

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE PROBLEM OF INTENT

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The question of social transformation is by definition bedeviled by the question of what we are transforming to, and by what criteria we regard the place that we are going to superior to where we have come from. For most people the idea of transformation is laced with democratic assumptions, which are often poorly thought through and clumsily applied. Whatever the assumptions are, I think it true to say that most people regard the goal of transformation to produce a happier and more fulfilled citizen and a more prosperous society.

I would like to propose that the issue of social transformation can not be separated from the problem of individual or personal transformation since both of these issues share a common theme. This theme is concerned with the degree to which the individual is unconditional in the pursuit of a goal which is bigger than their self interest. In other words, the *intent* of the individual is to make a contribution.

Transformation of the Individual.

This variable of intent is not to be associated either with wealth or knowledge. We all know people who are bitter and unfulfilled despite the fact that they own a lot. We also know people who are very knowledgeable or are indeed intellectually gifted who are unhappy. I would like to suggest that the key variable that accounts for the fulfillment and maturity of the individual is their *intent*, and that the problem of personal transformation is therefore principally concerned with the issue of intent.

It is axiomatically true that at birth the sum total of an infant's potential lies before it. It has not had anything yet. It has not achieved anything yet. From this point of view an infant is pure expectation with nothing yet realised. It is still going to get it all. It really does not matter if 'it all' is another eighty days of metabolic misery or eighty years of ease. Whatever that potential is, it is owed by the other, which means that the infant is here to get it all from the other. On day one the infant is here to get in the fullest, most absolute and unconditional sense.

It is equally true that at the moment of death one loses everything unconditionally. At this point we have received all that we would have been destined to receive. There is nothing left to get. In fact there is all to lose, to give. When we die we give it all, unconditionally.

Our lives are therefore pinned between these two unconditional moments. We arrive getting it all and we leave giving it all, and the process of maturation which transmutes our lives involves a movement from the one extreme of unconditional taking to the other extreme of unconditional giving.

A counter to this argument would suggest that at the point of death the subject does not give it all, all is taken away. On one level this is, of course true. However, this point would presuppose that the will of the dying person is not synchronised with the cataclysmic event that is unfolding. After all, what is the difference between an experience of something being taken from one to the experience of giving something? This difference has to lie in the intention of the person who is going through the experience.

If, in a transactional sense, one removed the question of intent there would be no difference between money being stolen from me or me making a gift of money. What has happened in both instances is that money went from my hand to another person's hand. In the case of the theft I experience that the money was taken from me

because I had not intended to give it. In the case of the gift I intend to give the other person the money. The difference between being taken from or giving lies in intent.

Death must therefore have two potentials. The one is one of unbridled horror that must ensue when the acquiring self sees all its aspirations nullified in an instant. Under these conditions death is the great rape, the most absolute experience of being taken from. On the other hand, if the subject is able to hand it all over unconditionally, death becomes the most elevated and ecstatic statement of giving possible, precisely because it is unconditional. In so far as our lives inevitably and inexorably aim us in the direction of this uncompromising gateway, it suggests that both appropriacy and inner health must be associated with cultivating the capacity to willingly and deliberately give unconditionally. The transformed individual is the individual who has cultivated the propensity to give unconditionally.

In the simplest, linear terms, the process of maturation is therefore about the transmutation of intention from being here to get to being here to give. The process of transformation is therefore necessarily a process of the maturation of intent. To be mature means to be here to give, intentionally. It means that the self has come to terms with the fact that the other is not there to serve the self, it is precisely the other way around. The self is there to serve the other.

This distinction is also synonymous with the distinction between accountability and its opposite. If you are the one who should be making the contribution you are the one that is accountable for it happening. The child, on the other hand, is not accountable because he or she is not expected to act. To be mature is to be accountable for the contribution you should be making. The child is exonerated from accountability because there is no requirement for the child to give. Rather, the child should be given to.

The distinction between an intent to get and intent to give is also the distinction between power and powerlessness. If you want something from someone else, the other person's capacity to withhold what you want makes you manipulable. It makes them strong and you weak. Whereas if you want to give someone something, and what you are giving is so unconditional that you do not even want them to like what you are giving to them they cannot manipulate you.

In this case you are strong. This means that you are weak to the degree to which you dedicate your attention to what you want to get and you are strong to the degree to which you focus attention on what you should be giving. Again, to be mature means to be here to give, which means to be strong. In so far as personal transformation is generally understood to be about empowerment, then it has to be concerned with the maturation of intent.

To focus on what you should be contributing is therefore what freedom is about. While the focus of my attention is on what the other is giving to me the other has power over me. I am therefore trapped by the other and at the mercy of the other. Assume I want Joe's shirt. Clearly Joe has power over the shirt, and in so far as this is the case Joe's capacity to withhold the shirt gives him power over me.

However, should I be brutally truthful with myself I will recognise that in this whole matter there are really two things at issue. The one is the shirt, and clearly Joe has control over that. The second is my desire for the shirt, which I obviously have power over. Should I disavow the desire for the shirt I slip out from under Joe's capacity to manipulate me. He no longer has any control over me and I am free from him.

If I focus on my expectations I am trapped. If I distantiate myself from my expectations I am free. The easiest way to disavow an expectation is not just to stop it,

but to examine rather what you should be giving to the other, as opposed to what you want to get from the other.

If you were to imagine the totality of the other it would clearly encapsulate you. The rest of the universe, the absolute other completely surrounds you and you are at its centre. When you get something, the thing that you are getting moves from the other to you. On the other hand, when you give something what you are giving moves from the self to the other. Clearly, your hands symbolise your power or your capacity, and your hands sit with you, not with the other.

This implies that you only have power over what you are giving or what's leaving you. You have no power over what you are getting or what is coming toward you because what you are getting is in the hands of the other.

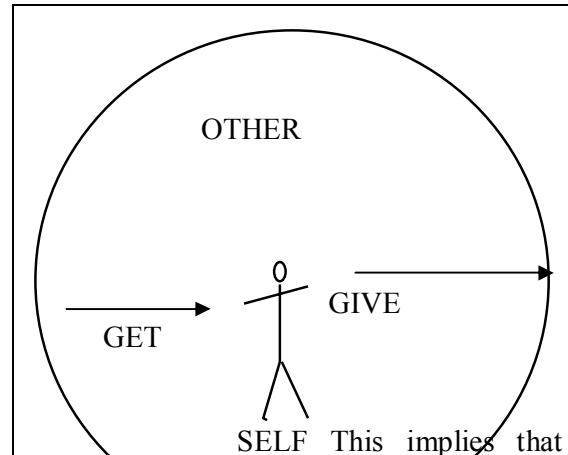
Therefore, when you put attention to what you should be contributing you become strong. On the other hand, when put attention to what you want to get you become powerless. It makes you powerless precisely because it delivers you into the hands of the other. Because you are at the mercy of the other you identify the other as to blame for your misfortune. You account for what happens to you on the basis of what they are doing to you, rather than what you are doing to them. You feel yourself to be the victim. You are at their mercy. They are in charge and you are innocent.

Therefore, from this point of view immaturity is about a rancorous demeanour with regard to the other. It is about accusation and discontent. It is clearly about discontent because if my contentment is based on what the other does to me, it means I will only be contented when the other conforms to my expectations of it. Because this happy condition is exceedingly rare, it therefore implies that I will rarely be contented.

On the other hand, if I base my contentment on the correctness of my own actions I base my contentment on that which is directly within my power. I therefore am not only in the position to assume full responsibility over my own contentment, I infinitely increase my capacity for contentment because the source of it lies with me.

The degree to which one acts on the basis of expectation is the degree to which one becomes manipulable. As the word manipulable implies, one has handholds. One has places where the other can get a grip on one. On the other hand, to disavow one's expectation means to become unassailable. The other cannot get a hold on you. You are powerful.

This means that person who is dealing with a situation on the basis of what they want to keep or hold onto has handed the initiative to the other. They can therefore only react to the agenda set by the other. They become re-active. However, by focussing on what should be putting in, giving or losing, and being unconditional about that, you set the agenda. You regain the initiative and define the outcome of events. You become pro-active.



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Transformation and the Enterprise

In exploring the issue of transformation I should like to view the enterprise as a microcosm of society, since this will help us to fathom the criteria of success. If we assume that we had a bakery with three bakers which only baked one very special cake a month. The three bakers each took a quarter slice home to feed their families, which left one quarter as surplus. It would be true to say that we would measure the success of the enterprise based on its capacity to produce that surplus, and if the surplus was comparatively large with regard to the rest of the cake then we would claim to have a successful enterprise.

The question is what accounts for the surplus? On careful examination it becomes clear that the surplus only exists because the total cake that was baked was bigger than the part of the cake that the bakers took home collectively. In other words, the bakers gave more than what they took. Which means that any enterprise is successful with regard to the degree to which the individual members of the enterprise are giving unconditionally in pursuit of the enterprises' objectives. We therefore account for the success of the on the basis of the intent or willingness of the individual to contribute to the enterprise.

What is very important to understand about this intent is that there is very little that one could do to the organisation as such that would solicit this it. It does not happen because management has had some industrial theatre, restructured the organisation or introduced a new bonus scheme. People do not go the extra mile for organisations. People go the extra mile for people. The problem of soliciting unconditional intent with the members the organisation is not an organisational problem, it is a leadership problem. The appropriate question to ask is therefore not what is the organisation that people would work for willingly but who is the boss that they would work for willingly.

In the early eighties I became involved in a project which was concerned with investigating the problem of employee discontent. This project was conducted under the auspices of the Chamber of Mines Research Organisation. In the process of doing this work I came to realise that there were a few basic conditions which accounted for the loyalty, trust and commitment of employees. Whenever one asked someone why they would work for someone willingly they would list a whole lot of characteristics which could be categorised in two major themes or areas.

The first theme had to do with the idea of *care*. If someone worked for a boss because he wanted to it is because the boss was approachable, listened, was supportive, and showed a genuine interest in the concerns and welfare of the subordinate. However, there was also a second theme that had a much tougher feel to it. Under this theme people would raise things such as the boss was fair, honest, let you get on with the job and gave you feedback. If one pointed out to people that fairness means that the boss will not always be nice, the response of people was that the apparent toughness of a fair boss is what enables one to learn and grow. In short, there were two themes raised, namely *care* and *growth*. People would work willingly for a boss if he cared for them and gave them an opportunity to grow.

I have subsequently found this criterion to be universally true. It does not matter whether the person describing their ideal boss was literate or illiterate, expatriate or South African, sophisticated and educated or not. The same two themes of care and growth were raised.

The universal nature of these criteria makes sense when one considers that in working for someone because you want to you implicitly give that person the right to tell you what to do or to exercise power over you. This suggests that there is a connection between these criteria and the legitimacy of power. It is as if all human beings have a commonly held expectation that people in charge should be there to care for and grow those in their charge. This makes sense if one considers that the first relationship of power one has is with one's parents. In this relationship there are two people, a big one and a little one. The job of the big one for the little one is quite specific. It is to care for and grow the little one. If the subordinate is of the view that the superordinate is doing this the subordinate by definition becomes willing in the relationship.

However, if one used these criteria to examine what happens at work it becomes clear that they are not applied. If you asked the average boss what his job was, he would not say it was to care for and to grow his subordinates. He would say it was to use them in order to produce a result. At this level there has already been a contradiction of the fundamental criteria.

To explore this consider the cases of Mary and Fred, both of whom work for me. Let us assume that in both cases I am very experienced in the job that they do, and in the case of Fred I say to him "Listen Fred, in 1980 I did the same job like this and it worked. Don't argue, shut up and do it like this. If this was my approach Fred would clearly be very resistant to what was going on.

On the other hand, if I said to Mary "Mary, in 1980 I did this and it worked. It may be useful to you, take a look at it," she would probably accept what I did. Clearly, in both cases my experience remains constant. What, then, is the difference between the two? To examine this we need to separate means and ends and assign to these two categories either the person who is doing the job or the job being done.

In the Fred case my intent is to get the same job done that I did in 1980, and clearly Fred is my means to do so. My intent is therefore to get something out of him, which is why he becomes resistant.

CASE	MEANS	ENDS	INTENT
Fred	Person	Job	Take
Mary	Job	Person	Give

In the Mary case, however, it is clear that if I am doing this sincerely I could have a very different outcome from what I had in 1980. In fact it could be worse. So what I am trying to achieve is not necessarily the same outcome that I had in 1980 or even a positive outcome. What I am trying to do is to be helpful to Mary by teaching her something.

This means that when my intent is to take from the other I will endeavour to use the other means to achieve a result. However, when I give something to the other I use the job that they are doing as the means to enable them. If we relate these criteria to *Care* and *Growth* it would be clear that in the Fred case I contradicted both and in the Mary case I acted consistently with both.

This overturning of means and ends is not at all far fetched, and makes sense if one examined the relationship between boss and subordinate in the same light as a coaching relationship. In any team sport one has similar set of things that take place to what takes place at work. You have the coach, who is the equivalent of the boss, you have the player, the equivalent of the employee, and you have the game and the result, which is the equivalent of the job being done and the money being earned.

If the coach had the peculiar view that he was the person who produced the result, and that he was going to use the player as his means to do that, he would have a very disgruntled player and a poor result. This is because he does not understand his

job. His job is not to get the job done and to produce the result. This is the player's job. His job is to coach the player. This does not mean that from his point of view the job or the result is irrelevant. In fact, from a coaching point of view he would be of very little help to the player if did not have an intimate knowledge of both the job and the result. It does mean, however, that the job and the result are purely his means, which is to enable the player. His intent, therefore, is to enable the player and to use the game to that end.

Therefore if the manager at work thinks he is there to produce a result and to use people to that end he is fundamentally contradicting the criteria of *Care* and *Growth*. The patterning of his intent fits the Fred description and not the Mary description.

Logically, this is where we encounter the major stumbling block with regard to establishing legitimacy at work and unleashing willingness. As far as a manager at work is concerned the aim of the relationship between him and his subordinates is not to care for the people who work for him, let alone allow them to grow. In fact he is not principally there to give them anything at all. He is not even held accountable for what he is giving to them. He is principally responsible for what he is getting out of them. As far as he is concerned the reason for his relationship with his subordinate is to make money for the shareholder.

If you were to ask this manager what gives him the right to demand delivery from the people that he employs he will argue that the wage is what his side of the transaction is. In other words, his view is that he has the right to demand delivery not because he cares and grows, but because he has bought it. The implications of this view are catastrophic. The assumption, therefore, is that the relationship between him and the employee is concerned with the buying of a commodity called labour. The prospective employee comes into the market with his labour and the employer comes with his money. These two haggle about the value of the labour, and come to an agreement.

This relationship is therefore about a haggle. About two parties trying to get as much out of each other for giving as little as possible. Not only is this about conflict, it also logically has to eventuate in the demise of the enterprise. If we say that a measure of the success of any enterprise is the size of the surplus it produces, then we must understand that a surplus happens under very special conditions. They are conditions where a group of people work together in such a way that the total product which they produce is bigger than what they collectively take out. In a very real sense they have to give more than they take. When they are haggling, their intention is to take more than they give. They literally consume each other.

The agenda of the manager basically gives the employee the following message: I am going to demand delivery from you, exercise power over you, in order to make money out of you. This is frightening. This is like a parent coming to the child and not saying to the child "I am going to feed you and look after you so that you can grow" but rather, "I am going to feed on you!". No wonder people in technocratic society are so cynical, discontented and unwilling. We have this extraordinary notion that we live in the most advanced age in history. At least in New Guinea they ate the other tribe!

In short, it is naïve of a leader of an enterprise to think that the people working for him will be willing if he is simply there to get something out of them. Their *intent* to give is based on his *intent* to give. The success of the enterprise is based on the degree to which the member of the enterprise is unconditional in the pursuit of the

objectives of the enterprise. This is a leadership challenge. It is a *Care and Growth* challenge.

Transforming the enterprise is therefore about transforming the intent of the individual from being here to get money to being here to make a contribution. The precondition for this is that the leadership of the enterprise aspires to the criteria of Care and Growth. Organisational transformation is therefore in the first instance about transforming the leadership of the organisation to act consistently with the criteria of Care and Growth.

Transforming Society

Economies are successful by virtue of the fact that the aggregate of surplus value equals the economic capital available in that economy. So too societies are successful by the degree to which there has been an accumulation of social capital. Social capital can be defined as the aggregate of unconditional acts of good citizenship undertaken by members of the community.

The transformation we should be aiming at should be to establish a society where the individual willingly pursues the greater good. The discourse for a transformed society must therefore be concerned with the enablement of just and good citizens rather than the problem of redistribution, whether of wealth or opportunity.

The problem of distribution in principle focuses the individual on what he or she does not have. It makes the individual pay attention to their own rights. In other words, what the other owes them, rather than on their duties, which is what they should be contributing to the other.

Unfortunately the rhetoric of liberation that we have become accustomed to has been a rhetoric of rights. It has therefore been one that has kept people both weak and discontented. We have argued that if you focus on what the other does to you not only give the other power over you but you therefore hand over your happiness to that which you cannot control. However, if your happiness is based on the quality of what you are doing in the moment you can always be happy, because one always has control over that.

Transforming our country therefore has to be about changing the register of the average South African's internal dialogue. It has to be about cultivating a dialogue concerned with being just, honouring ones duties and making a contribution. It is therefore by definition not a dialogue concerned with being expedient and acting in terms of one's needs and expectations.

It implies cultivating a new language of liberation. A language that makes people aware that they remain oppressed slaves while they act consistently with what they want from the other because that is precisely when the other has power over the self. That freedom is about accepting accountability and therefore being principally in the world to make a contribution.

The key actor on this stage of the new liberation has to be the citizen, because social capital is cultivated precisely by the degree to which the citizen voluntarily gets involved in civil society. However, this can either be assisted or undermined by the state. It is not helpful, for example, for the state to support and legalise the gaming industry, which is by definition about get rich quick and something for nothing.

It is not helpful for the state to support a political rhetoric based on resentment. The magnanimity of Madiba has averted a civil war in this country. That magnanimity was principally based on an intent to bury the rancour of the past and to focus on building the future.

It is certainly not helpful for the state to appear soft on crime. The issue of the maturation of intent is not about knowledge or wealth. One can have exceptionally wealthy and intelligent criminals. The maturation of intent is about accountability. It is the degree to which the state is willing to hold the citizen accountable for their malevolent intent that creates the climate where the citizen does not act consistently with his malevolence. The people know this, which is why they would rather stone the criminal in the street than hand him over to the police.

In a similar vein it is not at all useful to condone the slide to indiscipline in schools by disabling both teachers and head masters. You do not make the small big by making the big small. By taking the cane out of the teacher's hand we have created the condition where it is no longer the teacher that beats the kids, it's the kids that beat the teacher.

What does help is that corrupt officials are sought out and prosecuted. However, it does strike one that for a person in authority to betray trust is so serious an infraction that it should be considered equivalent to murder.

The language of African Renaissance is helpful. It certainly does help that there is an attempt at articulating a benevolent intent that could galvanise the people to acting for a higher order goal.

And so there are many things one could suggest that would be concerned with enabling a more just, honourable and contributing South African. However, it is not the mechanisms that are the point. The point is for us to define the issue of social transformation appropriately. Both successful governance and successful social transformation should be understood to be the process of shifting the intent of the average citizen from being self absorbed to being a contributor. This issue of the shifting of intent should be the singular criterion against which all activities and interventions relating to transformation should be measured.