

Nondual Leadership: Detached Involvement

by Robert M Dittler, Ph.D.

You can't lead something you yourself identify with.

*The paradox is that detachment
(not withdrawal, escape, or indifference)
coupled with involvement
(not addiction) -*

*in other words, detached involvement -
enables mastery.*

The Zen of Management Maintenance:

Leadership Starts with Self-Discovery,

Jagdish Parikh Harvard Business School

<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4790.html>

Leadership - it comes in many shapes and sizes. For the sake of discussion, let us just summarize and say that a Leader envisions a future and empowers others to realize that vision.

To distinguish leadership from management, management involves specific work tasks at hand that need be accomplished by subordinates and is based upon a set of objectives. Perhaps the old adage suffices: leadership is doing the right thing and management is doing things right. The leader might educate, draw out of the people what to do. Whereas, the manager might instruct, put into the people how to do it.

Nondual - it has no shape and no size. It actually has no explanation and certainly no definition. The ancients define nondual as not this, not that. A metaphor comes in handy to explain nonduality. We can describe the mind of an infant as nondual. The infant just absorbs all that it senses without difference or distinction. The infant has no belief systems to filter its sensations. The infant has no self or ego to judge the rightness or wrongness of a sensation. The infant has no thought about this or that or anything else. The infant, some may say, has no mind. How often we say in response to something we determine as negative: "Pay it no mind. Just let it go."

How would we lead without a mind? How would we lead without an ego? How could we envision a future? How could we empower others to realize that future? What is a nondual perspective?

First and foremost, the Leader realizes that there is a difference - a grave difference - between the way he hopes things to be and the way things are. He has resolved his conflict with his perception of Ideal Reality - his hopes and dreams - with the way things actually are. He has also resolved his conflict with his perception of Real Reality - the way he thinks things are - with the way things actually are. He has recognized and let go of his attachment to his beliefs, his hopes and dreams, and his biases and prejudices. The Leader perceives with clarity just the way things are, just as they are simply because they are what and how they are in the moment.

How? He has realized that he essentially is not his thoughts, feelings or emotions. His thoughts, feelings, and emotions are metaphorically just background noise in his field of experience. Likewise, he has realized that what he perceives -- besides his thoughts, feelings and emotions, but also people, places, things and events -- are also just his own creation. As Gertrude Stein once echoed: "there is no there there" (although she was probably referring to her house in Oakland). The Leader accepts unconditionally whatever is occurring now in the moment - just as it is, now.

The leader maintains an attitudinal stance that tends to be neither flexible nor inflexible, neither soft nor hard. He is inclined neither liberally or conservatively. At best, the Leader may be described as fluid. He succeeds because takes the shape of any container, yet retaining his integrity. The Leader is much like water, in this regard. How does he maintain a fluid, rather than flexible or inflexible attitude? He has

resolved his conditioned resistances. He appreciates the natural biases inherent in his belief systems through which he filters his perceptions of reality. He accepts these conditioned resistance for what they are, his own creation. He lets them go. The Leader has become the center of the cyclone, being Peace amid the chaos of ever present change in its myriad of forms. He is detached. The Leader is Nonduality.

Being detached from his perceptions -- thoughts, feelings and emotions, peoples, places, things, and events -- the Leader is absolutely responsible for his own integrity as he changes the shape the moment. He has resolved his basic human resistance to change. He has recognized his desire to keep things as they are even while recognizing that everything really is changing moment by moment. He does not create guilt or take pride in what he does or does not do. Leaves fall from a branch. Rain drops. Ivy grows. The Universe expands. Hence, the Leader engenders no feelings of blame for what others do or not do. He holds no residual emotional image of his own self or of others. He lets go moment-by-moment. Hence, the Leader tends not to experience the past emotionally. His own self image is no longer that of edited memories.

Being detached from his perceptions, he does not perceive reality from emotional or I-based conditioning. He has resolved the great trinity of Me, Myself, and I. Hence, he has learned that his subjective feelings are nothing more and nothing less than conditioned reactions that he had learned. He recognizes them to be just what they are: products of his own imagination. As such, they are fantasy, existing only in his mind. He created them. He lets them go.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Leader is not bogged down by unnecessary pain and suffering: psychological, emotional, or otherwise. The Leader is simply present. He engages thought when needed. He does not need to be constantly thinking, verbalizing, conceptualizing, or forming images. The Leader, taking the shape of the moment, being fluid, maintains his own integrity. He is totally unconditioned and one with the universe, his immediate moment. In essence, he recognizes when he is resisting his own resisting and lets it go. Therefore, the Leader experiences no conflict. The Leader can eschew a sense of calm composure, excitedly or more subdued, in the moment. Boredom, accordingly, is never an issue.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Leader is not depressed being caught in his memories of the past. He is not anxious being caught in his imaginings about a future. Nor is he worried being caught in the illusive present wondering whether or not to be depressed or anxious. The Leader has recognized the illusion of the alleged "continuity of events." He lets it go. The moment, accordingly, does not necessarily evoke an emotional impact. Again, he has integrated the sacred trinity (Me, Myself, I) of the Human Condition. He lets the trinity go. Only he in his awareness remains. The Leader is not the center of the (narcissistic) Universe. The Leader connects with others naturally, empathizing with others however they may be: liberal realist, liberal conservative, conservative idealist or conservative realist.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Leader may become angry, yet his anger is not me-based. The Leader does not take the moment personally or seriously. The Leader recognizes flattery and abuse as just as what they are and lets them go. If angry, the anger is very short lived. The Leader has no need to keep a residual mental image of the event. The Leader just lets it go. The Leader's basic temperament remains just as it is, yet the Leader responds rather than reacts to his thoughts, feelings, emotions, perceptions or people, places, things or events. Whether the Leader responds or reacts in moment, he does so by choice reflecting his absolutely objective grasp of the moment in the moment. The Leader experiences his emotions minimally and momentarily. He does not need to engage in the drama of the moment echoing the Human Condition. Likewise, the Leader does not create romantic images of the past or even nostalgic feelings about the past. The Leader knows no benefit.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Leader, therefore, being in the moment and being the moment, envisions a future and empowers others to bring that vision to Light. He adapts his style to meet the vision and - for the lack of a better expression - the leadership team. The Leader recognizes

not only his own the idiosyncrasies, personality, style and intellect, but also those of his team just for what they are. He lets his considerations about them go. He realizes that the best instruction is often the most subtle. The Leader, being detached from his perceptions, has the freedom to grow along with his team members as all grow in awareness given the subtly of instruction. All acknowledge that mistakes happen, good things happen and in absolute reality, nothing happens. Light is.

Ref: The Science of Enlightenment, Nitin Trasi, M.D.. New Delhi, India: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 1999.
Zen and The Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness, James H. Austin, M.D., Massachusetts, CT, USA: The MIT Press, 1999.

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