



DOMINATOR HIERARCHIES VS. GROWTH HOLARCHIES

by Muktananda

We are all familiar with patriarchal organization structures - hierarchal pyramids where power and decision-making are concentrated at the top, almost exclusively in the hands of men. As such, they may be characterized as dominator hierarchies - oppressive and power driven. The armed forces, religious institutions, political organizations, global corporations, criminal cadres and caste systems are all dominator hierarchies. As one ascends its power structure, each level of the hierarchy becomes more exclusive and more authoritarian. In short, it is a command and control fear-based structure. Men tend to see the world in these terms and structure their organizations accordingly. But what about the other half of humanity? Is that how they see the world?

Carol Gilligan is best known for *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (2009). According to Gilligan, there are two kinds of moral voices - the masculine and the feminine. The masculine voice is logical and individualistic, meaning that the emphasis in moral decisions is protecting the rights of people and making sure justice is upheld. The feminine voice places more emphasis on protecting interpersonal relationships and taking care of other people. This voice focuses on care, which means focusing on the needs of the individual in order to make an ethical decision. When it comes to moral reasoning, Gilligan found that men tend to emphasize autonomy, rights, justice, agency and hierarchy (ranking). Women, on the other hand, tend to emphasize care, communion, responsibility and relationship (non-ranking).

When Gilligan asked women, "How would you describe yourself?" she found that women define who they are by describing relationships. Men defined themselves by separation, or the use of "I" statements. She also found that men think in more violent terms than women. Gilligan

compares these results to childhood fairytales where men fantasize about slaying dragons and women fantasize about relationships.

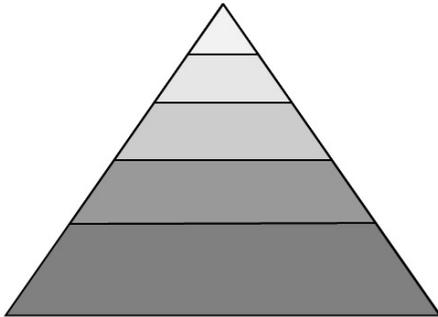
Gilligan identified four stages of female development: (i) Egocentric/Selfish - The woman cares only for herself, (ii) Ethnocentric/Care - The woman extends her care to a chosen group, (iii) World-Centric/Universal Care - The woman cares for all groups, and (iv) Integrated - The woman integrates both masculine and feminine modes in herself. Only at stage three does the woman begin to find oppression truly objectionable. That is why, she claims, slavery was only outlawed a mere two hundred years ago.

Society is at a stage where women, in general, find oppression truly objectionable. Consequently, many feminists equate all hierarchies with social oppression, which they attribute to the patriarchy. Hence, some argue, not entirely without justification, that men are responsible for all of society's ills, and that all hierarchies are, therefore, evil.

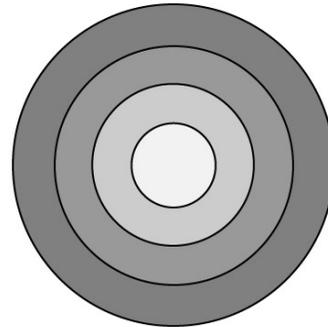
Gilligan, on the other hand, argues that androgyny, or integrating the masculine and the feminine, is the best way to realize our potential. To that end, Gilligan points out that there are two major, but very different types of hierarchies: *Dominator Hierarchies* and *Growth Hierarchies*. Dominator hierarchies are patriarchal, oppressive and power driven. In contrast, growth hierarchies are more inclusive and less oppressive. They are more loving, more integrating, more inclusive, more caring, more embracing and, thus, more conscious. They are often called "holarchies." As such, I refer to growth hierarchies as "Growth Holarchies" Growth holarchies are how we overcome dominator hierarchies.

Growth holarchies are more aligned with how the universe works. The universe evolved from quarks to atoms, to molecules to cells to organisms. Each of these levels transcends and includes its predecessor. Each unit is called a "holon" or a "whole/part." Thus, a holon is a part of a larger whole. In growth holarchies the higher level does not oppress, enslave or dominate its lower level. If anything, it loves and embraces it. Ever since the Big Bang, the primary drive of evolution has been self-organizing through self-transcendence. Each stage of development differentiates the previous stage and then integrates the newly emergent parts to a higher-level order.

In their simplest forms, dominator hierarchies and growth holarchies may be symbolized as follows:



Dominator Hierarchy



Growth Holarchy

Margaret Heffernan is an entrepreneur, writer, keynote speaker, the former CEO of several businesses and the author of five books, largely exploring business and effective leadership. As part of her research, she interviewed 100 women CEOs. At her first interview she was escorted to meet with the CEO but, to her surprise, the CEO was joined by her management team for the interview. It turned out that every single woman CEO included her management team for the interview. How many male CEO's would do that? That is why I claim that growth holarchies led by women and based upon the feminine principle are charting a course towards global transformation.

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