SEVEN ZONES FOR LEADERSHIP: ACTING AUTHENTICALLY
IN STABILITY AND CHAOS
BY: ROBERT TERRY
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Seven Zones for Leadership: Acting Authentically in Stability and Chaos offers to leadership educators, practitioners, and consultants a useful work of originality on the themes of the person, spirituality, and professional and organizational development. It was written by the late Robert W. Terry, veteran executive leadership consultant, race relations activist, and founding director of the *Center for Reflective Leadership at the University of Minnesota.* Born out of a pre-course design question that many leadership educators may be familiar with - "What am I going to teach?" - Terry's model provides a novel entry point into the formal study of organization development (6). An earlier book, *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action* describes the theoretical terrain of leadership theory, and in *Seven Zones* this terrain is extended. By drawing on Ralph Stacey's *Complexity and Creativity in Organizations* 0995), Terry helps operational leaders better navigate the dynamics of operational technique while also cultivating an explicit spiritually-centered focus. The book includes personal developmental features for operational leaders, diagnostic questions for multiple organizational development issues, and rich bibliographic points of reference throughout.

Foundational to the book is the author's description of a mapping system that interfaces the worlds of reality (internal) and the worlds of action (external). When the world is believed to be knowable, fixed, tight, (as it is in the past), the world is stable. When the organization is believed (internal reality) to be unknowable, changing, loose, (as it is in the future), the world is chaotic and unstable. Leaders may be expected to create or lead toward worlds of stability (internal reality of stakeholders), in order to ward off all things chaotic. This means the assumptive system necessarily impacts the tactical options (external actions) that are available in a leadership exigency, even while it impacts the perception of

who is credible for leadership during a particular organizational challenge.

To describe the arenas of tactical response to these worlds, Terry uses an image of a wagon wheel to explain, episodically, a way "to frame any issue, to begin to see how your journey as a leader through any issue might look" (4). This is *The Action Wheel.* When faced with a salient challenge, using a diagnostic approach will lead you to one or more of six areas:

- *Existence – What is the hist01y of this event?*
- *Resources – What are the central resources?*
- *Structure – What are the Plans and Processes?*
- *Power -What is the stakeholders level of commitment?*
- *Mission ~ What is the direction?*
- *Meaning -What is at stake?*

A seventh area (pictured as an outer-ring around the wheel) is labeled *fulfillment;* and a seventh question is also added: *"What is the event in its completed action?"* These seven arenas of action, along with these seven diagnostic questions, comprise *the seven zones for leadership.* On this point, Terry insists that personal and organizational congruence affects whether one is serving the promise implied by the questions being asked in an authentic or inauthentic way.

I find this book valuable for several reasons. First, it bridges three related domains in leadership studies that are not always connected: the person, spirituality, and organizational development. By the end of the book, readers are guided into the rare terrains of personal and organizational spirituality with vocabula1y such as: "authentic wisdom" (310), "leadership as a wildly transcending process" (364), "finding voice" (208), "scanning inward" (255), "organization's grounded hope" (382) and "spirituality equals theology" (390). Terry's thesis is implied in this exploration of the spiritual development of the organization's leadership as the means to fulfill the promise of the organization's existence.

Second, the text focuses on personal development. It allows readers to assess, through Lickert-type scales, their

readiness to enact zone competencies. It offers an orientation, key questions, bibliographic sources, a veteran educator's interpretation of research, and opportunities to reflect on personal and operational management.

Third, the model makes explicit the naturalist-empirical epistemology that under-girds the research programs of many North American leadership theorists and practitioners. Although not intended, it is a useful resource for intercultural leadership dialogue. It underscores how uncertainty reduction
- the leader's actions to manage toward stability - is a driving force in the American psyche, and thus in American leadership theories. Given this drive, the relationship between leadership and spirituality becomes obvious. These impulses interact with deep structures that underlie organization leadership, authenticity, humility, spirituality, promise-making, and promise-keeping.

I see two minor drawbacks in this book. First, Terry's model assumes that through blending diagnostics and tactical acumen, a leader can stem the affects of chaos. This is only partially true. Because of the neutralizing and displacing effects of such factors as culture, organization design, stage in life cycle, and the effect of political powerbases, a leader using this or any model can be hampered in an attempt to stabilize collective life. Second, a mixture of metaphors in this book creates unnecessary complexity and, at times, confusion. For example, the topography metaphor, while helpfully offering a one-stop taxonomical scheme to account for many organizational development theories and research, at times hijacks the simplicity the author promises. Terry's poetic license allows a mixing of topographical metaphors with spatial, cartographical, transportation, meteorological, and existential ones. The result is that readers are often unable to rise above the density of the metaphorical trees to see the simplicity of the *Seven Zones* forest.

Terry demonstrates his dedication to both boardrooms and classrooms when he declares, "I have longed for a diagnostic model of organizational development so I could more wisely offer sound advice - advice about selecting leadership actions in relationship to the great variety of real-world situations . . . there are few blueprints to place them in context so that people can make *wise* and *adept* decisions"

(xvi). I think he does this. He invites organizational leaders into a spiritual journey of leadership characterized by wisdom and authenticity.

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