



The Mind of the Leader*

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Abstract

The mind of the leader as a scientific matter, emerges with the development of modern psychoanalysis, modern psychology and contemporary political psychology. The focus on the mind as a scientific matter in the social sciences led to the salience of understanding the psychology of human behavior. It was Freud who provided us with an insight into the structure of personality that in various forms continues to be important. It was Harold Lasswell, a former President of the World Academy of Art & Science who adapted the Freudian categories to the study of personality, structure, and leadership. Central to the individual is the human perspective which comprises of components of identity, the expression of human demands, and the restraints of morality and cultural expectation. These issues were formulated in terms of homopoliticus. This type of personality represented the perspectives of private motives, displaced on public objects and rationalized in the public interest. The paper then proceeds to discuss the importance of early childhood and leadership and illuminates various forms of leadership styles from narcissist to democratic. The paper then discusses the thinking skills that leadership decision-making requires for constructive social performance. Performance is identified with decision making and the architecture of decision making.

The study of the mind is a science whose advances are most recent in the history of the human species. We owe a great deal to the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and his followers who developed the study of mind as an important component of the study of personality. The direction on Freud's work, and of many of his followers' work, was aimed at the therapeutic implications for medically treating patients requiring a better understanding of the human personality.

The term 'personality' is used to designate the principal traits displayed by an individual as a participating member of society. In the scientific exploration of personality it seemed apparent that every public and private relationship of the individual required exploration.

Therefore, the implications of Freud's work also generated broader concerns and applications of its insights that could be applied to the emerging fields of the social and behavioral sciences. Among the most important scholars on seeking to explore the broader

* The article is based on the author's lectures for a post graduate level course on "The Essence of Leadership" from March 30-April 3, 2015 at the Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia.

implications of a deeper understanding of personality was the political scientist and jurisprudence scholar Harold D. Lasswell.

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Lasswell was a Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science as were several of his colleagues and collaborators. Indeed, Lasswell emerged in the World Academy at its founding, and later became a president of the Academy. It is impossible to say what Lasswell’s single most contribution was to scholarly enlightenment. Scholars who know his work have said that when they pause to expand on his insights, his presence was not there, he had already moved to another challenge and another frontier of the social and behavioral sciences.

However, it may without a doubt be asserted that he was in essence the founder of a distinctive field of the social and behavioral sciences, namely the field of political psychology. Although he had moved his interests into world politics, world public order, human rights, the law of space, oceans and the law of war, a central thing in Lasswell’s thinking was the role of the individual in social process, in the process of power arrangements, in the processes of constitutional architecture and the centrality of the individual in world public order. A focus on the individual self-system in the context of world public order requires an understanding of the functions of personality, its constructive potentials and its destructive capacities.

The question of a deeper understanding of the mind provides us with a deeper understanding of the role of the individual in the system of public order. Additionally, observation will disclose that human communities often reflect complex forms of stratification. Some human beings gravitate to the top and hence provide scope for the study of a segment of society identified as the elite. Those segments that are not among the most conspicuous or influential, and are not in the position of the elite, are the non-elite.

It is certainly a matter of great interest to know what types of personalities gravitate to the position of the elite and the influential and what types of personalities are not so fortunate.

Lasswell opened up a distinctive line of inquiry to explore these issues in one of his earliest books, *Psychopathology and Politics* (1930); *World Politics and Personal Insecurity* (1935); *Power and Personality* (1948); *Power and Society* (1950). In these books Lasswell was trying to broaden and deepen the emerging science of political science. In what follows are a selected number of quotes from *Psychopathology and Politics*, which provide an orientation to the role of mind in the study of leadership:

- *“Political science without biography is a form of taxidermy.”*

- *“Political man [displaces] private motives... on to public objects [subjecting the former to] rationalization in terms of public interest.”*
- *“Political movements derive their vitality from the displacement of private affects upon public object.”*
- *“Political crises are complicated by the concurrent reactivation of ... primitive impulses.”*
- *“Political symbols are particularly adapted to serve as targets for displaced affect because of their ambiguity of reference, in relation to individual experience, and because of their general circulation.”*
- *“The political methods of coercion, exhortation, and discussion assume that the role of politics is to solve conflicts when they have happened. The ideal of a politics of prevention is to obviate conflict by the ... reduction of the tension level of society by effective methods of which discussion will be but one.”*

In this book, Lasswell utilized methods of clinical psychology to generate provisional but potentially significant insights that had both general and leadership implications of personality. The intellectual background against which he was writing stressed the institutional and structural components of political life and not the salience of human personalities in these institutions and structures. The conventional approach excluded the salience of the human personality and the importance of human perspectives within the framework of culture and civilization.

A specific focus on leadership would require a focus on the mind and personality of the leader, in short, the human dimensions of leadership. These dimensions must perforce be person-centered as a key orientation. Indeed, the person-centered approach makes the life history of a leader an important source of insight into the political leader, the business leader, the rectitude leader, intellectual leader, or indeed, any other social context within which leadership is needed and required.

There were two aspects of Freud’s work that Lasswell found particularly important: an understanding of the unconscious and an appreciation of free association as an important blade in the armory of human thinking. Lasswell’s work with patients confirmed his understanding of the importance of the unconscious, although the line between the unconscious, the semi-conscious, and consciousness Lasswell saw as permeable. The implications were that a great deal of memory is removed from consciousness and stored in the unconscious. It is in the unconscious that the powerful impulses that drive the personality to strive for leadership and more may ultimately be found. The roots of these impulses may be found in the experience of deprivation and the pre-adult’s effort to overcome it. In simple terms, if the child is hungry it will express itself by crying incessantly to draw attention to itself, and receive the gratification of feeding.

If the deprivations that the pre-adult experiences are sustainable and intense, these deprivations will shape the unconscious in ways that in later life may well produce mental illness. On the other hand, if the deprivations experienced are in some measure moderated, they will leave the residue of emotional impulses that may later express themselves in striving for achievement and for possible leadership roles. Lasswell’s great insight here was

that the personality's cognitions, feelings, and impulses are in reality not matters of conscious awareness, but an unconscious psychodynamic force of emotional energy.

In general, the individual person spends much psychic energy forcing thoughts from the unconscious to remain there as repressed unconscious impulses.

Since these impulses cannot be expressed directly, they are often expressed indirectly and one of the most important ways indirect emotional impulses are managed is by the process of rationalization. In short, the individual has a feeling and the individual provides a conscious rationalization of that feeling, although in reality the feeling is there as a function of the storage of unconscious emotions.

Accepting the general form of the history of personality from the Freudian tradition, Lasswell adapted Freud to the purposes and objectives of the social sciences. He adapted it to describe the developmental history of the political man. It is explained as follows:

$$p \} d \} r = P$$

- The first "p" represents the private motives of the individual as they evolve and are organized in relation to the family and early years.
- The second term "d" describes the displacement of private motives from family orientation to public objects.
- The third symbol "r" signifies the rationalization of the displacement in terms of public interest.
- The formula, therefore, reads as follows: private motives displaced on public objects, and rationalized in the public interest constitute "homopoliticus," the political man.

We would say that the formula has broader implications for leadership than the purely political arena.

1. Personality Structure and Leadership

From the time that Lasswell wrote *Psychopathology and Politics*, psychoanalysis provided advanced thinking, which came in the form of the psychology of the ego. This led to Lasswell's formulation of the perspective of the individual in society. In Lasswell's view, the perspective of the individual is composed of three identifiable components:

- I – a perspective of identity (influenced by the id)
- II – the perspective of claim or demand (influenced by the ego)
- III – the perspective of expectation (influenced by the super ego)

In effect, the perspective of a person will be significantly influenced by the unconscious characteristics of that person, which Lasswell characterized as the perspective of identity. This is not a static notion, however, since the perspective of identity implicates the id and the unconscious of psychoanalysis, it has a significant influence on the behavior of the person. Indeed, Lasswell's political formula provides a strong foundation for the influence of the unconscious on the evolution of the power-centered personality.

The second aspect of perspective is the perspective of claiming or demanding, access to the shaping and sharing of the basic values of coexistence. The perspective of demand is essentially the ego's rational orientation to the environment in order to secure the satisfaction of value wants and value needs. It will be obvious that the energy driven by unconscious impulses will have an impact on the expression of demand-value objectives. In this sense, the perspective of demand will perform some kind of guidance role on the direction of energy impulses emerging from the perspective of identity.

The perspective of expectation in a sense collapses the perspectives experienced in cultural norms, standards, morals, and ethics. In this sense, both the direction of identity impulses, the direction of value demands or claims are tempered by the expectations inherited from cultural expectations and rules that include morality and ethics.

The perspectives of identity, demand, and expectation reflect diverse components of the personality system. All of these components are affected by, or influenced by, the signs and symbols that emerge from the environment within which the self-system interacts. Understanding the behavior orientation of the individual, according to Lasswell, requires us to take note of what he called the "triple appeal principle." In short, communications from the environment will influence the pattern and level of intensity of the identity system, it will influence the consistency and tenacity of the demand for values and it will influence the perspective of expectation, which in turn will influence the other aspects of personality as the other aspects of personality are influenced by the signs and symbols of the environment.

2. Defining Perspectives

Identifications: Self-definition of the individual as a member of particular categories or groups of individuals. Demands: Expressions of desired outcomes, based on values. Demands range broadly in terms of their intensity, from mild preferences to assertions of inviolable rights; Expectations: Beliefs about past, present, or future states of affairs, apart from demands or identifications.

3. Early Childhood Development and Leadership

In the cultural framework of child caring and rearing, society often overlooks the fact that an infant's sense of time is radically different from that of an adult. This means that an innocuous deprivation is a radically different experience between adult and a child. This implies that in the ordinary experiences of child caring and rearing, there may well be overlooked and serious elements of deprivation, which will affect the child's behavior. In order to get a response to the deprivation, the child may be energized to use whatever techniques it has at its disposal to draw attention to itself. Built into the psychology of the child will be the notion that access to gratifications requires the discharge of strong emotionalized impulses.

Therefore, we must confront the uncomfortable fact that leadership is a matter of emotional impulse and intelligence that finds its roots in some measure of deprivation in the child rearing experience.

Another complex aspect of the evolution of the infant is the complex identity pattern, which influences the identity of the child and relations to the parents. In classical Freudian terms,

progress from infancy to maturity requires the internalization of the mother figure as a love object and later as love object lost. The love object lost phase is accompanied by the internalization of the father figure as a symbolic representative of society and culture (the oedipal complex). Such a person has a capacity (and therefore maturity) to seriously regulate the untrained impulse bent on gratification of some sort, including political gratification. With regard to the environment of signs and symbols, Lasswell himself provides us with an excellent summary:

“The environment of the infant and child is teeming with words of ambiguous reference, which take on positive or negative significance long before there is enough contact with reality either to define their frames of reference, or to distinguish those whose frames of reference are wholly interdeterminate. As an “adult”, the individual continues to respond to these articulations in many childish and juvenile ways, often imputing some special and even awesome significance to them. Such words are ‘law and order’, ‘patriotism’, ‘a gentleman and a soldier’, ‘truth’, ‘justice’, ‘honor’, ‘good’, ‘patriotism’, ‘bad’, ‘loyalty’, ‘duty’, ‘Germans’, ‘French’, ‘Negroes’, ‘national hero’, ‘good citizens’, ‘national interest’, ‘king’, ‘constitution’; but these words do not stand alone in primitive concentrations or irrelevant affect. The whole of our vocabulary, plus our non-verbal symbols, is caught in the mesh of early structuralizations of this kind, so that the inner meaning of our symbols is never revealed except through the technique of free fantasy.”†

It is worth noting the importance of the developmental stages of personality, these are as follows:

- Infancy
- Childhood
- Juvenility
- Adolescence
- Young Adulthood
- Mid-Adulthood
- Old-Adulthood

If we accept the principle that leadership in the personality system is connected to the impulse—directed at the acquisition and exercise of power as in Lasswell’s “*homo politicus*,” we might also consider that leadership may be directed and sustained by impulses and emotional intelligence in other directions in the social process. Here, it could be business leadership, academic and intellectual leadership, scientific leadership and indeed, leadership in terms of functional roles implicating all the values in society.

The political leader acquires perspectives, emphasizes the demand for power, expects power to exert a decisive influence on value outcomes, justifies power in terms of common values, acquires skills sufficient for at least a minimum degree of effective political participation.

To pin leadership capacity on the element of deprivation in the shaping of the personality system in early years means that without a deeper appreciation of the psychobiography of

† This quote is abstracted from Lasswell and McDougal’s unpublished manuscript dealing with law, science, and policy

a leader or potential leader it cannot be assumed that there will be a predicted good or bad leader. This is a challenge.

The salience of resolving the period implicating the Oedipal complex is when the relationship of the child to family authority undergoes relatively rapid and decisive crystallization. It is a time when the physical and personality development of the child has prepared him to expand his activity. He is on the verge of moving outside the immediate ken of his nurse-protector, thereby enlarging the scope of his mobility and independence. At this point a conflict breaks out between the tendency to stay in the older and safer grooves of conduct, and to launch out beyond them. The conflict betrays itself in many ways, notable shrinking from new opportunities, and remaining closely attached to key figures in the primary circle. In this period the Oedipal conflict must be resolved, or distortions of growth occur.

When this conflict is successfully resolved by the child a new set of goals is adopted in place of the demands for immediate body contact and for continual protection and supervision; and also in place of the destructive demand to annihilate the rival. The new goals implicate a wider context of human beings, and in general many more objects in time and space.

Specifically, they include the copying of adult patterns of conduct and the sharing with playmates often sub-culture of children that stays in touch with though remaining distinct from the world of adults. Directing energy toward progressive goals of this kind, the child is able to hold his destructive tendencies in check and to forestall acute internal crises of anxiety in which guilt and fear predominate. The Oedipal phase has successfully surmounted the personality that has achieved a major consolidation, and is able to acquire the culture of his community at an accelerated rate.

The salience of this phase of development for the power leader personality is the light it exhibits for understanding the totalitarian personality and the features of prejudice and discrimination that drives it. Moreover, the first cousin of the totalitarian personality is the prejudice-prone authoritarian personality. The totalitarian personality reproduces a dangerous leader. The authoritarian personality, similarly, inflicts on society a dangerous form of leadership.[‡]

Returning to *homopoliticus*, we undoubtedly see that what emerges from the construction of personality in leadership terms represents a formidable challenge of understanding. Lasswell's summary of the developmental theory of political man is as follows:

Political man is an expansion of the conception of the political man in terms of private motives displaced upon public objects and rationalized in terms of a common good.

We now speak of power demands in the primary circle as being directed to secondary circles and justified in terms for "displacement" and "rationalization" and we use "defense" of the self against low self-appraisals. It is clearer that the "public objects" are the institutional patterns of power in a given social process.

Since Lasswell wrote, we have a deeper understanding of the wide range of personality types whose behavior may be conditioned by the level of deprivation experienced in early years. We can isolate approximately seven distinct personality types:

[‡] These materials are abstracted from the unpublished manuscript of Lasswell and McDougal on law, science, and policy.

- I – the narcissist
- II – the obsessive compulsive
- III – the Machiavellian
- IV – the authoritarian
- V – the paranoid
- VI – the totalitarian
- VII – the democratic

“Good leadership has the intellectual capacity to identify what a problem is and why that problem may be a problem of importance to the social process and the public order.”

Many of these categories represent some forms of psychopathic disorder. Narcissism, for example, is a psychopathic disorder but they frequently straddle the line between egregious behavior and behavior that can be tempered. However, political psychology has identified all of these categories as reflected in modern political leadership.

The critical question is the extent to which such leaders may, under appropriate environmental circumstances, displace their private pathologies on public objects so that those public objects become a realistic part of the personality system. Indeed this may be achieved if these public objects can secure a compelling rationalization, a justification as representing the public interest. In short, leadership requires emotional impulse and intelligence, requires a judicious displacement if possible on defensible public objects and can be secured by a rationalization consistent with a public interest.

Some theorists recognize the importance of emotion in leadership and stress the salience of emotional intelligence. This includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Other theorists consider that there is a distinction between behavioral leadership and positional leadership. Here, the example is given of Nelson Mandela, who falls into the behavioral leadership category. Mandela’s emotional intelligence lay in his capacity to express collaborative versus totalitarian behavior and a capacity to never give up against seemingly impossible odds.

In today’s leadership industry, many promoters of leadership maintain a pocketbook of precepts that are the recipes for good leadership. Success in leadership requires that the leader creates and maintains a vision, creates goals for the realization of the vision and provides for strategic and tactical direction to achieve the vision.

Good leadership requires followers to be influenced and good leadership will be receptive to the influence of followers. The leader must think practically about the specific tasks, which need to be implemented to secure a vision. These tasks must be utilized to their full capacity for as long as possible until the vision is secured.

4. Problem Solving, Leadership Roles and Intellectual Skills

4.1. Problem Identification

What we expect of good leadership is that good leadership has the intellectual capacity to identify what a problem is and why that problem may be a problem of importance to the social process and the public order. In order to identify a problem of importance to social process the leader has to recognize that the problem itself is an outcome of human interaction. This would still require a fairly disciplined method for identifying and contextually locating the problems that represent a challenge to leadership responsibility. This means that we must have some shorthand manageable method for mapping the context out of which the problems emerge.

The contribution of WAAS Fellows to this task was the development of what they called a “phase analysis” at any level of abstraction and inclusivity. The phase analysis represents the markers of social interaction among human beings, implicating values and value problems. The markers essentially would represent from this perspective particularized contextually located problems. For example, the first marker would be the **identification of participators** and it would be important to know who the participators are and what the problems are of participation. The second marker would include the **perspectives of the participators** and we would like to know what the problems are of the perspectives of identity, demands for values, and the demands relating to expectations. The third marker would identify the **basis for power** and or authority available to the participators and therefore, includes a concern for the problems relating to the basis for power. Social interaction is located in situations of space and time these situations therefore could be special, temporal, institutional, or pervaded by the conditions of crises. We therefore need to know the **problems related to situations**, which is the fourth marker. The fifth marker would relate to the **strategies** and the problem generations by the utilization of diverse strategies. Strategies can be persuasive or coercive; they could include strategies of economic coercion or persuasion, strategies of diplomacy and communication, strategies in the deployment of propaganda and influence peddling as well as strategies of major and minor coercion. The sixth marker would relate to the problems relating to the **outcomes** of value shaping and sharing. The seventh marker would look at the longer-term **effects on the social process** generated by these outcomes and their problems.

One of the most important leadership qualities which can be facilitated by this methodology is the critical function of predicting problems before they happen for the leader. This is an underappreciated leadership skill of the mind, but we would submit it as a critically important skill.

4.2. Problem Solving

The decision-maker as leader would have an advantage if he were able to master some of the identifiable intellectual tools that guide the process of problem solving (these skills may be employed additionally by the leader’s advisors).

The first of these tasks is the task of goal or **value clarification**. The problems that emerge from the various aspects of social process invariably implicate claims for values or claims for the denial of these values. This requires the leader to have a clear picture of what values are at stake in the context of problems that he seeks to regulate.

Trends in decision relevant to the problem before the leader. A leader would be advised to understand what the relevant trend in leadership decision making was, with regard to the particular problem in the particular context. In short, the leader has to represent a perspective that accounts for history.

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The leader would have to look at the trend in decision in terms of the **conditions/cause and consequences**, which inspired the trend in the first place. This concern for cause and consequences would require the leader to engage in at least a rudimentary form of scientific inquiry. The leader decision-maker will then have to consider what the implications are of an expected decision making intervention, under the present framework and trends of conditions. Here, the leader would be advised to cultivate a sense of the capacity to **predict or forecast**. In short, the leader may indulge in a forecast conditioned or formulated as a developmental construct. In short, what is the worst-case scenario that might emerge from a given set of trends and conditions? Second, what is the best-case scenario that can emerge from that situation?

With the guidance of a developmental construct indicating the best and worst case scenario, the leader decision maker may well have to consult within himself the idea of a creative or alternative mode of thinking that provides him with a creative solution, which approximates the best case and avoids the worst. Here the mind may well be guided by the creative and possibly constructive possibilities that may emerge from the disciplined use of free fantasy.

As earlier indicated, Lasswell saw the importance of both the unconscious and the element of creativity reposing in the thinking process of the mind that function apart from logic, namely free-fantasy. A capacity to develop the free-fantasy aspect of thinking, Lasswell believed, would open up the consciousness to constructive and creative possibilities reposing in the mind’s framework of free-fantasy and the psychic resources to which it can have access.

4.3. The Thinking Skills of Decision Making

The skills of decision-making will be enhanced if the thinking skills that constitute the architecture of decision making are both understood and utilized. WAAS Fellows Lasswell and McDougal identified seven thinking skills that are implicated in decision making. These thinking skills in effect constitute the architecture of decision-making. The leader would be advised to understand the leadership role in decision-making and that requires some knowledge of the workings and interrelationships of the key identifiable functions relating to the architecture of decision-making. It is possible that leaders intuitively incorporate these ideas into the structure of decision-making but if they were more consciously understood,

the possibility of improved decision-making could be enhanced. The following are the seven identifiable functions:

- I – Intelligence
- II – Promotion
- III – Prescription
- IV – Invocation
- V – Application
- VI – Termination
- VII – Appraisal

It may well be argued that the deeper the understanding of these decision functions, the more effective would be the discharge of decision making roles in the good leader. In conclusion, the tools that the leadership in WAAS has provided are a useful toolkit of thinking skills that would benefit the mind of a good leader in the discharge of leadership responsibilities.

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