
LEADERSHIP, HISTORY, AND WOMEN

PART 1

by Tony Smith

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Walking across Midtown New York today, a beautiful sunny day with a forgiving breeze, I stopped, I sat, and I observed some of the most intriguing creatures on the planet—women—in their natural habitat:

Commerce.

Commerce includes that old favorite, shopping, and goes way, way beyond it. Why? Because women today c-a-u-s-e commerce. Women today are capitalists. Artists, entrepreneurs, teachers, leaders, partners, experts – they are busy re-making, re-constituting, re-inventing the world they inherited.

What world?

And, re-inventing it from what to what?

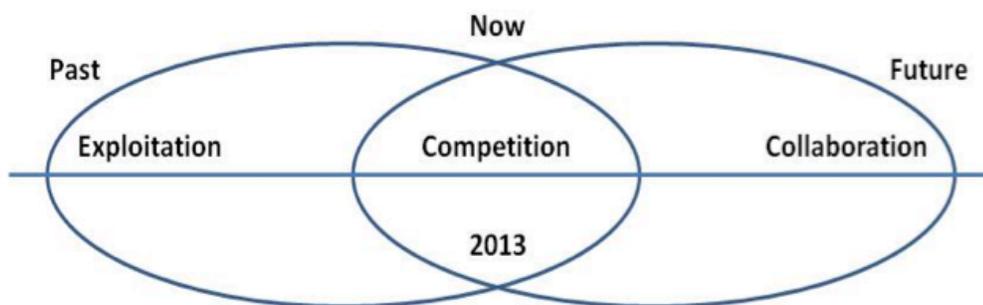
Consider, for eons, we have generated and known human history as being given by the exploitation of things: The natural world and its peoples (people as things, people as property). Today, a new framework is emerging, based on something called: collaboration.

To collaborate: from the Latin, “laborare” (to work) and “co” (together).

To compete: To strive for an objective; to be in a state of rivalry (Webster’s)

To exploit: To make productive use of, including “meanly or unjustly for one’s advantage” (Webster’s). To extract, or to take, without regard or concern for one’s impact or replenishment.

It is none too soon.



Above is a simple graph of human history as seen through the dominant themes and organizing principles of our three human eras:

1. **Exploitation**
2. **Competition**
3. **Collaboration**

None of these eras are mutually exclusive, but the behaviors and mind sets of different eras have dominant themes.

Here's the point:

Unrelenting threat/challenge to human beings Specifically, hunger and starvation, disease, climates, even water and terrain, et al. impacted and shaped all that the human life depends on: hunting, gathering, crops, minerals, forest, rivers, oceans, mountains etc.; and shaped our various human responses: tools, weapons, agriculture, settlements, supply chains, commerce, territories, et al.

This struggle against nature has been an ongoing and has included/still includes the domination and exploitation of people. This drive to possess, dominate and exploit "scarce" natural resources (including people as things, people as property) has dominated thousands of years of our history.

Wars were both seasonal sports and regular events. Read any text of human history and you're struck by how much of it is a struggle, often violent, amongst peoples for domination and exploitation. This domination, if and when successful, was presumed to protect against the relentless threats of hunger, disease, storm and each other. The conquests of people, and nature, have been unrelenting.

From time to time, human beings were able to create **innovations**, even spectacular **masterpieces** and occasional **breakthroughs**, the sum total of which constituted what we might call the evolution of our culture, the forwarding of our human enterprise.

Today, believe it or not, **actual scarcity itself does not run the show.** **The Industrial Revolution** was designed specifically to take on the threat of scarcity and has largely succeeded, alongside the various communications, energy and transport technologies we have developed in the last 100 - 200 years. **Today, actual scarcity itself is no longer the fundamental threat**, for 80% of us (and there is work to do for and with the seriously impoverished because while the means are here the will [mindset] is missing and needed). Material scarcity itself, doesn't (need not) run the show. And yet, the mindset and fear of the scarcity definitely still does run the show for almost 100% of us, as a widely unexamined and pervasive "mind set" of **all** human beings. (See [Carol Dweck, "Mindset"](#)).

That fear, **that mindset, is obsolete** and yet it may be killing us, quite literally.

For example: The notion/belief that, “if I win, you lose”, and “if you win, I lose”, became, overtime, a persistent, tenacious **model in our heads**, a lens we have adopted, a filter through which we see, transparently (and thereby invisibly, as with **all our lenses for reality**). This mind set, this lens, is called **“zero sum”**. One person’s “winning” necessarily, must, require another person’s “losing”.

Genuine or wide-scale (global) **win-win** is still considered rare or impossible (this “impossibility” is a given, dramatized daily by our “mainstream” media who some writers consider clueless. See The Clue Train Manifesto that suggests traditional media and marketing are industrial dinosaurs, operating as a one-way broadcast to passive, “unknowing” consumers. This is distinct from marketing and media characterized as an authentic, two-way conversation which we’ve seen begin and take hold in the Internet).

When one sees through a lens, or a filter, one rarely sees, or accounts for, **the lens, or filter, itself**. Our models of reality, the ones we carry in our heads, our brains, are like a lens: and these lenses become, once in place, over time, completely transparent to us, therefore invisible to us, even though pervasive. Like if one were skiing with brown goggles, after a while the terrain is no longer brown – it is “just the way it is”. **Models of reality are like the air we breathe:** pervasive, transparent, invisible, and therefore, not fully accounted for. Having a-n-y model in our heads as the “true and right” model biases human beings to act consistent/persistent with that particular model. This includes our inherited, historical model that insists on **scarcity, domination, exploitation as “the way it is”**. Inside that reactive model, life shows up as, occurs as, threat, threat, threat. So says my brain. This fear (anxiety) invites, insists on, and perpetuates this condition: win/lose, zero sum.

Enter women. Why Women? Because women are designed by nature, and by now, by culture, to naturally collaborate when they’re free to be women, not male clones. **Women carry, and are equipped to carry, life;** living, breathing life, felt and seen. They’re built to carry life in them before, during and after pregnancy; their bodies and psyches are preparing for carrying life, giving life, being responsible for life (for all time actually). Their feeding, caring, developing, nurturing of life shapes their view (and increasingly ours as men) including our modern mind sets and skill sets. Women naturally come to, learn to, value and foster relationship, connection, coordination and communication because the life they carry depends on it. Without that, the life they carry, nurture and foster dies. The consequences are real. ([Dr. Dorothy Dinnerstein, "The Mermaid and the Minotaur"](#)).

Men, God bless ‘em, for better and worse, do not carry life. They may carry something (or have carried something) swords, egos, intelligence, heart, cajones, humor yet men’s purpose is not naturally

“justified” by carrying or bearing the physical life of the next generations, as women’s lives are. Historically, men get their purpose, their “justification”, their reason for being, for their distinct existence, through their works, their impact out here in the world. Historically, at least, they write, read, perform, attack, defend, build, destroy they do, they do, they do. They have created and destroyed and created and destroyed for eons.

Note: By destroy, I do not mean simply some nightmare Hollywood image of killer monsters on the loose. **By destroy, I mean the word at its origin: to de-structure.** Often when something is created, it de-structures something else; it de-constructs the structure it’s in or has been there. Creating and de-structuring, in the most straightforward sense, may be two sides of the same coin (see the economist, [Joseph Schumpeter, “Creative Destruction”](#)).

These “**men creatures**”, when well managed by themselves or by women who genuinely empower them with **integrity, vision and compassion** have been/are/can be very productive, useful, valuable, inspiring, creative, imaginative. Creating the Internet, by both men and woman, for example, de-structures, to some real degree, music, publishing, and now, education. These industries become de-structured and then re-structured, and when intelligently so, are still viable, competitive and valuable.

These “**men creatures**” make and meet targets, meet objectives, produce results in whatever medium they’re in engaged in, out in the world. **Men are natural [winners, opportunists and hustlers](#) who seek, create and exploit opportunity.** They can be/have been, at times, ruthless, brutal and shortsighted **IF** they’re un-tempered by a powerful vision, grounded in integrity, compassion and vision. **Often this is a vision tempered and shaped by a powerful, grounded, empowering woman** or a man who has had such real exposure to genuine vision, vision for what is possible, not merely predictable.

Without the **vision, integrity, compassion** tempering and shaping their natural opportunism, and their creative/destructive bent men (interestingly) often do not make, and often have not made, very good leaders; and much of human history is evidence of that – not all, yet much.

Today, **the biggest threat to humankind** is not nature, disease, starvation, storms (other than those storms invited and precipitated by us). Today, by far, the biggest threat to humankind, to the natural world, to human being, is: **human being**. Billions of them, armed with enough technology (or the ability to hack into enough technology) to quickly blow up (or rapidly pollute) the entire planet. With so many well armed actors bumping into each other at light speed (quite literally), the likelihood that we’ll end up where we have been headed, for millennia, is at or near 100% (see ["Ishmael" by Dan Quinn](#)).

Where we have been headed is given by, and based on, **a PAST model of the world** constructed in language, carried in our heads, residing entirely in our brains one of necessity, scarcity, exploitation and domination, including the ruthless exploitation of nature and of each other. We now can, must, and will, shift our mindsets, our institutions, our behaviors into a model founded fundamentally on different ways and means, a different way of being, a new model:

Collaboration

A **collaboration**, beyond individual, nation, state, beyond me, as a natural view and way of acting, needs now to become our second nature; as welcome, and human, as enjoying a sunset. We now – right now – need a different leadership model where people themselves, men and women, even children, are seen as collaborative leaders, each of us working together, in communication, fully, to re-direct, re-conceive, re-construct the biggest threat ever to our human history: **ourselves**.

Stay tuned for Part II.