

Reinventing Organizations' Insights that Could Compliment CHM Initiatives

I'd like to share some reflections on Frederic Laloux's Reinventing Organization as I care passionately about the book's implications and think they so resonate with the Center for Healthy Minds' vision for a kinder, wiser, more compassionate world.

I had the pleasure of visiting at your open house and am so eager to share perhaps some teasers to encourage consideration of Laloux's work. I come from a human/organizational background and roughly at retirement age became a convert to a more mindful way of life which has become a community based dream by a cadre of us in Winona, MN.

I seek to show some connection with Laloux's work and promoting the four domains of a healthy mind:

- 1. an awareness and being able to recognize certain basic qualities of awareness and deploy awareness in a volitional way.**
- 2. care and connection and interpersonal relationships.**
- 3. understanding of the self, and an inquiry into the self and insight into the narrative that we carry around**
- 4. connecting to a sense of meaning and purpose.**

Thich Nhat Hanh often says, "the next Buddha will be a sangha." Based on my reflections on Reinventing Organizations(RO), I'd assert perhaps the next Buddha could be organizations. Laloux has studied a dozen organizations mostly from the United States and Europe; however, two are worldwide ranging in size from 40,000 to 100 co-workers in for profit to non profit and manufacturing to service settings. These organizations, some having existed for 40 years, were completely unaware of each other, but have all functioned at a higher stage of consciousness which perhaps are nondual ways of thinking/operation. Laloux has a color scheme based on Wilber /Beck/Graves Spiral Dynamics, and he calls this stage of functioning Teal Consciousness; its prime feature being dis-identification from the ego.

Laloux has found commonality in their operating principles, they: have a deep belief in self management, foster a climate in which all co-workers move to finding wholeness, and listen for the emerging evolutionary purpose that propels the organization and individuals ahead. Organizations have intuited Wilber's All Quadrant thinking striving for congruence between the individual and the collective and the exterior and interior(see P 227).

These three areas: self management, wholeness, evolutionary purpose are summarily conveyed graphically in concrete practices that so differ from conventional organizational functioning on pages- 140-141, 190-1, 223-224, respectively. I'll give one example from each area.

Self-Management: Job titles and job descriptions changes to fluid and granular roles instead of fixed job descriptions and there are no job titles.

Wholeness: In old way of thinking job titles are identity-giving status markers with a prescriptive job description. While in the new consciousness, absence of job titles compels oneself to find a deeper sense of identity and no job description allows selfhood to shape roles.

Evolutionary Purpose: In old way of thinking, it's not the organization's role to help employees to identify their personal calling. While in the new consciousness, recruitment, training and appraisals are used to explore the juncture of individual calling and organizational purpose.

You can get an inkling even from the 3 examples above that there is concerted effort to structurally more deeply understand the self and the narratives that shape it seeing the self as a construct, an ever changing process.

Laloux aids in an unpacking of the narratives we hold around power and control.

"If we look at ego from a distance , we can suddenly see how its fears, ambitions and desires run our lives. We can learn to minimize our need to control , to look good, to fit in. We are no longer fused to our ego, and we don't let fears reflexively control our lives. In this process we make room to listen to the wisdom of other, deeper parts of ourselves. What replaces fear? A capacity to trust the abundance of life. We cross the chasm and decrease our need to control people and events(even the unexpected or mistakes) Things will turn out alright. Life has given us opportunities to grow(p 44). So in summary, Laloux says leaders' fear to give up control overrides their ability to trust, so they keep making decision higher up and not allowing a power sharing with co-workers closer to the action.

As I ponder this collection of thoughts, perhaps Power is the delusional placeholder for our sense of lack. Laloux is constantly pointing to delusions of power as we try to control in staving off existential fear... He notes a whole industry that has sprung up around project management trying to get control of complexity however in TEAL organizations there's radically simplified project management. He comments when we concentrate power at the top and create the powerful and powerless this brings a plague to organizations as it brings out the shadow side of personal ambition , politics, mistrust, fear, and greed by those grasping for power while resignation and resentment result for the powerless.

In mentioning the Dutch healthcare organization(Buurtzorg) he notes a central office staff of less than 30 for an organization of over 7,000 and comments that large central staffs give the illusion of control to those in field with little sense of how dispiriting and counterproductive this power over ploy is. Also, Teal Organizations have little need for all the policies, detailed budgets, and other road maps that give other leaders an illusionary sense of control. Another example of our current illusions is the idea that one person could master all the information of such a complex system rather than the Teal approach to things which is more natural way where we trust the collective intelligence of the system.

So as we look here, we begin to see that structures and practices have a huge bearing on the human qualities manifest in people . I'd concur that striving for power brings much discord and mental anguish among the strivers and much apathy among the complacent. I think it's important to bear in mind it's not the craving for dollars as much as the craving for power that in a delusional way appears to attempt to mitigate the sense of lack.

As we think of organizations from profit to non profit, it's important to realize there is a quest for power beyond the mere monetary. In the area of adult development research(Perry, Blenkey et. al., Kegan, Cook Greuter, etc) , the research on Systems 1 vs Systems 4 teachers sheds some insights as I think power over is very present in System 1 teachers and the structural configuration of most schools maintains this. It seems to me that System 4 teachers(which are rare according to most research) would much better support an environment where thinking is a very important part of human creativity and the mindfulness and compassion are inherent..

System 1 Teachers consider themselves, textbooks, and persons in high positions to be sources of authority. Questions have only one right answer. It is inappropriate and unnecessary for students to search for other answers and thereby defy authority. Teachers who function at this level deliver information and ask questions in such a way that only one answer is right. Students are rewarded for recalling the definitions and facts provided by the authoritative sources, and for conforming to the rules and procedures set forth by the teachers.

System 4 Teachers see knowledge as tentative, not absolute, and they have respect for doubt, an openness to new experience, and can consider situations from the pupil's point of view. They do not regard themselves as authority sources. Rules and standards are neither arbitrary nor imposed; rather, they are presented as information. They encourage students to test, relate, and reflect upon their own ideas and to hypothesize, synthesize, and even conjecture about

content and ask questions to aid in the search for understanding and for relationships rather than for precise, correct answers.

I'm not trying to denigrate teachers just pointing to a reality that goes vastly ignored. Teachers are a subset of people where their work structures and norms do much to thwart human potential.

Part of the celebrating of Laloux is that he is echoing and providing research evidence for the 40 year old observations of Chris Argyris, a hard nosed organizational consultant who recently passed away , and who also saw the consequences of structures and norms that perpetuate power over. . He said, most of our schools and colleges, businesses, legislatures, social agencies, and community organizations operate in this power over fashion. In doing so they keep individuals from maturing, as employees and students, they are given minimal control over their environment and are encouraged to be passive, dependent, and subordinate. Thus the pattern of keeping people immature is built into the fundamental management practices of most organizations.

Laloux' s Teal organizations reflect senior leaders who have willfully given up their commanding power and move to a higher stage of consciousness . I've always been so struck by his insight early in the book. " There is a dirty secret I have covered in 15 years I have spent consulting and coaching organizational leaders: life at the top of the pyramids isn't much more fulfilling. Behind the façade and the bravado, the lives of powerful corporate leaders are ones of quiet suffering too. Their frantic activity is often a poor cover up for a deep inner sense of emptiness. The power games, the politics, and infighting and taking their toll on everybody. Both the top and the bottom, organizations are more often than not play fields for the unfulfilling pursuit of our egos, inhospitable to the deeper yearnings of our souls.(p.4)"

At this higher stage of consciousness, their power resides in moral leadership. Laloux is clear that Teal organizations can't exist unless leaders have engaged in this surrender of formal power. But power changes dimensions and transforms; it's more of a" power with" that supports abundance and sharing vs. grasping and hoarding. And related to RO's three tenets of: self management, seeking wholeness, and listening for evolutionary purpose 1) Power is multiplied when everybody gets to be powerful, rather than just the few at the top(self management). 2. Power is used with more wisdom, as people bring in more of themselves to work(wholeness). 3) Somehow things just fall into place when people align their work and wisdom with the life force of the organization(evolutionary purpose).

So what makes a CEO or a mid level manager want to give up power over? This bears more looking at Coming to Wholeness. Certainly, Authentic leadership has been in the management lexicon for years. Laloux's TEAL consciousness really addresses issues of a healthy understanding of self and its narratives that I've not seen in common business leadership books. He begins his chapter on General Practices in Striving for Wholeness with a quote by Einstein: "A human... experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Laloux goes on to talk about the masks we must all wear in typical organizations citing Parker Palmer's prescient insight, "You can measure an organization by the number of lies you need to tell to be part of it". He then begins to lay out the types of practices that Teal Organizations have for people to support each other in their inner work. Laloux states by wearing masks, we don't just lose productivity at a deeper level our humanity feels cheated by the shallow relationships we have when we don't engage with each other at levels that truly matter.

I think It's staggering here to think of the loss and cost implications from the inauthenticity that is normative. In 2016, Robert Kegan's *An Everybody Culture: Becoming A Deliberately Developmental Organization* echoes this same message as leaders begin to consider what the cost/loss implications have been in the old power over models: *In an ordinary organization, most people are doing a second job no one is paying them for. In businesses large and small, in government agencies, schools, hospitals, in for-profit and nonprofits, and in any country in the world, **Most people are spending time and energy covering up their weaknesses, managing other people's impressions of them, showing themselves to their best advantage, playing politics, hiding their inadequacies, fighting their uncertainties, hiding their limitations.** Hiding. We regard this as the simple biggest issue of loss of resources that organizations suffer every day.*

Thus leaders need to be the models and condition setters so we can be free from our delusionary prisons and mask wearing. It is unlikely this type of leader would have a quest for power. These organizations support reflective spaces that integrate: yoga, meditation, prayer, walking in nature along with large group reflections on how from a higher place of consciousness we can reflect, for instance, on failure. Wholeness can't be found in egoic consciousness and it seems from Laloux's accounts that creativity on the other side of emptiness accounts for abundant unfolding around the organization's evolutionary purpose.

Although not specifically noted in Laloux's book, Theory U (Otto Scharmer) processes bear a great deal of resemblance to ways teams of individuals coming from stances of wholeness approach work issues. Theory U says when voices of: judgment, fear, and cynicism can be overcome, out the stillness the next step emerges. This is similar to David Loy's quote from Buddha, "My mind is empty. According to the situation, the proper thoughts, the proper response arises naturally and spontaneously. It's the freedom to engage rather than to just empty the mind that needs to be emphasized."

Teal organizations in addition to supporting co-workers coming to wholeness to bring a different ethic to working together more motivated from a spirit of generosity, loving kindness, and wisdom of a Teal Consciousness than from the three poisons of greed, ill will, and delusion also have specific structural practices that seek to remove the egoic poisoning from, for instance, decision making processes. For example, Holacracy has a process called Integrated Decision Making that fosters emergence and removes egoic carping. So there are very systematic ways that **care and connection and interpersonal relationships are nurtured and supported.**

In summary of this quick treatment of Teal Organizations striving for co-worker wholeness, it seems that wholeness relates to the move beyond a nagging sense of lack as one sees his or her self beyond the masks and at a deeper level of bringing one's gifts to unfolding processes in a non attached way. So that **connecting to a sense of meaning and purpose are natural to the work setting.**

I wanted to relate Laloux and his attention to the individual and collective narrative and how this relates to culturally conditioned suffering. As I read Laloux and his description of the joy in work and trust in people in Teal organizations, I couldn't help but think of something I learned in U W Business School in the 1960's as an undergrad.. Douglas McGregor, management theorist posited Theory X and Theory Y.

In Theory X some of the stories we tell ourselves are:

- The average person dislikes work and will avoid it he/she can.
- Most people must be forced with the threat of punishment to work towards organizational objectives.
- The average person prefers to be directed; to avoid responsibility; is relatively un-ambitious, and wants security above all else.

Correspondingly, in Theory Y key beliefs are:

- Effort in work is as natural as work and play.
- People will apply self-control and self-direction in the pursuit of organizational objectives, without external control or the threat of punishment.

- People usually accept and often seek responsibility.
- The capacity to use a high degree of imagination, ingenuity and creativity in solving organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
- In industry the intellectual potential of the average person is only partly utilized.

These two positions, X and Y, have such a vast difference as we think of lack or potential. In the 40 plus years since learning this distinction, it seems that Theory X is most commonly believed and acted out as the Argyris summary on management practices fostering immaturity captures this well. This belief causes a great deal of suffering from all the egoic jockeying that constitutes the common work environment. Theory Y comes from a deeper level of consciousness that is grounded in the basic goodness of people which is a meaningful mantra situated in a felt sense of having arrived at some degree of wholeness. Laloux describes the stellar financial and human performance of Teal organizations and helps us begin to realize the loss that comes from the sense of lack that drives Theory X thinking which fails to capture the gifts, goodness, and potential of co-workers.

The flip side of **care and connection and interpersonal relationships is a Theory X world of blame and projection.** This is a keen point for me – I thought the quality movement (where I've spent the last 20+ years working) would be transformative in bringing data for decision making. I loved the Quality guru Deming's dream- mistakes should be our friends. But too often in most places mistakes are still buried. Laloux highlights a degree of responsibility that Teal organizations enjoy. Related to a more tentative understanding of self, people don't become invested in titles/positions. There is much more fluidity in assuming a role and its corresponding responsibilities for a period of time. People have power and latitude to solve problems and don't off load blame to a boss or others. There is a learning curve in making a switch to living with that amount of responsibility and freedom and it is the ground for true professionals to be born-like the Deliberately Developmental Organizations. Again wholeness, opens one to trust this process and every role has a commitment to peers. Co-workers aren't accountable to one boss but rather to all. Trust is huge in this higher level of consciousness. When trust is extended, it breeds responsibility in return. I've never thought of Albert Einstein as a management consultant, but Laloux cites a very prescient quote in a book section called –The Energy of Trust. ,” Everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom”.

The Teal organization moves beyond the scientific materialist world view, it sees the organization as a living system. It's an irony that we've given personhood to the mechanical, heartless organization, when it might be more appropriately given to this entity situated around a living purpose that embraces a greater

good. This seems to be the end point of all faith development models for the individual-that we are called to some higher purpose and surrender the needs of the egoic person matching the CHM tenet on meaning and purpose . Laloux cites a Margaret Wheatley quote(renowned author of Leadership and the New Science), “life is intent on finding what works... The capacity to keep changing, to find what works now, is what keeps an organism alive”. This is so different from all the mechanistic approaches that emulate the scientific materialist worldview. There’s more tolerance for the unknowable and unknown with a realization that a perfect answer doesn’t have to agonized after and found with certainty to move forward.” The organic coordination in Teal mimics more the interdependence of things.

Regarding motivation and intention, I connected with the sense of listening for evolutionary purpose both at the individual and organization level along with earlier statements about wholeness and being motivated by generosity, loving kindness and wisdom. I wonder if this comes from a growing trust in one’s self, and in the unfolding process of life?

In my reflecting on Laloux’s Reinventing Organizations, I’m convinced that organizations operating at Teal levels of consciousness could be the sanghas that are next the Buddha. There seems to be such a capacity to help people on a journey to wholeness that reaps such a benefit personally for co-workers and for the good the organization’s manifestation of its evolutionary purpose.

This changed state seems to beg questions:

- 1) How do CEOs become this type of leader? Could a supportive community help here?
- 2) RO gives some broad strokes for coming to personal wholeness that organizations have tried. Does this supporting environment plus a person’s personal path move them to Teal consciousness? How does this apply to a person’s other life spheres- parenting, civic, religious/spiritual, etc?
- 3) If the workplace become a new sangha-what is the role of religion? Can Teal consciousness be seen as the end that wisdom traditions have aspired for? Is this consciousness a neglected part the major religions’ traditions. Can we see how power has corrupted good intentions in religions to lead from this stance?

I hope this piques interest in the ground breaking work of Reinventing Organizations and has some value in how the Center for Healthy Minds see the intersection of the personal and the organizational as you pursue your vision of a kinder, wiser, more compassionate world especially now as you embark on working with large organizations.

