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Feminine Qualities and Style of leadership

-Preliminary Draft-

We live in the age of women, the age of the input of feminine values.

In a declaration of the UNESCO on the contribution of women to a Culture of Peace it is said: "Only as women and men together in equality and partnership can we overcome the difficulties, silence and desperation and secure the understanding, political will, creative thinking and concrete activities which are necessary for global transition from a culture of violence to a Culture of Peace."

Women are awakening to their responsibility. It was an overwhelming experience at the CSW in New York to see how many women are active in the NGOs and politics.

The power of women is fascinating. In a UN report from the 80's we can read:

"Women make up half of the world's population ,they work two thirds of the total working hours throughout the world, they receive one tenth of the world's income and are in possession of less than one percent of the world's wealth."

I have difficulties in believing that this situation has changed very much in the new millennium. The injustice practised against women is clearly apparent. However, it is particularly the strength of women, the strength of the feminine which is revealed through this report.

Woman represent values which are deeply anchored in the female soul and mind and these values and principles leave their mark in their working- and leading style.

On the 3rd March 2006 there was a headline in the largest newsmagazine in Germany "The Times" asking: "What is feminine? " The editorial department covered this topic in four

different articles and two full pages of pictures.

- Gertrude Lübbe-Wolff, Professor and since 2002 a judge at the German Federal Constitutional Court, said: "Every society profits if its citizens are capable of placing themselves in a position with perspectives which are not immediately related to their own. Many people see this quality as feminine.
- Barbara Unmüßig, a political scientist, refers to the stamp feminine aspects can make on management style. Instead of being caught up in inefficient internal power clashes women promote co-operation, team work and networking. She also observes a different feminine reaction in situations where there is conflict.

In summarising, all the interviews exposed some feminine characteristics

- to put oneself in another person's perspective,
- to perceive the entire situation of the life of another person
- have a view point including all senses,
- to avoid power struggles,
- to wish for efficient teamwork, harmony, balance, creation of common agreement.

These are some of the values which are commonly defined as feminine. Generally feminine means everything relating to women. In biology and medicine female is describing the gender. But in philosophy and ethics 'feminine' is also referred to as describing certain virtues. This indicates that when we speak about feminine values or characteristics, we do not only speak about something uniquely relating to us women but we talk about characteristics present in all human beings, man and woman alike. Therefore, talking about feminine qualities and styles of leadership refers to certain

aspects which are mainly represented in women, but not exclusively.

I don't want to be misunderstood. I believe in the necessity of the input of femininity into our society. At the same time I see the necessity of gender alliance, which is uniting feminine and masculine capacities and characteristics in the process of creating a culture of peace.

It is my desire to create awareness of the capabilities we women have. Also I want to show, that exactly these feminine characteristics and capabilities will make the difference in our society, in politics, in economics and every part of society.

In the following I refer to the experiences made by Sally Helgesen during a research observing and interviewing several women in leadership positions in the management of big companies or corporations.

Sally Helgesen came to understand that in leadership positions women represent the values which are deeply anchored in the female soul and mind. Allow me to share some aspects how these characteristics are expressed in feminine leadership:

Structures of leading

In the myths all over the world we can listen to stories how the goddesses work the netting of human life, how they spin the thread that connects the events of the past with those of the future. For this reason the spinning goddesses of the German and Greek myths were also known as the goddesses of destiny. They knew and accepted destiny as a combination of past, coincidence and conscious acting.

Women strive to be in the centre and shrink back at the idea to be alone at the top of a hierarchical structure. This kind of leading style is in literature often described with the

concept of "net" or "net structure". It helps to imagine a spider's web. The spider in the centre can feel whenever the net is touched, every movement is perceptible and thus the spider can react directly.

In the net structure the woman in the centre - or alternatively the man – is connected with every part of the net: Thus it is possible for her/him to gain all kinds of informations directly from the source. Distortion or falsification through filters and controlling entities are therefore avoided.

Direct access to all information helps to make the right decision. The person in charge can test reactions before and therefore support the final decision with more data.

All the women of the study didn't want to hurry while making decisions. From the women's view point the top position in a hierarchical structure is too far away from the centre of action. For men in contrast the centre of the net seems often confining, so as to be wedged in the middle – without perspective.

Leadership strategies

Most women dislike the words strategy and power. Both seem to be connected with oppression. Strategy seems always orientated to reach certain positions, to work to the top and to beat competitors.

The net structure is a different kind of strategy, uses different methods and is striving for different goals. Therefore we find networks especially in the area of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or peace movements.

The fundamental aspects in the network emphasize a good relationship amongst the co-workers. The situation of each co-worker is important. Therefore the effort of the person in the centre is directed towards stabilisation,

taking care of relationships, connecting loose ends and striving for integration and alliance. Thus the person in the centre attracts the others to her/him, strengthening all the connections that keep the system functioning.

This feminine nature of connecting people, bringing them closer to each other, strengthening the individuals as part of the whole is one of the necessary inputs to our society through women.

In the hierarchic system the chains of command and the positions are clearly structured. In the network all are working together on one level.

The strategy of the net is guided by opportunity and intuition and is marked by patient waiting. It is not only orientated on goals. It rather emphasises character development and defines success connected to personal growth. Not activity at any cost, but patient waiting and the unfolding of the inherent capabilities of each person is of higher significance. This is only possible through encouraging connections between all co-workers.

Important is also the appreciation of the diversity and variety of all characters, all aspects and options.

Caring for the needs of the community, the employees, the city, and the country is an important part of the strategy of the net. Women in leading positions therefore appreciate people and the relationship to them as one of the most important aspects of their work.

The strategy of the net structure recognizes the importance of the feeling that we are part of what has been and part of what will happen in the future.

Working Styles

Another very interesting aspect is the difference between men and women in their way how to work.

Here I draw from personal observance and experiences as well as of the above mentioned study.

Basically women have a constant working pace, interrupted by short breaks for a "breathing." Pace regulation is important due to the fact that I am only one person and need my inner "rest", says Mrs. B. Grogan, owner of an industrial company in Denver.

Unexpected duties and encounters are not felt as disruption.

Frances Hesselbein, Director of the Girl Scouts in the USA appreciates unexpected duties, encounters and very much exchange of ideas. "I want to achieve that people are not shy to come to my office". She also wants, that everybody can see that she is part of all events and that she is interested in all proceedings.

Caring for others, participating, helping and taking responsibility are the basic principles of her work. I am sure these principles are well known to all of us.

The women participating in the research of Sally Helgesen need their secretaries to ease the communication to the outside world. Conversations are given high priority as well as the personal answering of letters. On the other hand the secretaries of men in leading positions are often instructed to avoid too many personal contacts.

Women take time for activities which are not directly connected to their work.

It was important for the woman participating in the research to take time for activities, not related to their work. They didn't want to be spiritually isolated. Therefore they followed

special personal interest as reading books, engaging in arts, psychology or further educational programs not directly connected to their job.

Women undertake many different rolls and tasks.

Women see their personal identity as complex and multifaceted. They identify themselves less with their job-related position. They have many positions at once: mother and manager, wife and friend, and many more.

Through the inner distance to their job-related position women can easier slip into different roles; different roles with different scripts but always the same person. It is fun to play these different roles – or? Caring mother, smart negotiation partner, clever executive manager, brilliant speaker, listener.... just as it is needed. Thus all the different aspects of our personality become important.

To give in formations is more important to woman as to keep them for individual use.

Women try to give as much information as possible, transmitting the data to the place in the net structure where it is just now needed. Active giving and receiving keeps the network of relations intact. Accurate answering of correspondence is also a possibility of passing information.

Communication

Different models of leading also implicate different styles of communication. In the hierarchy one uses different channels of information and the chain of command. The net cultivates a direct, free flowing and relaxed communication, because many connecting points enable the flow of communication. The net structure strengthens human relationships; facilitates communication and gives value to the means as well as o the objectives.

Awareness of the importance of good use of the language is needed for good communication.

Conscious use of a language helps to convey what we want to say. Slow speaking shows that I take time, fast speaking shows that I am in a hurry and actually want to do something else. Through language and tone I can signalize respect. Language shows the cultural standard of my organisation.

To use praise and a positive echo as reinforcement is an essential part of communication from the viewpoint of women.

Margot Käßmann, before Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran German church in Hanover, said during an interview: "One special feminine point of view is clearly the way women perceive other people. Women much more often keep the overall living situation of their counterpart in mind. Women often need harmony around them more than men. I myself... would rather seek to achieve common perspectives... because a position taken as the result of consensus often lasts much longer than decisions taken by a single person on their own".

People often seek to solve conflicts through force since they simply do not have the capabilities to achieve a constructive solution to a conflict. These abilities have, in turn, their bases in experiencing a feeling of security, respect and love.

A non-violent conflict strategy as a means to achieve social change is surely a feminine quality. This type of conflict resolution generates positive, transformative energy. Gandhi called this "the power of truth".

Chris Griscom, a (lady) American author and healer said:

"The feminine strives in all ideas, with creative efforts, to find that which is common and to unite. Encountering resistance, the feminine discovers openings and solutions and discovers what unites people in all ideologies and philosophies. Which perspective would be

better suited to research, fashion and realise the opportunity to achieve peace? Who is most suited to achieve peace and to educate the next generation to pursue peace?"

The women participating in the research instructed those parties which had different opinions to work together on a solution. The final decision then complies with the requirement of both parties, a close co-operation is enhanced and the team spirit is strengthened.

Authority

In the hierarchic structures authority is based on the position you have. In the net structure women represent rather the heart than the head of the whole without necessity of subordinate positions to emphasize the status.

Women achieve authority through contact to people in her surroundings, not through distance. That boosts the team spirit. When they are successful, women in leadership positions give thanks to the co-workers and emphasise the joint efforts.

At meetings not reports of success are asked for, but sharing of experiences, giving inspirations, informing, in short...strengthening and consolidating the connections between the different departments.

The girls and woman in the tales of Astrid Lindgren show often courage, self-reliance and assertiveness. Astrid Lindgren describes women free of the influence of clearly defined social functions. It doesn't matter what challenge they take on, the internal significance is always the importance of female self-confidence and their independent ability to love apart from the value system of the time they are living in.

It would be ideal when woman could have a leading role in politics, economics, and culture

and in every other area of society and/or that these female aspects could be integrated.

Basic prerequisites for introducing feminine values in society

➤ Education

If it is our desire to bring these feminine capabilities into society then it is surely essential for us to continuously further our education concerning in the area in which we wish to make a contribution. Professionalism is most certainly not just a male domain. Here I would like to draw your attention to something which we often forget: Seneca said: "We do not dare to do something because it is difficult; it becomes difficult because we do not dare to do it."

Thanks to the various tasks which I have taken on in the Women's Federation I have been able to realise how multi-faceted the expression of truth, wisdom and knowledge is and how fascinating the search to discover different aspects.

Further education is a gift from Heaven. I am not just referring here to the accumulation of external knowledge.

A further horizon, feeling joy from recognising connections, deepening of our understanding of that which philosophers, sages and prophets have bequeathed to us, help us to recognise our original essence and nature as a woman. Our search will show us the way to connect to our inheritance from the past and fill it with new life.

The dignity of woman

We who are living in Europe are very fortunate to be in a culture in which we can easily be conscious of the dignity of the human being and we can be very grateful for this. However there are still so many women throughout the world who simply have no chance at all to find their true identity.

It is therefore essential to restore the original value of woman, her dignity, in the consciousness of the society all around the world through

- self affirmation of being a person with a unique and valuable personality,
- as a being in whom divinity resides,
- consciousness that we possess special values, capabilities and talents which our society needs,
- understanding that without women there can be no peace and no further development of our society.

Pico della Mirandola, a Renaissance philosopher, saw the dignity of people in self-determination and free development of their character. All other creations grow according to laws and it is only people, human beings, who have the option, in other words, the divine commission, to help create themselves.

➤ The spiritual aspect

Klara Maria Fassbender, the co-founder of the West German Women's Peace Movement, said that the task of woman in fashioning society is to inject a new spirit; also into masculine politics, to inspire everybody to move away from the old political friend-enemy type of thinking recognising that they (politicians) can all resolve their conflicting interests at a higher level. She says that our task as women is to train our heart.

Heart for me is the centre of our being and the source of love. It is in our heart that we carry the divine essence and nature. The more we can obtain access to our heart, the more our internal "structural design" and its potential can develop. Every person can express his/her potential individually perhaps through music, art, meditation, contemplation and internal dialogue. Benevolent self-reflection without personal value judgements can lead to healing of the spiritual wounds which block access to the heart. Once freed, emotions, intellect and

will become an expression of the heart and are revealed in the form of loving acts.

Thus it is particularly the spiritual aspect of the individual's personality which is associated with the topic "Women in leading positions". Only if we open up chances for true inner renewal can we also reform our social behaviour.

The necessity of the unity of feminine and masculine aspects

I do not wish to be misunderstood since I am neither a feminist, nor a proponent of replacing a patriarchy by a matriarchy. We live in the time when models for partnership need to be developed.

Shakti Gawain sees in our intuitive, receptive aspect the feminine aspect which can receive the creative force of the universe. Conversion of internal impulses into actions is what she sees as the masculine aspect. This unification of feminine and masculine energies within every person is the basis for all creative acts – feminine intuition plus masculine action leads to creativity. ...

In his "Banquet" the Greek philosopher Plato mentioned the old myth that man initially arose as a twin creation, as a man and woman at the same time. This "androgynous" prehistoric man was separated by enraged gods because they feared man's insuperability when united as man and woman together.

To conclude we can say that a culture of peace can only arise if both aspects, the masculine and the feminine, work with each other on an equal basis.

This will be achieved through an influx of feminine qualities into all areas of society.