger system for which they are responsible.

**Middle systems falling into alienation (non-systems).** Middle systems are ones composed of peers with similar functions whose work draws them away from one another: peer supervisors, middle managers, staff specialists, division heads all fall into that category. Middle systems exist in diffusing environments that draw them away from one another and out toward those individuals and groups they lead, manage, coach, supervise, or otherwise service.

The reflexive survival reaction to diffusing environments is individuation – middles operating independently of one another with their energies focused on those individuals and groups they service. This is the adaptive part of the response; this is what Middles are hired to do.

The inertial part is that individuation, once begun, continues and deepens; Middles become increasingly invested in these external individuals and groups and less in one another. *Individuation deepens while integration is suppressed or remains dormant.* In that hardened individuation, the very idea of there being a robust Middle system is inconceivable. So there is no integration, no meeting together, no sharing of information, no mutual support, no working together in common purpose. And in the absence of being an integrated whole, questions of differentiation and homogenization in the service of

common purpose seem irrelevant. Middles are basically on their own. Middle system members fall into an “I” mentality – alone, separate from their peers, competitive, feeling there is no possibility of collective power among them.

This hardened individuation has consequences for individual Middles and for the system. Individual Middles are weaker and less informed than they could be; they are alone, unsupported; they provide weak and inconsistent leadership; lack of coordination among Middles results in differential treatment of Bottoms; it is difficult for Tops to get consistent information from Middles and it is difficult for Tops to have their initiatives moved forward consistently by Middles; the overall system is more fractionated than it needs to be.

In summary, Middles are vulnerable to falling out of the potential of robustness and into a pattern that weakens them individually, diminishes the possibility of their developing productive relationships with one another, and reduces their potential contribution to the larger system.

**Bottom systems falling into We versus Them: Peace internally, power externally.** A Bottom system exists within the larger system of the organization where members experience shared vulnerability to other parts of the systems that can influence their lives in major and

minor ways. These others can eliminate Bottoms' jobs, shut down operations, transfer operations overseas, eliminate existing initiatives, come up with new initiatives, change health care and retirement benefits. All of this happens *to* members of the Bottom system.

The reflexive survival reaction to this environment of shared vulnerability is to coalesce through homogenization and integration. Homogenization intensifies members' commonalities while minimizing differences that might divide them; integration heightens members' connectedness to one another, sharing and supporting one another in common purpose. In coalescing, members reduce their experience of vulnerability, if not its reality.

Members of the Bottom system fall into a "We" mentality in which they experience their oneness and connectedness to one another and their difference and separateness from all others. *It is a pattern of love internally and power in relation to other parts of the system.* Commonality and connectedness within the Bottom system, difference and separateness in relationship to others. A "We" mentality develops in the Bottom system, a mindset that differentiates and separates them from others. This is the reflexive part of the process. Inertia sets in as the Bottom system hardens in both its internal pattern and its external relationship.

Internally, as the Bottom system hardens in its coalescence, pressures to maintain uniformity come up against competing pressures for differentiation and individuation. The internal dynamics of the Bottom system are the subject of a subsequent chapter. For now, our focus is on the Bottom system's external relationships. As the external power relationship hardens – when the last traces of commonality and connectedness are lost – members of the Bottom system feel little constraint in how they deal with the others who are now experienced as foreign, as “others.” The relationship between the Bottom system and the larger systems deteriorates in any number of ways: the Bottom system weakens the larger system through minimal cooperation or even direct sabotage; the Bottom system is cut loose by the larger system in search of a more cooperative collection.

### **SUMMARY**

Top, Middle, and Bottom systems exist within the larger system of the organization. Each of these systems has the potential for being a robust system, a system of love and power, one that has outstanding capacity to survive and develop in its local environment. Yet, each system is vulnerable to falling out of the possibility of robustness through reflexive inertial responses to its immediate environment, a process in which initially adaptive responses harden into power

patterns that weaken the system and diminish its contribution to the larger system of which it is a part.

<b>SYSTEM</b>	<b>LOCAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>REFLEX RESPONSE</b>	<b>MISSING PROCESSES</b>	<b>DYSFUNCTION</b>	<b>MENTALITY</b>
<b>TOP</b>	Complexity And Accountability	Differentiation And Individuation	Homogenization And Integration	Territoriality	Mine
<b>MIDDLE</b>	Tearing	Individuation	Integration (then Differentiation And Homogenization)	Alienation	I
<b>BOTTOM</b>	Shared Vulnerability	<u>Internally</u> Homogenization And Integration  <u>Externally</u> Differentiation And Individuation	<u>Internally</u> Differentiation And Individuation  <u>Externally</u> Homogenization And Integration	<u>Internally</u> Conformity  <u>Externally</u> We/Them	We

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SYSTEM DYSFUNCTION II:**

#### **SOCIAL/ECONOMIC IDEOLOGIES OF POWER OVER LOVE**

In the last chapter, we described how systems fall into dysfunctional patterns without awareness or choice. It is also possible for us to *choose* dysfunction; we choose it because we believe in it, and, if our ideology is strong, we continue to believe in it and choose it even when it fails to produce the results we expected it to produce.

A robust social/economic system expresses both power processes (individuation and differentiation) and love processes (homogenization and integration); yet it is possible to believe in systems that legitimize one - power or love - while demonizing the other. And certain social/economic systems have done just that.

#### **Free Markets and Communism**

Free market social/economic systems are Power systems; they value individuation (*Turn us loose to freely compete*) over integration (*Don't constrain us*); and they value differentiation (*Competition will generate newer and better products, services, markets*) over homogenization (*Who needs more than one brand of car, toothpaste, coffee, etc?*) Individuation provides the energy of the system; it is an internal force propelling individuals, and it drives differentiation – the

need to find ever more competitive products and services and markets. *The Power Social/Economic system is self-propelling; it needs no external impetus.* Simply set individuation as the basic principle, and the system is off and running.

The communist social/economic systems were created as Love systems to counter what were seen as the negative consequences of Power systems: greed, exploitation of workers, actions serving the interests of organizations and not those of the larger system, unequal distribution of wealth. The Love Social/Economic systems valued homogenization (*All persons are all equal*) over differentiation (*social class differences, hierarchy, patriarchy*) and integration (*the primacy of a system that oversees equality*) over individuation (*the duty of individuals to serve the interests of the system over their self-interests*). I've described the Love Social/Economic system in the past tense *since no such systems exist, nor did those created as Love systems continue as such for very long.* In contrast to Power Social/Economic systems, Love Social/Economic systems are not self-propelling; turning people loose to serve the interest of others and those of the state (integration) does not have the driving force of self-interest. Founders of communist Love states recognized that limitation

by posing the need for a New Man. To make the Love system work, a different type of human being was required: one who was naturally altruistic, community oriented, and who would sacrifice one's self for the common good. In the absence of the evolution of such a New Man, or while awaiting his arrival, Love Social/Economic systems quickly devolved into authoritarian states in which integration was forced from above. (*You will want to serve others and the system.*)

So the economic warfare that was waged between two social/economic systems was not Power versus Love, but Power versus authoritarian pseudo-Love systems.

**Greed or individuation.** With the collapse of Soviet Communism and the infusion of capitalism into Communist China, it appeared that the battle between Power and Love was over, with Power emerging as the clear winner – a vibrant economic system that was spreading across the globe. Then, in 2008, came the worldwide economic collapse reminiscent of the 1930's depression. One explanation of the economic collapses was greed. Greed is a simple and satisfying explanation; we can actually point our fingers at the guilty parties. From a systems perspective, such economic collapses are inherent to Power Social/Economic systems. When individuation-without-integration is

the underlying economic principle, there is no such thing as greed, only people being allowed to freely compete. The financial markets developed ever more refined and complex mechanisms for creating wealth. (Ever more differentiated products being freely developed and sold. Individuation and differentiation at work.) And, so long as the ideology of Power ruled, integration was too weak a force to check it.

So the government steps in just as it did in the thirties to change the rules, to increase checks and balances, to restrain freedom. From the ideological perspective, such moves are dangerous signs of creeping communism/socialism. From the Robust System framework, missing integration is being brought back into the social/economic system.

There is no inherent war between Love and Power social/economic systems; what is required is a whole systems perspective that enables us to see Power and Love as necessary ingredients of robust social economic systems. The issue is not one or the other, but being able to find the appropriate ever shifting balance.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **LETHAL POWER FORMULAS:**

#### **WHEN HOMOGENIZATION AND INTEGRATION GO TO ZERO**

In previous chapters we have described the processes by which systems lose their potential for robustness either blindly or by ideological choice. Dysfunction, however, comes in all degrees. It matters, for example, whether in the Top system there is little homogenization and integration or whether there is none at all. Dysfunction follows the first case whereas more destructive, possibly lethal consequences follow the second.

Pure Power relations develop when homogenization and integration go to zero, when we experience *no* commonality with and *no* connectedness to another. We experience ourselves as being fundamentally different from, superior to, and in opposition to the "other." It is in that condition – whether we are Tops hardening in our territoriality, Middles hardening in our alienation from one another, Bottoms hardening in our We-versus-Them relationship, Power or Love Social/Economic systems hardening in our ideological purity - that we can in good conscience subvert, hurt, and destroy one another. We

move beyond relationship difficulties to unbridgeable divides. When we are in the grips of extreme Love-less Power, survival now depends on protecting ourselves from the "other," dominating the "other," or destroying the "other." When we are in the grips of extreme Love-less Power, it is inconceivable to us that our problem is the result of process-imbalance, and that a solution lies in changing the formula. The problem, clearly, is with those "others." (**Revisit insight #1.**)

The whole of humanity is one blooming process of differentiation: gender, race, ethnic group, nationality, spirituality. And, wherever there is differentiation, there is the possibility –*and the attraction* – of succumbing to power, hardening in our difference from others and separateness from them.

### **Our human vulnerability to Power**

In our system blindness, we have proven to be vulnerable to the deadly consequences of pure Power, Power without Love. We do not see the system process of which we are a part, and in our lack of awareness we easily fall into, and can be manipulated into, one pattern or another. Differentiation and Individuation are powerfully attractive.

Differentiation gives us affiliation and depth: my religion, my nation, my ethnic group, my neighborhood, even my sports team; these system memberships give me a past, drama, emotion, righteousness, a history with triumphs and defeats. And individuation gives me my uniqueness, my specialness. Not only am I different from these others, I am better than them. It is an attractive brew.

Differentiation and individuation have their power even in relatively trivial matters, sports for example.

*I live in Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America. Boston is a sports town with championship baseball, football, and basketball teams. As I was writing this paper, my baseball team was involved in a thrilling championship series. I do not play on this team, yet my emotions were tied to its performances. I was tense when the outcome was uncertain, exhilarated when my team was victorious, and depressed when it was defeated. What has their performance got to do with me? Rationally, nothing. Emotionally, quite a bit. I feel connected to this team not only in its present form but also with its history going back decades. I feel connected to its heroes who are my heroes, to its past triumphs and defeats. It is interesting that the current owners of the team refer to all of us – players, owners, managers, fans –*

*as Red Sox Nation. So now we are a Nation, and the nations of other teams are our enemies.*

If so much identification and emotionality can be attached to a sports team, how much more powerful are the lures of: *my country, my god, my ethnic group, my race, my gang*. How much more gripping are the dramas associated with these system identities.

Previously we have explored two paths to Power: falling into it blindly or choosing it ideologically. Much of our more destructive history with Power without Love grows out of a mix of the two. History is replete with demagogues who feed us this rich stew of difference and separateness and then draw us into deadly crimes against humanity. They give us an opportunity to experience our power – our difference and separateness – and then we do the rest.

In the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, one candidate roused the crowd by assuring them that they were the “real Americans.” The audience reaction was, predictably, one of pride – *Who doesn’t want to be counted among the real Americans?* – and along with pride came anger directed against the “others,” those less than real Americans. *We are different and superior.*

The “real” people and the “others” is the formula that has resulted in our most devastating human-on-human catastrophes. The

formula follows a regular pattern: leaders strike the opening note - *We are the real people because* (fill in the blanks) - then the mob eagerly joins in - *Yes we are the real people*. When we are in the grips of system blindness, our explanations of our condition are personal and situational: *We feel special because we are special and we see these others as less than human because they are less than human; and whatever is happening is happening because of the specific conditions we are in*. And all of this is experienced as reality; there is no sense that this is one more in a long chain of blind and deadly dances. When commonality and connectedness are dialed down to zero, there is no limit to one can do to others.

Power without Love, in its extreme forms, has fueled the Crusades, the righteous wars of religion, the Armenian genocide, the murder of Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals in the holocaust, slavery, the brutal Hutu/Tutsi savagery, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, Apartheid in South Africa, and more. In such cases, homogenization and integration have been dialed down to zero: *we are wholly different from and unconnected to the other*. In the extreme we are human, they are less than human: *vermin, leeches, cockroaches*. Power without Love makes it possible to dominate, oppress, enslave, and annihilate the "other."

**Insight #1 revisited.** From the outside, racial, religious, ethnic oppression are seen as the consequences of process-imbalance, homogenization and integration being dialed down to zero, potentially robust systems falling into the temptations of Power without Love. On the inside, we see difference and separateness, and they feel to us like solid reality. And that's the illusion on the inside.

**Reality.** Robust system is not a dream or an idealized state; it is the underlying reality of system life. The reality is differences *and* commonalities, separateness *and* connectedness. Dysfunction develops when we fall away from that underlying reality. The costs of that falling away have been and continue to be immense.

**The future.** By some counts, over 17 million persons have been murdered in 20<sup>th</sup> century genocide and ethnic cleansing. Men, women, and children – innocent, yet murdered with relative ease of conscience, once having been seen as the “other.” Connection and commonality dialed down to zero. One frightening thought to consider: This Extreme Power with Love may be incurable; it may be that genocide and ethnic cleansing will always be with us. The appeal is universal: *we are great, and then there are these “others.”* Unless we understand this process and our vulnerability to it, and unless we are able to notice how in the moment it draws us and others in, and unless

we have the skill and means for stopping the outbreak before it gains momentum, then there is little reason to think that the old magic will cease to work.

We can't count on the power of learning from one genocide to the next. There is nothing to be learned so long as each outbreak is thought to be specific and personal: *our* situation, and *our* "others." And we can't count on the power of civilization, since genocide and ethnic cleansing have broken out in societies with venerable traditions in education, fine arts, law, science, industry, and philosophy. None of that slowed the outbreak.

What is required is a change in *seeing*. We are brilliant at observing and understanding systems that are separate from us, whether it's looking down through our microscopes or up through our telescopes, we see, we understand. But we are less adept at understanding the systems of which *we* are a part and how the processes of these wholes shape *our* hearts and minds.

When we don't see systemically, we fall into variations of Power without Love, losing our connection and commonality, burrowing down ever more cozily into our differentiated and individuated nests: Tops falling into turf warfare with one another, Middles falling into alienation from one another, Bottoms falling into We versus Them; couples

falling out of relationship; politics and economics falling into Free Market versus Communism; gender versus gender and race versus race.

**Insight #1 revisited.** There are two perspectives: seeing from the inside and seeing from the outside. Inside we see people; from the outside we see system processes. On the inside, there are our evaluations of one another, our righteousness, and our defensive and aggressive tactics: avoid, escape, dominate, avoid being dominating, hurt, and, in the extreme, destroy. On the outside, we see Power and Love out of balance: *We need to inject more commonality and connectedness into this relationship.* Like a voice from the engine room: *Pump up the processes! Homogenize and integrate!*

System sight raises its own set of challenges. Who are we when we step out of those cozy, ego-enhancing nests? As I am writing this paper, the United States has concluded an historic election; for the first time, in a country with a long history first of slavery and then of racial discrimination, a black man has become the country's president. That possibility breeds its own brand of pure Power without Love: the Greatness of Whiteness along with its denigration of all other colors. Recently, reports of an assassination attempt were revealed: two

young men deeply entrenched in the White nest revealed their mission to save future generations of White babies. The questions these young need to face are:

*What does this differentiation (White versus Black) get me?*

Clearly, it allows them to be larger, deeper, more significant, more powerful, more historically connected than they would be without it.

*What does individuation get me?* It allows them to be separate from and superior to others.

*And what would you be without these? What would you be without your inflated and superior trappings of whiteness?*

This is a challenge all of us face when we are caught up in Power without Love, when we experience our difference and superiority in our organizational system conflicts and our societal system conflicts. As Tops, Middles, and Bottoms; as Jews, Muslims, Serbs, Christians, Americans, Whites, Hutus, or Red Sox fans: *What does differentiation get us? What does individuation get us?*

I suspect that some of these system identifications are so deeply entrenched that we can never be wholly detached from them. In fact, it is often dangerous to give even the appearance of detachment – you run the risk of being seen as a traitor to your country, your race, your religion, or your social class. Yet even if we cannot be *wholly* detached

from these system connections, we do have the less extreme possibility of moderate detachment. We can notice our attachment to this greater, historical, and noble whole; we can notice our experience of superiority to these others; and we can smile at our vulnerability while not taking the whole business too seriously.

And, finally, when we are caught up in the grips of our greatness and superiority, this can be a signal to us that this is not the time to avoid, escape, dominate, hurt, or destroy the “other.” Rather, our reflexive feelings can be a signal to us that it is a time to work on homogenization, to find ways of identifying and developing our commonalities with the “other;” and it is time to work on integration, to find ways to connect, to find projects we are jointly committed to, and to work on supporting one another in the service of those projects.

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All systems have the potential for being Robust Systems, and all are vulnerable to falling away from that potential into either Power Systems or Love Systems. Systems fall either through reflexive responses to their environmental conditions or through ideological choice. To this point, our focus has been on Power systems; in the

chapters ahead, we will turn to the system dynamics of Love Systems,  
Love without Power.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**SYSTEMIC DYSFUNCTION III**  
**FALLING IN(TO) LOVE**

In this chapter we will expand work begun in Chapter Three. There we examined how Top, Middle, and Bottom systems within the larger system of the organization react to their immediate local environments, and how through inertia what begin as adaptive responses harden into dysfunctional patterns. Here we will continue that analysis with focus on the internal dynamics of the Bottom system.

A Bottom system is a system within the larger system; members in the Bottom system experience shared vulnerability to other parts of the system; these other parts that can influence Bottoms' lives in minor or major ways. Previously we described Bottom systems in the context of the organization, but here we extend that picture beyond the organization to racial, religious, or ethnic groups whose members experience shared vulnerability to other groups within the larger system – Blacks in the apartheid system of South Africa, Muslims in Bosnia, Palestinians in relation to Israel, and so forth.

We indicated that Bottom systems, in response to an environment of shared vulnerability fall into becoming Love systems;

they coalesce: homogenization and integration predominate, while differentiation and individuation are submerged. Members experience their commonality, their oneness, with one another and their connectedness to one another. The individual “I” mentalities are submerged into a “We” mentality.

Coalescence is an adaptive response – at least initially. Members within the Bottom system feel less vulnerable and, through their interactive efforts, they may in fact be less vulnerable when they coalesce. Dysfunction sets in as the Bottom system hardens both in its external relationships with others and in its members’ relationships with one another.

Previously we examined the Bottom system hardening in its *external* relationships: differentiation and individuation predominate – *We are different from them and unconnected to them*. It is when commonality and connectedness to the others dials down to zero that the members of the Bottom system feel free to hurt, humiliate, or do serious damage to the others through work slowdown, resistance, or sabotage.

In this chapter, our focus is on the Bottom system’s member relationships with one another as the system hardens in its coalescence. Staying together and being united in action is

experienced as the unshakable ground of existence; differences around fundamental issues and unsanctioned unilateral action by any system members are experienced as dangerous and must be suppressed. But differences will emerge: *How to deal with our vulnerability? Do we accept our lot and make the best of it? Do we complain? Do we try to negotiate for better conditions? Do we take direct action against the others? And if we do, how severe should our direct action be?* Differences might have been present at the beginning and suppressed under the pressures of homogenization; or they may have emerged over time. And, for some members, the pressures toward conformity will become oppressive.

So now the system is under pressure between two forces, the *containing* forces of homogenization and integration and the *expanding* forces of differentiation and individuation. What follows are some of the patterns Bottom systems fall into in reaction to those opposing forces.

**The depressed system.** The system remains intact; the containing forces - homogenization and integration - reign supreme; the expanding forces - individuation and differentiation - are quashed both by others and by one's self. Members are listless; the system is a weak force in its environment, accomplishing little; it is reactive to

other parts of the system with little initiative of its own other than passive resistance. There is much suppressed member anger at one another along with much depression, and a pervasive sense of powerlessness, little that members feel that they or the system can do.

**Dissent.** The Bottom system develops its position and members solidify around it; homogenization and integration hold for that position. The system is faced with the challenge of maintaining its position in the face of difference. The challenge can take many forms; what is constant is the presence of both a unified position and overt dissent from that position. As examples:

The unified position is to support the system; a dissenter is committed to fighting the system.

The unified position is to fight the system; a dissenter is committed to supporting it.

The unified position is unquestioning patriotism; the dissenter vigorously questions the actions of one's own country.

The unified position is to challenge one's own country; the dissenter demands unquestioning loyalty.

The unified position is to take direct action against the other; the dissenter argues for negotiations.

The unified position is to negotiate with the others; the dissenter presses for direct action.

The unified position is direct action but no killing of children; the dissenter argues to kill all.

The Bottom system is able to maintain its unity by dismissing the dissenter one way or another. Dissenters can be subjected to "rehabilitation;" they can be imprisoned, treated as insane and institutionalized, exiled, or murdered.

**Suppression.** The system maintains its unity when members, out of fear of isolation or exile or worse, suppress their disagreements and independence; they act as if they are in agreement with the unified position when in fact they are not. For some members, the fear of isolation is so great that they hide their differences from themselves; that is, they are unable to accept in themselves their disagreement with the unified position.

**The village idiot.** One variation of the above themes is the emergence of the village idiot. This person consistently expresses dissent from the unified position, and is increasingly ignored. The system maintains its cohesiveness by seeing this member as neurotic or deranged, so therefore there is no need to respond to the member's arguments. The village idiot's rants are simply experienced as

unconnected to the system's work. He or she is invisible and in time may come to believe that he or she is in fact a village idiot.

**The guardian of the WE.** There sometimes emerges in the Bottom system a single person who carries much of the burden for maintaining the unity of the system. This person is most anxious over the potential dissolution of the Bottom system. He or she consistently espouses and reinforces the values of the unified position and actively disparages and otherwise suppresses dissent. The guardian of the WE protects members of the Bottom system from all evidences of dissent.

**Splinter groups.** Sometimes the container does not hold. Differences burst through in the form of two or more unified systems in conflict with one another. The outcome is two or more Love systems in power relationships with one another. That is, each system internally is homogenized and integrated; and in relation to the other is differentiated and individuated. This is a process that has developed in the splintering of religions in which differences become irreconcilable with one another, resulting in separation with relationships ranging from benign liberal tolerance to religious warfare that at times turns deadly.

This splintering process also develops in labor groups when the unified container no longer holds and irreconcilable differences break

through. *Should we end the strike or continue it? Do we accept management's proposals or reject them?* Towns splinter into opposing camps. Friends become opponents and sometimes enemies. Camps engage in mutually destructive actions.

**Comes the revolution.** There is another phenomenon that can at least in part be thought of as reflexive. It occurs when a Power system is overthrown and is replaced by a Love system. The French and Russian revolutions were reactions to the consequences of Power systems: vast inequalities in wealth and power. The goal in each case was to transform a Power system into a Love system – from highly differentiated and separate social classes to a homogeneous integrated system in which all persons are equal and all work together in the service of the system.

As mentioned earlier, those Love systems were short-lived if not aborted at birth. Love systems, in contrast to Power systems, are not naturally self-perpetuating; they require external force to ensure that equality and self-sacrifice in the service of the system will happen *like it or not*. And so these Love systems quickly devolve into autocratic systems.

A somewhat more optimistic scenario has developed in certain Power Labs. Sometimes Bottoms in collaboration with Middles do

manage to overthrow the Power system. A new order is put in place. No more unilateral decisions; in their stead are long meetings based in consensus in which rules, laws, and procedures are painfully discussed. However, as is always the case, when Love predominates over Power, differentiation and individuation are suppressed. Meetings are long. Members grow restless. Probably because there is no authoritarian power with the strength to constrain the system against these expanding forces, differentiation and individuation do break through. Members break out of the system, entrepreneurial projects are created. The system evolves into a new form that is neither pure Power nor pure Love. It approaches the form of a Robust System, one that is differentiated and homogenized, individuated and integrated. Separate structures and services develop that are not at war with one another, that exist side by side; members move easily from one operation to another; there develops some system of governance or connectedness among system parts. What once was a Power system of Tops, Middles, and Bottoms, sharply differentiated and separate from one another, is now a newly differentiated system with structures and processes that cut across previous class lines; there is a new judicial system; a privately run dance hall operation, an ecology tour business, an alternative restaurant, and so forth. Compared to the

destructiveness and oppression coming on the heels of the French and Russian revolutions, such Power Lab transformations offer much healthier whole system developments. Let me be clear: what I have just described is not characteristic of all Power lab outcomes, but to witness even one such is to offer a possibility for all systems.

### **Summary**

In this chapter we have explored the process by which Bottom systems, in reaction to threatening conditions in which members experience their shared vulnerability, fall into becoming Love systems in which homogenization and integration (unity and connectedness) predominate while differentiation and individuation (difference and separateness) are submerged. We have also described the internal system dynamics as tension develops between the containing forces of homogenization and integration in the face of emerging forces of differentiation and individuation, that is, as a system committed to unity and togetherness struggles with the emerging forces of difference and separateness.

In the next chapter, we will examine the phenomena in which systems *choose* to be Love systems and the consequences of those choices.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE IDEOLOGY OF LOVE SYSTEMS**

**Love in the time of no danger.** In the previous chapter we saw how systems fall into Love patterns in response to perceived danger. Under such conditions, the pattern is Love internally and Power in relationship to the endangering system, that is, commonality and connected within and difference and separateness in relationship to the other.

Sometimes, however, system members choose Love even when there is no external danger; Love is preferred over Power. Love systems value community, equality, democratic processes; they disvalue unilateral action, difference, and separateness. Both our strength and our specialness come from our unity of purpose, our commitment to working together in harmony with toward a common goal.

It is easy to fall asleep to one's own agency in a Love system; you are one component in a larger whole. It is easy to allow oneself to be carried along in the system's movement; this is especially true when there is no external enemy against which to energize one's self. The possibility of separating one's self from the group or taking

unilateral action may not even enter one's consciousness. There is some relaxation in this going along, in this lack of personal responsibility or agency; but this also comes with a lack of aliveness.

Because of its commitment to integration and homogenization, it is difficult for the Love system to correct itself when things are not going well. Say, for example, that members were bored, or feeling that the system is unproductive or progressing too slowly toward its goal, or maybe even headed in the wrong direction, system members are limited in how they can respond since acceptable responses must fall within the values of a Love system: homogeneity and integration -- equality of members, togetherness, working in community, consensual decision-making, no power differences among members. In short, the tendency is to continue to rely on the same processes that are limiting the system, while suppressing those that might free it. Acting against the values of the Love system has the possibilities of enlivening and strengthening it, but it can also jeopardize one's relationship within the system. The following is a case in point.

Some time ago, I was participating in a three-day off-site with members of my trainer network. I was relatively relaxed going into the meeting since the design and implementation of the event were in the hands of a Planning Committee. My comfort was short-lived. I had

difficulty sleeping the night following our first day of meetings. Over a third of our time had passed with what I felt was little accomplishment, excitement, or sense that much useful would come from our efforts. Some potentially productive directions had come up, but there was no energy behind them and no structure to support them. It felt to me that we were in the grips of an ideologically-based Love system. One statement kept sticking in my head; regarding a particular group activity a woman asked: "Is this real or are we role playing?" I knew we weren't supposed to be role playing, but the question itself indicated that we weren't real either.

As the night wore on, I became increasingly worried; something had to be done. Toward morning, the thought hit me: Robust Systems. *Why are we not treating this group as the potential Robust System that it is?* Two feelings struck me simultaneously: the first was excitement at the thought that I could energize the group; the second was anxiety over violating the norms of the group.

At breakfast I met briefly with the Planning Committee, told them that I wanted to try something different that morning; I invited them to let go of their planning responsibilities and just be regular participants in the process I was about to initiate.

I started the morning session with a brief conceptual input on Robust Systems and the four whole system processes. I then described my image of our current condition as a system that was essentially a mush of unfocused energy. Homogenization was present in our shared understanding of and commitment to our common work, and integration was present in our group interaction. But what was depressing us was the lack of energy that comes with individuation and differentiation, the Power processes. We needed these to energize ourselves, to elaborate our differences and to pursue these with zest. I suggested that the process we had been following was not allowing that to occur. I then described the two directional possibilities I heard from the previous day (differences that had emerged but were not being developed), and I asked people to commit fully to one or the other (individuation) for the morning at least, and if they could not commit fully to either, then to move off to a separate location until they could come up with something they could commit fully to.

Most people had no trouble choosing which direction to pursue; those who were torn made a choice and committed to that choice. Energy was high; individuation and differentiation released energy that was available to be released and worked with.

It all worked well...except for one matter: my relationship with the Planning Committee. They felt undercut by me, which they were. They felt I had not trusted them enough to involve them in my plan. I would have put the question of trust somewhat differently: I was concerned that if we were to decide this action consensually within the Love framework, it would not have happened. For me, it was less a matter of trusting the people than the process. Another way of looking at this is: I had been suffering from the suppression of my individuation, and the unilateral action was *my* breaking out.

Relationships with the Planning Committee needed to be repaired. For some that was easier than for others. The more ideologically committed one was to the primacy of integration over individuation, togetherness over separateness, the more difficult the reparation process.

### **Summary**

**Insight #1 revisited.** During the first day, on the inside, members were experiencing some combination of boredom, frustration, game-playing, or low to moderate levels of involvement. From the outside, we see a weak Love system – homogenized and integrated yet lacking the power that comes with individuation and differentiation. During the second day, the members felt energized, involved, working on real

issues, and committed to making things happen. From the outside, we saw a Robust System – Power and Love, a system in which we were zestfully pursuing different avenues while maintaining our commonality and connectedness.

It is possible, as some members of the Planning Committee maintained, that had we followed their plan we would have come to the same place. It didn't feel that way to me, but it is possible. Even if that were the case, the story has the value of describing one person's experience in a Love system: from the initial comfort when there is no apparent need to differentiate or separate, to the discomfort associated with the consequences of those conditions; to the anxiety accompanying the thought, and then the action of breaking through the constraints.

**Feelings are the clue.** When we are caught up in the dysfunctionality of either Love without Power systems or Power without Love systems, our feelings on the inside can be important clues to what are the missing processes of the whole. When in Power systems we experience our difference, our specialness, our separateness from and superiority over the other, these feelings can be a clue to us that this relationship is out of balance and what is needed are actions aimed at identifying

our commonality with the other and our need to integrate with the other in common purpose.

And when in Love systems we are bored, feeling underused, feeling that the system is anemic in its functioning, these feelings can be clues to us that the system is being constrained by the pressures of homogenization and integration, and that what is needed is a release of energy through developing, deepening, and unleashing difference.

Change can come from the inside or the outside; it can come from a system member using one's experience as a clue to system dysfunctionality and as a prod to remedial action; and it can come from an outside consultant/intervener/agitator who sees the dysfunctionality and acts to remedy it. The following is a case of an outside consultant/intervener/agitator.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **POWER IS WHAT?**

Some years ago I was delivering a talk to a group of organizational development specialist and consultants. The subject of the talk was Power. The hall was packed. At the time power was a little discussed topic in the field of organizational behavior and people were anxious to learn what insights I would bring to this largely taboo subject. To the best of my memory, I was a disappointment for most of the audience. The power I was talking about – with great enthusiasm – was not the power they were curious about. For them, power was about those hard headed folks at the tops of organizations who were constantly thwarting these people’s change initiatives. What audience members wanted to know was: *What’s with these people and how can we change them?* Given those expectations, it’s easy to see how my approach was such a letdown. My topic was: Power is creating differentiations.

Long before the concept of Robust System was developed, my colleagues and I began to see the power of individuation and differentiation as they expressed themselves in the Power Lab.

Fritz Steele had been a floating staff/resource person in one program years back, moving from group to group, observing, and if he

saw an opening, making what he hoped would be a useful intervention. The Immigrant (Bottom) group he was now observing had spent endless hours arguing over what direction the group should take. The arguments went back and forth with no resolution. Fritz could feel the heaviness in the group, the frustration, the inability of either side to convince the other, the lack of action, the stifling confinement of being trapped in the weakness of non-action.

The basic disagreement was whether to take direct action against the Elite or to envision and possibly put into play an alternative social system, one that was counter to the current system, one based on consensual law-making, minimal hierarchy, egalitarianism. Each side, with predictable regularity, expressed its disdain for the other's position. The "constitutionalists" were seen as weak and naïve; the "direct action" crowd was seen as reckless and endangering the safety of the Immigrant group.

After many fruitless back-and-forths, Fritz offered a simple observation: *It seems like we have two teams here.* The Immigrants thought about that for a few moments and then split in two as if struck by a jeweler's hammer. Energy that had been bottled up under the pressures to remain homogenized and integrated was now released. Without a lot of discussion it became clear that these two positions

were not in opposition to one another, but rather that differentiation in fact could be a more powerful strategy than either one alone. The “constitutionalists” were going to map out the details of the new societal order, while the “direct action” group would make their moves. One member of the “direct action” group said to the “constitutionalists”: *We’ll get their attention; then they’ll be ready to deal with you.*

**Insight #1.** On the inside, we feel frustration, a mutual grinding down of one another, tension, a weakness of the whole, a fear that our position will lose and that the opposition will win, with all the negative consequences that would have. On the outside, we see a weak Love System – homogenization and integration suppressing individuation and differentiation. And the challenge, whether from the inside (trusting and acting on our feelings) or the outside (noticing and rectifying process imbalance), is how to release that energy, how to allow differentiations to be set free and fully develop while maintaining our commonality and connectedness.

Differentiations either exist from the outset of system life or they will eventually evolve as a system deals with the uncertainties it faces along with the variety of possibilities for dealing with those uncertainties.

Love systems diminish their strength by suppressing difference or keeping difference from being elaborated and set free. Sometimes difference needs to be put into the spotlight and allowed to experience and express its specialness. This is a process described in our next chapter.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **ELABORATING OUR DIFFERENCES**

One reality that works to sustain Love systems is the fact that differences *do* cause one another difficulty; they are not intuitively experienced as additive, and in certain cases they are not. So, rather than hiding differences, it can be helpful to shine a bright light on them and clarify both the difficulties they cause one another and their potential strengths in combination, if there are such. There is a two-stage exercise we employ to demonstrate the two faces of difference in a Love system. The first stage simply demonstrates the process as it relates to relatively benign differences; the second applies these processes to central differences within the Love system.

#### **Stage One: Value Differences**

In stage one we explore members' differences using brief descriptions from the Allport-Vernon Scale of Values. The six basic values are Theoretical, Economic/Practical, Social, Aesthetic, Political, and Spiritual. We acknowledge that most if not all of us are some mixture of these values (homogenization), but for the purpose of the exercise we ask people to choose the one that comes closest to describing a basic value of theirs (differentiation).

Step #1. **Clarifying our difference for ourselves.** Then we have people move off to six spaces in the room and meet with other system members with similar value choices. And the groups are given ten minutes to answer the following question: *What is the unique contribution this value makes to this system?* What is the unique contribution the theoretical value makes? The economic value? The spiritual value? And so forth. And we encourage people not to be shy or humble, but to fully express the contribution their value orientation makes to the larger system. It is important that people get the experience of making differences clear.

Step #2. **Clarifying our difference for other system members.** Members from each values group report out. *This is the unique contribution our value makes to this system.*

Step #3. **Clarifying the difficulties and possibilities in our interactions.** Each group is asked, as they have been listening to the other values, to identify the one that in day-to-day interaction causes it the most difficulty. (If there are more than one, they should identify them as well.) Then they are to be precise in describing what the other value orientation does or doesn't do that causes them difficulty. Pressing people to be precise is critical to bringing out in the open that which when hidden grinds against relationships.

In addition to describing the difficulties, each group is also asked to describe the value they can derive *from the same group or groups they have difficulty with*. Again, these descriptions of the value-to-be-derived-from-the-other cannot be surface platitudes. If such do arise, the group needs to be prodded to dig more deeply. *What is the value this orientation brings to the system? What is missing that this orientation can provide?*

Step #4. **What are we seeing about difference?** Before moving on to Stage Two, system members should have the opportunity to clarify their observations regarding difference. Certain points should emerge: that differences exist, that they can and often do rub up against one another, that no system would function successfully if it were driven by any one value alone, and that the same differences that grind up against one another can also be productive for one another.

Once all of this is made clear, it's time to move onto Stage Two.

### **Stage Two**

In Stage Two, the same Stage One processes are followed only this time the differences to be explored are those that are central to the system. In cross-functional systems, the differences would be the functions: manufacturing, research and development, marketing,

procurement, and so forth. In cross-cultural systems, the differences would be the various cultures represented. In cross-sector projects, the differences would be by sector, for example: corporate sponsors, government, non-governmental agencies, and community representatives.

Whatever differences are being explored, the process is always the same: clarify the differences and the contributions each makes; identify and clarify the difficulties these differences cause one another; and clarify the contributions these differences can and do make to one another.

Having identified all of the above, the team now needs to work at how to integrate this knowledge as it moves forward. What agreements need to be made regarding how to work together and what to expect from one another. The purpose to this point has been to sharpen differences and create understanding that supports them being employed productively. Elaborating and valuing difference is an important step in transforming a Love system into a Robust System, but individuation may still be the missing ingredient; that is freeing up individuals and differences to move out, challenge themselves, experiment, test, make things happen in the external world. This then is the final process for the system.

**Commitments: adding individuation to the mix.** The final action for the system is for individuals and/or subgroups to make specific commitments and promises regarding next steps that they will be taking. *What will you do and when will you do it?* Actions and the dates for these need to be specific. Procedures for following up on commitments need to be made as well.

Individuation is the process that mobilizes us; it gets the juices flowing; it exhilarates us and it makes us anxious. It is the process that puts us on the line.

### **Summary**

The goal of this exercise is to unleash the energy of a Love-minus-Power system. The goal is to clarify and liberate differences that have been not been fully utilized. The goal is to support a system in becoming a Robust System: Love and Power.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **INDIVIDUATION**

Individuation disrupts the Love system; an individual or group separates itself from the whole and by doing so breaks the flow, upsets the status quo. The possible motivations for an individuated act are many: people may simply be struggling to free themselves from the confining pressures of the Love system; they may be acting in the service of their own private interest; or they may be individuating for what they believe is in the service of some higher purpose. Even in the latter case, though intentions may be noble, the outcomes can be quite different from what one had intended.

#### **Rescue Missions**

In 2003 the United States invaded Iraq. Despite having cobbled together a "Coalition of the Willing," the U.S. undertook this basically on its own; it was not a consensus act supported by the nation of the world. One may never know fully understand the motivations underlying that act, but let us assume it was undertaken with reasonably noble intentions: that is, by overthrowing a dictatorship and establishing a western-favorable-modernistic-democratic government in the Mid-East, one that could transform that part of the

world in ways that would be beneficial to governments and people in both the Mid-East and the West, and that doing so might even be an important step toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue. As I said, I do not know if this was the motivation, but I do know about another rescue mission, one that I undertook.

It happened in a Power Lab several years ago. I was a member of the Elite. There was an unusual configuration of Immigrants: half were members of a militant teachers union and half were ministers. None of us in the Elite had any real knowledge of life in this Immigrant group, but that didn't stop us from having our story, which was that the peace-loving ministers were oppressed by the power hungry union people, and our Elite mission was to liberate the ministers.

One night we had our opportunity; we had been negotiating with the Immigrants over some of their demands. For me, the content of their demands mattered less than the opportunity to break up that Immigrant group and liberate those oppressed ministers. As the negotiations wore on, my position was firm: we could agree to their demands if I could meet with half of the group. The union negotiators, spokesmen for the Immigrants, resisted. I pressed; nothing could happen without

that meeting of the half. After much wrangling, it was agreed: I could meet with half. This was a terrible concession for the union representatives; I had done the unthinkable; I had split the union. I was grudgingly granted my meeting. It was assumed that I would meet with the power people, but, in a last minute's inspiration, I chose to meet with the "liberated" ministers; this was another blow to the union people. So I met with the ministers and it was for me a most disappointing meeting. These "liberated" ministers were far from grateful; they were furious at me for what I had done. One told me he was going to report me, write a letter to my bosses at headquarters. Which he did. So much for my noble rescue mission -- which should add a note of caution to all "rescue" missions.

### **The Many Faces of Individuation:**

#### **Initiator, Instigator, Adventurer, Experimenter, Energizer**

**Insight #1.** From the outside it may be clear that individuation is precisely what is needed: the system is lethargic, its actions are weak, there is little initiative, and members' resources are under-utilized. Individual action is suppressed; differentiations are limited or insufficiently developed. Individuation is what is needed to energize

the system. On the inside, individuation is experienced quite differently both by the individuating entity (individual or group) and by the system that is being acted upon.

Individuation separates the individual or group from the whole; it disrupts integration and the forward flow of the system. Members inside the system may experience the individuated action as outrageous, unfair, immoral, insane, self-centered, foolhardy, disruptive. And the experience of the individuator, even when simply conceiving the *possibility* of individuation, may also have some of those elements: *This is dangerous. What if I'm wrong? I'll lose my legitimacy if not my membership in this system.* At the same time, the individuator is exhilarated, having moved from relative passivity to excitement and challenge, seeing the possibility of moving the system to its next level of possibility.

Up to this point, the member who is now considering the possibility of individuation, has been coasting in the system, comfortable, anxiety-free, going along in the flow, not particularly challenged by events. And the member's experience of the whole system is much the same; it is moving along, but not with much zest. It is in that condition that suppressed thoughts begin to emerge, possibilities for individuated action; and along with those thoughts

come fear and excitement. Fight or flight. In the next chapter I offer a personal tale of individuation from a power lab before there were Power Labs.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **THE FUTURE IS CANCELLED**

The year is 1970. The place is Berkely Springs, West Virginia. I am Dean of weeklong program called PRIOR (Program to Reduce Institutional and Organizational Racism.) PRIOR was developed in response to a confrontation by a group of African-Americans asserting that National Training Laboratories – a training organization I was associated with at the time - was not doing enough to combat institutional racism. The commitment to creating PRIOR was one outcome of that confrontation.

PRIOR became our first total immersion residential program in which two social classes – the Haves and the Have Nots – were created with sharp differences in wealth and power including such matters as whether you had money (Have-Nots had none), the quality of your meals (sparse for the Have-Nots) and housing (primitive for the Have-Nots), availability of transportation (by foot for the Have-Nots), the extent of your personal belongings (not much more than the clothes you were wearing for the Have-Nots.)

A number of factors distinguish that first program from current Power Labs. First there were the times – the late sixties and early seventies. Issues of racism, sexism, and war were in the air. The

Vietnam War was still raging; Martin Luther King had been assassinated two years earlier; there were riots in many cities; there had been a violent confrontation outside the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago between protesters and police; revolutionary groups of all stripes had had arisen, from the street theater Yippies to the Black Panthers to the bomb-wielding Weather Underground.

Second, there were the participants. Today's Power Lab participants are more corporate; they come to learn more about themselves primarily in the context of organizational life. Though some may come with goals regarding organizational change, their notions of change tend to be within programmatic organizational bounds; rarely are they focused on total system overhaul. The 1970 participants were of a different order; they were more socially conscious and activist; they were more directly focused on the larger societal issues of racism, sexism, and classism.

Third, there was the composition of staff. Our plan was to deal with a variety of forms of institutional oppression: racism, sexism, and youthism. So we brought on staff people who were deeply immersed in these areas including Betty Friedan who a few years earlier had written *The Feminine Mystique*, re-igniting the women's movement, and who was president of NOW, the National Organization of Women; David X.

Spencer, a Black activist who was heading up one of the newly-created community-based schools in New York City; James Kunin, a 21-year old who had just written *The Strawberry Statement*, a description of the student uprising at Columbia University; and a group from the Race Institute of Baltimore, Maryland who had been working to create racial awareness in that city.

And, finally, there is the matter of purpose. PRIOR was about institutional oppression. In our minds, that meant we were focused on institutional change; this was not simply to be about changing ourselves or our groups, although those were considered important, but the larger goal was nothing less than institutional change. It may have been a grandiose vision, but those were the times and that was what we were about.

This last becomes a key factor in my story. There came a point in the life of the system when the matter of institutional change became relevant. Were we serious about it, and were we willing to deal with institutional change in the program *if we the staff were holders of the institution in need of change?*

The Have Have-Not society was generating much drama, events none of us had been fully prepared for, events that mirrored interactions in the larger society: confrontations, sabotage, hard

negotiations, a trumped up constitutional convention, even a hostage taking.<sup>2</sup> Matters heated up to a point at which staff had to decide whether to continue the society or end it. One matter that influenced our thinking was learning from the manager of the conference center that the Have-Nots had approached him requesting gasoline. The Have-Nots had proved themselves to be a formidable, crafty, creative force in our society. What was up with gasoline? Were they thinking about fire? One of our inner city black staff members, strong and brave in so many respects, was panicked at the thought of fire. He had had too many close encounters with fire and too many recollections of fire's destructiveness. As far as he was concerned, this was the end; we needed to stop the society now before really bad things happened.

I disagreed. I felt that this was a critical point in our system life; until now, the struggle had been between the Haves and Have-Nots, and we staff had been mere sideline players. The action was getting closer to us, and that was fine. We were part of the reality of this institution, and if the society was to deal with institutional change, then we were in the game. That was my position, and there were opposing positions. There was the matter of fire, and there was the

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<sup>2</sup> Events from this program are described in *Leading Systems*

matter of racism and sexism that needed to be dealt with more directly with structured activities.

In the end, the decision came down to the keys. The Haves did not control the Have-Nots' belongings, the staff did. The staff had collected these at the outset of the society and locked them away: their luggage, other personal belongings, car keys, and money. Our choice was: Do we return all belongings and end the society, or do we allow matters to continue? It may have been symptomatic of this program that the decision was made not through rational discussion but by a wrestling match. The Black staff member who as I said was strong in all respects except fire wrestled me with the keys hanging between us. He won, the belongings were returned and the societal phase of our program ended.

The program continued with other activities focused on racism (including a set of powerful participant and staff developed skits) and sexism (including a male beauty contest developed by Betty Friedan and Jim Kunin). These were well-designed events that contributed to our learning. I say this to make the point that ending the societal experience did not deaden the program; all of us continued to be involved and contributing.

The activity on the last day was built around planning for back-home. How were we going to use our experience here to create change in our organizations, institutions, and communities?

That evening Jim Kunin and I made the rounds of groups, listening in as people were describing their change plans. By and large, the plans were promising, but there was one commonality that caught my attention. All change efforts focused downward in systems; none were taking on their systems' power structures. I confess to being sensitized to this phenomenon since it jibed with my losing argument: that the society needed to successfully deal with us, the staff, as a warm-up practice field for tackling the power structures in their systems. Jim Kunin agreed with this downward description of change plans. My reaction may have been tainted by sour grapes, but it was not merely sour grapes. But we felt there was little we could do about this now; the opportunity had come and gone. I was experiencing a combination of anger, depression, "I told you so," and futility.

Later that evening my despair deepened as I overheard a conversation between Betty Friedan and David X Spencer; there was some element of mutual congratulations in the tone of their conversation, not about this program – which they were downgrading as merely a "game" – but about the real, in-the-trenches work they

were both doing back home. Maybe this was water cooler talk but I took it seriously. Not only were the change projects limited in scope and power, but, in the eyes of people I respected, all of our work here was not really real, just a game. Despite all of this, I knew that if the participants went home the next day they would have been satisfied with the program. It was involving like no other program they had experienced; people were having significant insights about power and social system life; powerful memories and good person-to-person connections were made, and reasonable change plans had been developed. Yet for me, there was something missing. This system was ok but it was less than it could be; we were not as real as we could be and we had not dealt with institutional racism, which was a major piece of what we had set out to do.

I had trouble sleeping that last night. Somewhere toward morning a frightening and exhilarating thought came to me, the beginning of a plan. There may be many ways to interpret how I was feeling and what I planned to do: be the hero, prove that I was right and others wrong, gain revenge. It may be that some or all of those played into it, but for me this was the prototypical experience of individuating in an integrated system. This system at this point was experiencing no difficulty; it was moving smoothly toward its next

destination. My thought and plan was to disrupt all of that. It may be that from my inside/outside perspective this system seemed in need of energizing, some action that would take it to its next level of possibility. Inside the system people seemed to be feeling satisfied with themselves; they had survived a challenging set of events and had come through stronger for it. I shared much of these feelings, yet I felt there was still more challenge, growth, and power potential for all of us.

Here is the thought that both frightened and exhilarated me: This program was scheduled for two parts. We were about to complete part one; three months down the road we were to gather again and review how our change projects were progressing. My move was to cancel the future.

The following morning I addressed the group. I shared with them my observations regarding their change plans. I also brought up the conversation I overheard between Betty and David as further evidence of the shallowness of this experience. Betty tried to downplay the significance of that conversation, but it served my purpose to take it seriously. Then I dropped my bombshell. I announced that the follow-up gathering was cancelled, that the anemic nature of our change plans did not warrant our getting together. A staff member shouted *He*

*can't do this! He can't do this!* He was right; I had no legitimate authority to cancel the follow-up; I was just a contract worker for this program. For the follow-up to have been canceled I would have needed the agreement of the central office, and it's not likely I would have gotten such agreement and certainly not in time for this move. But I acted as if I did have the authority to act – I was the *Dean* after all - and others seemed to accept that.

And now I had my counter-offer. Funds had been set aside for the follow-up event; those funds were still available. I said that I would be up in my cabin and if people had proposals for *real* change projects, I'd be open to discussion with funds available for support. And then I left.

I spent the next period of time (was it an hour? two hours?) not in my cabin, but hovering just outside the meeting room building. I had no idea what to expect. Would anyone take me up on my offer? Would an angry mob burst out of the conference room and attack me? Would someone think to call the central office to see if in fact I could cancel the follow-up? (Was the fact that no effort was made to contact the central office more evidence of their blindness to or fear of dealing upward in the system?)

Periodically Jim Kunin emerged with a report. The first was a long time coming and it was no surprise: they were furious at me. The second came a short while later: I had put them in a bind, telling them how anemic they were while their only recourse was to come groveling to me seeking approval of their plans. The third report was more promising: people were beginning to agree with my assessment of their change plans. Then came the final message: no one was coming to my cabin, but I was being summoned to the meeting room.

I entered with the proverbial "much trepidation." There were no smiles or friendly greetings, but the room was electric with energy. This was not the collection of individuals I had left a few hours earlier; I was now facing a unified system with its own sense of power and direction. The power balance shifted; they were in charge and I was invited to join *their* process. This was the most energized system I had ever experienced. For me, this was as far as our laboratory experience could take us; we created institutional change *here* as a first step toward creating it *elsewhere*. Plans were made; the bar had been raised on change goals; participants had teamed up around projects for their institutions; plans were made for corporate Have Have-Not programs. Some projects had great success - witness the two

graduates who returned to their state and worked successfully to enact equal opportunity legislation – and some had more modest outcomes.

For me, the magic of that morning was to see a system thinking it was awake, realizing it was asleep, and then coming fully awake to its potential. To see that once is to know that such a transformation is *always* a possibility. Had I had the concept at the time, I would have described the process as the emergence of a Robust System.

**Insight #1.** On the inside were all the above experiences – mine and those of the other participants. From the outside, there was a system operating at a passable level of functioning that needed a burst of individuation to elevate it to its next level of possibility.

### **Summary**

Love systems are anemic in performance and under-stimulating to their members; both the systems as wholes and their members are less than they could be. Love systems suffer from individuation/differentiation deficiency. They are under-differentiated or their differentiations are suppressed or underdeveloped. The challenge is to take steps – individuate – in ways that release system potential.

Creating awareness of whole system processes is one potential avenue for change: educating system members about the potential of Robust Systems; helping them recognize the current state of their

system (some variation of individuation/differentiation deficit); and working with them to explore strategies for identifying, developing, and liberating differentiations. Education, however, can only take one so far. Individuation may make logical sense, but it is inevitably a risky activity; one puts one's self on the line; one runs the risk of failure, embarrassment, humiliation, exile, and more. Abraham Lincoln made such an individuating move with the emancipation of slaves; Anwar Sadat made such a move in an effort to transform Egyptian/Israeli relationships. Both Lincoln and Sadat were murdered for their efforts by outraged forces *within their own systems*, as was Yitzhak Rabin as a consequence of his efforts to break the stalemate in Israeli/Palestinian relationships.

When the possibility of making an individuated move pops into one's head - in that moment of exhilaration and fear - one is confronted with a complicated choice: a predictable, safe, but less than satisfactory future, or an unpredictable, more malleable, and potentially more satisfactory future. The temptation is great to remain with the safe and less than satisfactory future.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

A Robust System is a possibility for all the social systems of our lives: the family, team, organization, university faculty, middle management, worker groups, social action entities, government agencies, and nations. Robust systems express both their power and their love.

Their power comes from individuation and differentiation: from the freedom and independence of their members to experiment, test, explore, and challenge themselves, and through the development and elaboration of a wide variety of structures and processes that offer rich experiences for members while enabling the system as a whole to interact complexly with its environment.

Their love comes from homogenization and integration: from recognizing and maintaining the commonality of system members, and from system members coming together, using their uniqueness to support and be supported by one another in common cause.

The Robust System is energizing and challenging for its members; both the energy and the challenge come from mastering processes that appear to be in conflict with one another but which in fact are mutually enhancing. Individuation is self; integration is

community; individuation is freedom, separateness, independence, private cause; integration is togetherness, collaboration in common cause. Yet it is the result of individuated activities that enrich and strengthen integration; and integration – the sharing of information, knowledge, and support – strengthens subsequent individuation.

Differentiation is difference, and homogenization is commonality; yet homogenization is the comforting base that enables us to elaborate our differences. We can comfortably explore and elaborate our differences so long as we acknowledge our underlying commonality.

We have also seen how potentially robust systems diminish their potential by falling into, or choosing to be, either Power Systems or Love Systems: Power Systems in which Differentiation and Individuation predominate while Homogenization and Integration are under-developed or suppressed; or Love Systems in which Homogenization and Integration predominate and Differentiation and Individuation are under-developed or suppressed.

We have seen how Power and Love systems develop in reflexive response to their immediate environmental conditions. We have seen how initially adaptive responses harden into dysfunctional patterns. And we have seen how systems can choose to be Love or Power Systems based on ideology.

We've seen how system sustainability requires both system power and system love, and without both systems diminish their effectiveness and can ultimately self-destruct. The Love system has neither the energy nor the differentiated repertoire needed to stimulate its members or effectively cope with the dangers in its environment and prospect among its opportunities. The Power System self-destructs as parts harden in their difference and separateness, lose their commonality and connectedness, and members feel justified in separating from one another, or hurting, and ultimately destroying one another whether in the form of turf warfare among members of Top systems or racial, religious, or ethnic warfare in society.

Hope lies in system consciousness, but system consciousness does not come easily to us. We do not naturally see and understand the processes of the systems of which we are a part, yet we *are* capable of such understanding. At one level, the antidotes to dysfunctional Power and Love Systems are straightforward. Power Systems need infusion of homogenization and integration. Processes need to be created whereby members experience their commonality with one another, and there need to be opportunities in which members interact with one another, supporting and being supported by one another in common cause. Love Systems need infusions of

individuation and differentiation. Members need to be willing to separate themselves from the pack, pursue independent directions, and shake up the status quo, surface and elaborate differences.

**Insight #1.** And there is this other piece of knowledge that is at the heart of system consciousness; it has to do with the relationship between our feelings as members inside the system and the processes of the whole as viewed from outside the system. When we are immersed in a Power System, we have strong feelings toward the other; we see them as foreign, other, dangerous, separate. And those feelings seem very solid to us, like the way things *really* are. We may be reluctant to see that those feelings are not the ways things *really* are, that they are a *consequence* of the process we are in. Change the process and the feelings toward the other will change. If Tops who are engaged in turf warfare infused more homogeneity and integration into their system, if they shared important information with one another, if they took time to walk in one another shoes, if they functioned as mutual coaches to one another committed to one another's success, if they made opportunities to work together on projects unrelated to their organizational specialties, their feelings toward one another would fundamentally change. Instead of fearing, opposing, and defending, they would come to understand, value, and respect, and

possibly like one another. When one is caught up in the power dynamics, such a transformation is inconceivable. Yet it is always available. And what is true for the Tops is also true for all members of systems caught up in power relations.

There is a parallel illusion in the Love System – the feeling that this system is weak and powerless. That feeling too may be experienced as grounded in reality - *That's simply the way it is with this system*. Yet, if system members dared to individuate, if they sought to identify, liberate, and elaborate differences that are suppressed in that system, that “weak” system would be remarkably transformed.

When one observes the current status of our world's system relationships – from broken marriages, to failed partnerships, to children's alienation from their parents, to territoriality, alienation and we/them relationships in organizations, to strife within churches regarding homosexuality, to terrorism, to ethnic cleansing and warfare – all grounded in what feel to be solid and justifiable feelings about self and other – one cannot help but see the costs of Power Systems without Love and Love Systems without Power. And, given that we have the capacity to see, understand, and master the whole system processes of which we are a part, there is hope.

## CODA

Tillich's essay deals with love, power, and justice. When I first undertook the current work, I felt that I could deal with power and love as whole system processes, but that justice would elude me. Justice implies morality, and morality is outside the realm of total system processes. Robust Systems are amoral; they build powerful relationships internally, and they have strong capacity externally. But robust can be for good or evil.

So there is no morality to Robust Systems. And then it occurred to me: There may be a whole systems equivalent of justice when applied to the one system of which we all are a part, the single system of humanity. This whole system is a Robust System and the reality of life in that system is: We are similar and we are different; we are separate and we are connected. That is how it is on the outside; it is our reflexive blindness and ideological commitments on the inside that lead us to the limitations of Power or Love. Recognizing our underlying reality as a single ever evolving Robust System, understanding it, and acting on the basis of that reality may in fact be the whole system equivalent of morality. A systems perspective on Justice.

This essay was completed while working and vacationing on Key West, Florida. A bumper sticker seen on many locals' cars reads: One Human Family...I would amend it to read: One Robust Human Family.

Barry Oshry

Key West, 2009

### **Additional Resources**

(1) For more on the Power Lab, see:

Oshry, B. (1999). *Leading Systems: Lessons from the Power Lab*. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler.

(2) For more on the Organization Workshop, see:

Oshry, B. (2007). *Seeing Systems: Unlocking the Mysteries of Organizational Life (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler.

Additional information on both of these programs can be found at [powerandsystems.com](http://powerandsystems.com).

For further reading on this human systems perspective, see:

Oshry, B. (1994). *In the Middle*. Boston, Mass.: Power + Systems.

Oshry, B. (1992). *The Possibilities of Organization*. Boston, Mass.: Power + Systems.

Oshry, B. (2000). *There is no New Scientific Paradigm...Yet (Toward a Most Practical Science of Social System Life)*. Boston, Mass.: Power + Systems.

**Further resources**

Kahane, A. (2004). *Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities*, San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler.

Tillich, P. (1954). *Love, Power and Justice*, London: Oxford University Press.