To have to halve to have: ‘Being’ in the middle in changing time’s space

Abstract by

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What I call middle-class society is any society that becomes rigidified in predetermined forms, forbidding all evolution, all gains, all progress, all discovery. I call middle-class a closed society in which life has no taste, in which the air is tainted, in which ideas and men are corrupt. And I think that a man who takes a stand against this death is in a sense a revolutionary.

(Fanon, 1967, p. 224)

Abstract

During feudalism, middle managers were the king’s comptrollers and protectors. In terms of class structure, they fell into the workspace between the “have s” and the “have nots” but to survive, ultimately their loyalties needed to be with the ‘haves’ at the expense of the ‘have nots’ (Krahn & Lowe, 1988; Thompson, 1967; Whipp, 1987). The delineation between these two general classes remained relatively stable from propagation of highly traditional acceptance of cultural and societal role inheritance as opposed to role achievement. In other words, most feudal middle managers had no where else to go but down so they used peasants as objects to prop them, up.

Presently, middle managers also reside in the workspace between those above and those below. The difference between the feudalistic and the post-modern middle manager is one inherent in the paradox of choice (Schwartz, 2004). By virtue of role achievement rather than feudalistic role ascription, today’s middle managers can act in ways to be promoted or to have more, if, while simultaneously serving self-interest, they also choose to serve both “tops and bottoms” (Oshry, 1994, p. 8; see also Kets de Vries, 2001). Consequently, middle managers need to be in constant temporal and spatial compromise: they must, at the same time, show multiple allegiances by maintaining many diverse relationships while attending to task (Hornstein, 2003; Robbins & Langton, 2003; Schwartz, 1990; Whetton & Cameron, 2003). Middle power decreases when perceptual boundaries become stonewalled to the extent that synchronistic consideration of other(s’) contextual spaces is eliminated. Without the desire to better invest through paradigmatic transformation, the middle manager is unable to become divested of ‘bad’ values, attitudes and beliefs, which therefore, impedes leadership towards the establishment of ‘good’ cultural norms (Hall, 1966/1990):

‘Personality’ thus entails not merely a choice of, and adherence to, ‘certain ultimate “values” and “meanings of life’ but also the choice of, and adherence to, a particular life-sphere. Weber’s point here is that this-worldly rational-teleological action in modernity can only express itself through labour in a given life-sphere, where this labour involves
commitment to norms and obligations which are irreconcilable with those of the other
life-spheres … (Owen, 1998)

Consequently, middle managers learn to abuse their subordinates in the same manner middles are abused
by their superiors, causing the psychodynamics of object use (Ogden, 1989).

Middle managers can actualize attributes of effectiveness and efficiency if they learn to minimize
object use by moving through object relations toward object _collabrelations_ or the ability to learn to co-
create faith and trust or negative capability (French, 2001) as the means to simultaneously, help self and
others - instead of self or others. The means by which this movement through space and time occurs is by
continually moving through intermediaries to split differences between contraries (Aristotle, 344-322
BC/1961) or between master and slave (Carr, 2003; Hegel 1807/1977). To survive in today’s organisations,
middle managers need to be, synchronistically, masters and slaves. In changing time’s space, being
successful in the middle is being and doing (moving) between contraries of master and slave or living in
the personality paradox of master slave without ever becoming master or slave. In post-modern parlance,
being well in the middle is to do well as servant leader (Daft, 1998; Greenleaf, 1998, 2003; Kofman &
Senge, 1995; Senge, 1990; Wituk et al., 2003).

Psychodynamically, being and doing well in the middle entails continual practise of moving
away from modern times’ ‘bad’ ego defences toward post-modern times’ ‘good’ ego offences (Alford,
Klein, 1975a-d; Marcuse, 1955, 1964; Ogden, 1989; Spielrein, 1912/1994). This means enacting continuous,
synchronous splitting of differences between the ‘bad’ and ‘good’ of self and others, because self and
others are at the same time, ‘good’ and ‘bad’. However, lack of desire, anxiety, and or inability to do or to
make these changes creates the post-modern mid-life crisis (Carr, 1994; Fuller, 2003; Glass, 1993, 1995;
Sievers, 1994) and the state of stagnation from fear of experiencing degrees of the split personality.
Ontological security (Laing, 1960), then, is achieved by moving toward ontological insecurity without
becoming either secure or insecure but by achieving decentred centeredness. The instrumentality of
moving toward ‘good’ splitting and similar enactment of other ego offences creates enough
decenteredness to keep one practised at mastering change so as not to become or make others slave(s) to
change. We are masters and slaves; leaders and servants and paradoxically, splitting is the means by
which different personalities are able come together to share in servant leadership. The purpose of this
paper is to explore the necessity to **have to halve to have** while being in the middle in changing time’s space.
References


