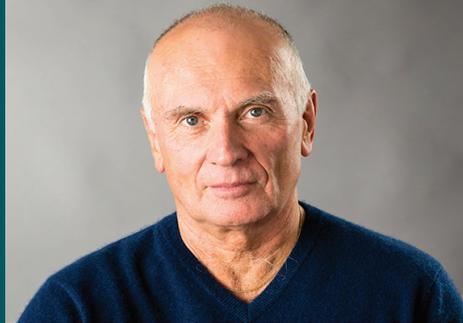




The Power of Being & The Power of Becoming

by Dr. Paul Dunion, Transformational Faculty Member



Western culture appears to be enamored with the Power of Becoming; a privilege bestowed upon white-straight men. This myopic view of Power left women and people of color marginalized regarding socio-economic and political potential. Women were coincidentally relegated to the Power of Being as if it were something women might have some innate propensity. At the advent of the Feminism movement, many women welcomed the possibility of being recipients of the Power of Becoming. As the Mytho-Poetic Men's movement unfolded with its ethos strongly embedded in the Power of Being, to which there were several reactions.

The first was those men simply who were simply oblivious, convinced that any gathering of men not devoted to generating profit or competing in some fashion, was not worth the time of day. Other men heard rumors of men doing something that simply did not sound very manly, since harnessing the Power of Becoming became synonymous with real manliness. Of course, there were the hard-core feminists who were convinced that the leaders, Robert Bly, and John Lee were simply attempting to position men to accrue more Power of Becoming. It appeared that the lust for the Power of Becoming even skewed the vision of some women.

I continue to hold gratitude for the men and women who could hold that the Men's Movement was making an offering to men that would inevitably greatly benefit both genders. Although not identified as such, the Mytho-Poetic Men's Movement was about the Power of Being. The hope is that men will continue to find their ways to embrace the Power of

Being. Without it, our socio-economic and political institutions will likely succumb to their inevitable collapse.

Before examining these two different forms of Power, let's look at where the concepts of Being and Becoming come from. They originated in Western Civilization around 500 BC in Greece. There were two schools of thought about Cosmology, or the study of what is real. One school of thought suggested that reality was ever-unfolding or becoming, transitory, and advancing. Becoming referred to the non-static nature of reality. Thinkers representing the Becoming cosmology include Thales, Xenophanes, Democritus, Anaximenes and later Aristotle. One of the famous Pre-Socratic Philosophers was Heraclitus who claimed: "No man steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river, and he's not the same man."

The Being perspective of reality was represented by Parmenides, Anaximander, Anaxagoras and Plato. This view accounted for reality as possessing a certain constant, not susceptible to change and existing beyond the senses.

The Being and Becoming cosmologies constitute a polarity or opposites. The Power of Being and the Power of Becoming are not necessarily opposed nor mutually exclusive. They are psychological contraries sharing some commonalities. For example, as we shall see, both belonging and networking are social phenomena. However, belonging calls upon emotional energies that have more depth and sustainability, therefore reflective of the Power of Being. Where networking has some particular goal to advance and the networking may be extremely transitory, it is

recorded under the Power of Becoming.

The early Greek influence seen in the items listed under the Power of Being seems to have more durability and is less susceptible to the influences of the times. We can also think of the Power of Becoming as reflecting the archetype of the Masculine and the Power of Being displaying characteristics indicative of the archetype of the Feminine.

The Powers

We can think of power in two distinctly separate categories: Power of Being and Power of Becoming. Our culture tends to initiate young people into the Power of Becoming. Religions, schools, other social organizations, and the norms of the typical American family teach and model the Power of Becoming. The problem is that life cannot be understood or deeply lived from this one power only. Especially noteworthy, is that complexity cannot be approached and investigated with any significant level of efficacy by employing only one power. Our nomenclature is limited to the Power of Becoming any time the word power is spoken or written. We think, talk, dream and act as if the Power of Becoming is the only way to relate to our lived experience.

An ancient definition of the word power is “to be able”. When restricted to the Power of Becoming, we run the risk of not being able to be guided by our inner landscape. This form of self-alienation is captured in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*: “I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw – sky. I saw the things that I love in this world: the work and the food and time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I

grabbing for? Why am I trying to become what I don’t want to be? What am I doing in this office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can’t I say that, Willy?”

The mythologist Michael Meade writes about two arcs of life. “While following the first arc we ‘make a life’ and learn to make our way in the day-to-day world.” We can say that the Power of Becoming energizes the first arc of life. Meade goes on to say, “The second arc of life involves an involution or turning within to seek self-knowledge and develop greater self-awareness. This inward arc depends upon reflection, remembering, and becoming aware of the core pattern of one’s soul and the inherent purpose of one’s life. The inner arc bends toward things eternal; it involves the dream of one’s life as well as the life of one’s dreams. This is the arc of growing consciousness, genuine calling, and potentiality of spiritual fulfillment.”

The Power of Being animates the second arc but is not limited to the second arc. The Power of Becoming is forward moving in alignment with cultural expectations. It helps us to “make a life.” The Power of Being moves downward in the direction of our own depths, which calls for some downsizing of the ego in order to employ.

Before examining what happens when we attempt to create a life by only employing the Power of Becoming, let’s look at the distinguishing features of these two expressions of power. Keep in mind that the distinctions between the powers are not mutually exclusive; they reflect a propensity of a particular characteristic.

Power of Being

- Interior Focus
- Living a self-examined life
- Tracking the pulse of one's emotional and spiritual life
- Valuing feeling vulnerable, leading to living with heart and being bodily informed
- Prioritizing collaboration & co-creativity
- Welcoming personal wounds & innate gifts
- Valuing the development of deep sense of belonging
- Valuing living authentically
- Valuing the development of a deep sense of belonging
- Able to employ surrender as an expression of power
- Valuing the development of emotional intimacy
- Desiring mindfulness & equanimity as outcomes
- Prioritizing emotional intelligence
- Prioritizing integrity
- Prioritizing seminars, trainings, & workshops supporting emotional intelligence & spiritual development
- Prioritizing process
- Power is often expressed through surrender
- Able to assist others in their ability to author themselves
- Identity is a reflection of personal ethos
- Comfortable with a descent
- Comfortable with darkness

Compensations

It is simply natural to compensate when attempting to live with only one form of power. However, this compensatory move possesses some unfortunate consequences. Let's explore some of these unfavorable outcomes when attempting to live only from the Power of Becoming.

Compensation for little or no interior vision - When our interior worlds are defined as off-limits, there is a propensity to exaggerate our external focus, getting lost in conventional beliefs and values. We no longer

Power of Becoming

- Exterior Focus
- Living a life examining economic & political conditions
- Tracking intellectual pursuits
- Valuing ego strength in leading to greater efficacy & executive functioning
- Prioritizing competition
- Welcoming personal strengths & talents
- Valuing adaption to external norms & expectations
- Valuing an ability to network
- Able to employ willfulness as an expression of power
- Valuing casual friendships & membership in professional associations
- Desiring a fulfilling occupation & solvent finances as desired outcomes
- Prioritizing abstract & practical intelligence
- Prioritizing a positive reputation
- Prioritizing formal education
- Prioritizing outcome
- Power is often expressed by acts of will
- Able to hold authority without abuse or abdication
- Identity is a reflection of social roles
- Comfortable with an ascent
- Comfortable with the light

can guide our lives from intuition, imagination, and heart. Integrity is seriously compromised.

Compensation for low emotional intelligence - When this occurs, cognitive or intellectual activity is aggrandized. The results include low self-awareness, limited capacity to collaborate and communicate effectively, diminished ability to exercise empathy, confusion about emotions leading to an impaired ability to generate emotional intimacy accompanied by unconscious biased thinking.

Compensation for feeling vulnerable - The compensation is expressed as an exaggerated persona of bravado often accompanied by rampant ambition.

Compensation for genuine belonging - There is a tendency to obsessively attach to making varied acquisitions in an attempt to fill the emptiness created by the absence of real connections to others.

Compensation for feeling helpless - When the exercise of will is the only expression of power, we are not able to effectively navigate what is out of our control. We are not able to live life on life's terms, creating delusions of control, distortions about one's limits and perfectionistic demands of oneself and others.

Initiatory Trainings

There is an emerging awareness regarding the desperate need to access the *Power of Being*. If we refuse to learn and integrate this power, we likely will destroy the planet and compensate ourselves into oblivion. The integration of this power calls for some form of Initiation. The word *initiation* means, "to begin." Nothing begins without something ending. Living from both the *Power of Becoming* and the *Power of Being* is a large paradigm shift. Certain biases will need to gradually come to an end, giving rise to a new vision.

3 Stages of Initiation

We can be Initiated into the *Power of Being* at a Training or Workshop as well as by life such as a time of significant loss. to the traditional three stages of Initiation: *The Separation, Trials and Ordeals, and The Return.*

Separation includes leaving familiar work and living environments. Of course, this entails disconnecting from customary rituals, protocols and procedures of normal daily life. It includes detaching from communication devices, which aid participants in the separation process. During the *Separation*, participants are greeted and received by four or five faculty who have been formally educated and initiated into the *Power of Being*. During this time, participants are encouraged to describe what they are leaving behind and identify what they hope to gain by participating in the Initiation. The week's schedule and logistics are covered. Participants will engage in

activities aimed at clarifying: Who am I here? Who are you here? Who are we here? These three questions support the participants' inclusion into the initiatory container.

Trials and Ordeals constitute the second stage of the Initiation. During this stage, participants begin moving away from relying upon the *Power of Becoming*. There are a series of tasks, exercises and reflections aimed at focusing participants within themselves, temporarily suspending a strong external focus. Simply this shift in focus can be experienced as an ordeal, as well a trial when participants feel the challenge of deciding how to give meaning to what they discover within. It is common to create a scaffolding of values in support of any cherished belief, such as a belief in the prominence of the *Power of Becoming*. Not only do certain values offer credence to the belief but also contrary values are held disparagingly.

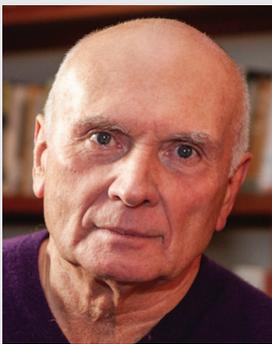
An Initiation into the *Power of Being* needs to include a gradual resolution to the downgrading of its essential characteristics. In the framework of an Initiation, each of these marginalized characteristics takes on new meaning and importance. For example, vulnerability is no longer simply a weak and unfortunate state of being, but rather a necessary condition for all acts of courage. There are several key questions that can help the participant face the *Trials and Ordeals*: What is this experience asking of me? How can I best employ the faculty and my peers as valuable external resources? What risks am I willing to take as I face these trials?

The Return includes a return to the self in a new way, encompassing the integration of the *Power of Being*. This *Return* encompasses new awareness about the self, deeper understanding of patterns that obstruct maximization of competency and newly acquired skills for interrupting those patterns. Participants return with more access to the *Power of Being*, which allows them to bring a new dimension of power to their relationships. They have more of themselves as they return to work, family and friends. Their relational adeptness takes on new levels of clarity, empathy, depth and a greater capacity to co-create. Questions supporting the *Return* include: What have I learned and how will I continue to integrate the learning? What external resources can I access in order to support the integration of the learning? In what ways can I employ the *Power of Being* at work and in my family life?

THE POWER OF BEING & THE POWER OF BECOMING

Becoming Initiated into the *Power of Being* is important for all of us. Fortunately, there are current Initiations into the *Power of Being*. The Mobius Executive Leadership Training Programs offer leaders such an Initiation. Erica captures the *Power of Being* in her book, *Winning from Within*. “Winning” reflects the *Power of Becoming* while “Within” falls under the auspices of the *Power of Being*. She says, “The key

to a good outcome, whether around a conference room table or the dining room table, is to undertake a negotiation within ourselves. Yes, we can learn to say and do helpful things. But ultimately, the ability to achieve mastery over how we lead and live with each other comes from a place within, what I call ‘center of well-being or our ‘center.’”



PAUL DUNION, Mobius Transformational Faculty, Senior Expert, and track leader at the Next Practice Institute, earned his Doctoral degree in Counseling and Consulting Psychology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and his M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Connecticut. He taught Philosophy for thirteen years at the University of Connecticut and Three Rivers Community College.

He has been in private practice for the past thirty-seven years. As a holistic psychological healer, employing an existential modality as well as a somatic approach to treating trauma, Paul is trained in EMDR and is a graduate of the Somatic Experiencing Institute.

From its early beginnings, Paul represented the State of Connecticut at the national gatherings of the mytho-poetic men’s movement, sponsored by Wingspan. As the founder of Boys to Men, he created a mentoring community for teenage boys. He is the co-founder of COMEGA (Connecticut Gathering of Men), having served over 6,000 men since 1992, which continues to offer biannual retreats. In 2013, Paul established the Croton Mystery School and designed its curriculum with a focus on teaching students how to make peace with life’s mystery and unpredictability. He has offered over 200 workshops on topics related to Human Potential. Currently, Paul offers supervision for younger psychotherapists.

Paul has published six books: *Seekers – Finding Our Way Home* (2016); *Dare to Grow-Up – Become Who You Are Meant to Be* (2016); *Path of the Novice Mystic – Maintaining a Beginner’s Heart and Mind* (2013); *Shadow Marriage – A Descent into Intimacy* (2006); *Temptation in the House of the Lord* (2004); and his latest offering *Wisdom – Apprenticing to the Unknown and Befriending Fate* (2021).



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