The Prison with Symbolic Walls: Complexity and Structuration in Havel's *Power of the Powerless*

Abstract (Article Summary)

A dear friend who, as I write, is in a Chinese prison once told me this tale: For want of something to do, a prisoner gleaned from the sweepings of the shop floor tiny bits of glittering wire, which he deposited in a bottle. Years passed. On the day he was freed, there was nothing to take with him to make the passage of those years except the bottle, and so he carried it away. Back home he rose and he ate and he slept at the exact hours the warden had decreed. Too old to work anymore, he spent his days pacing, the exact space of his long confinement-four paces forward, four paces back, four paces forward, four paces back. For want of something to do, one day he smashed the bottle to count how many tiny bits of glittering wire he had collected. He wept. At his feet lay broken glass, and a clump of wires rusted solid in the shape of a bottle (Lord, 1990, p. 3).

Full Text (7,076 words)

How many organizations, rules, relationships and customs continue to control us long after we are free? Power relationships, agency and identity collide until, like the elephant and his chain, we become accustom and sometimes dependent on controlling power that structures our lives, often unwilling or unable to let go of our own victimhood. Deleuze (1990, p. 3) reminds us that our sense of causality is easily blurred and our good sense destroyed when identity confronts power.

Power has long been a central topic for consideration for communication and organizational scholars and has been prominent in the literature of post-modernism. In this essay, we examine the essay by Czech poet and President Vaclav Havel entitled *The Power of the Powerless* that expands the notion of power in political systems towards an understanding of structuration and self-organization. Havel published the essay in 1979 while the Czech people were still under the political control of a government sustained by the former Soviet Union. In a case that is similar to the Chinese prisoner, Havel's story begins with the situation of the green grocer trying to make a living for his family in the totalitarian state. The grocer complies with requests to put party poster in his window and does not offer resistance to regulation. In a traditional way, the green grocer is seen as "powerless," but Havel argues that traditional view of power is insufficient in understanding the scope of the power relationships. Havel then proposes a conceptualization of power in the post-totalitarian state that is consistent with structuration and complexity theory. In his discussion of automism he explains why the Chinese prisoner referred to above stays a prisoner even after the walls are gone.

This essay begins with a discussion of some of the many common definitions of power beginning with traditional theorists and moving to the post modern. In this section we give a brief accounting Foucault's influence on postmodern conceptualizations of power, citing his distinction between juridical and contingent power. The second section describes Havel's unique contribution to the concept of power, focusing specifically on his case study of power in the old Soviet Union and using examples of the green grocer. The third section shows how Havel's view of power is consistent with current complexity theory views of power. In this section, we show how Havel's examples illuminate the complexity theory power perspective and draw out important ideas such as emergence and selforganization. The fourth section and conclusion argues that Havel's view of power operates sympatrically with traditional power. For Havel post-totalitarian power does not mean that traditional forms of power can be dismissed. Havel sees both traditional and holistic (posttotalitarian) power in play. In the final section we discuss the creation of symbolic power through field theory and structuration and show how Havel proposes a metaphysical symbolic field with underdetermined boundaries within which power operates.

FROM LINEAR TO NETWORK DEFINITIONS OF POWER

Historically, definitions of complex subjects most frequently begin in a practical domain and power is no exception. We begin examining the nature of power conceptualizations with a practical analysis that looks at the locus of power exercised and the relative directness of the action. We note that most explanations of power begin with interpersonal descriptions and move toward systemic locations of power**.** The location of interpersonal power includes French and Raven, (1959) who proposed that interpersonal power is based on individual knowledgeability, or on their capacity to mete out rewards or punishments. In contrast, systemic power includes not only social influence of a dominant group, but also the archived structures that we produce and reproduce as a society (Giddens, 1984;1997).

Another basic element of power is the action that is created when power is exercised either interpersonally or systemically. Effects of action can either be direct or indirect. Direct action is simple cause and effect action where power exercised over another is immediately observable and felt. The guards in the Chinese prison, for example, controlled the prisoner with reward and punishment. The teacher-student, manager-employee, doctor-patient, politician-citizen, priest-paritioner relationships are commonly explained by traditional power.

In a relationship familiar to most academics, traditional power explains why the instructor and student agree to participate in a direct exchange model of authority and conformity. There is an agreed upon structure or text where the student accepts that the instructor has formal authority. The power is centralized in the teacher and creates a dynamic by which the teacher holds power over the student. These relationships, of course, exemplify traditional social models of power that either directly or indirectly assume that power is linear. If power is linear, then there must be a power differential between two entities for it to flow in one direction (Odum & Odum, 1976). Power

operates as a directed mechanism in defining social relations and in creating outcomes deemed desirable for organizations by those who have leadership roles in the hierarchy.

Examples of traditional power are never distant from our own experience nor those who write about power in the context of organizations. French and Raven's acclaimed model proposes power is based on five characteristics (reward, punish, expert, referential, and coercive) that may be exhibited by an individual. Ultimately, individual power is based on individual knowledgeability, their capacity to mete out rewards or punishments, or special trait s and talents. Similarly, Pfeffer (1988;1992) agrees that power begins with individual attributes. The individual characteristics that lead to power include: energy, focus, sensitivity to others, flexibility, and the ability to manage conflict. Kanter (1979) also says that individual characteristics are the raw material of power, but she extends here argument to account for the empowering information that comes from social networks that are like power grids in an electrical power system. Once information is converted to power in the network, to a usable form, then it can come into play in the behavior of the organization. Boulding (1989) takes a more institutional approach that moves us closer to Foucault and other post-modernist perspectives. Boulding's model presents power as a means to get what one wants in three different types: destructive, productive, and integrative. Ultimately, Boulding attributes the exercise of power to the range and depth of individual choice.

It is in De Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics see an emerge differentiation between these different views of power. De Certeau's model also is the first hint that the theoretical debate should not be about one type of power or another, but rather about how different types of power play within a system. Tactics, according to de Certeau, are calculated actions determined by the absence of a proper locus. Janeway (1980), for example, argues that women in subordinate power roles find tactical ways of dealing with male domination. Whilemales in many societies are seen as controlling or owning the space, women take time-based contingent opportunities that further their interests.

In contrast to tactics, De Certeau defines strategies as the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that become possible as soon as a subject (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) with will and power can be isolated. For example, Deetz & Kersten (1983) argue that communication in organizations is systematically distorted, based on the interests of different groups. This allows for the maintenance and reproduction of inequitable interest where priority is eventually given to managerial interests; the roles of owners and workers are produced and reproduced out of historical forms of domination that support the economic need to make products. Since workers participate freely in this system, consent is an effective means of control.

Clegg (1989), like De Certeau, also began moving towards different types of power that co-exist within social systems. He argued that the traditional conceptualization of power has its roots in Hobbes and Machiavelli. He says Hobbes emphasized a mechanistic view of power roots in causality. Machiavelli was pragmatic, militaristic and placed emphasis on strategy. Weber was concerned with differentiating power from

authority, a distinction that not all share. Clegg (1989) and Lukes (1984) argued for a more complete and contextualized view of power that accounts for power fields, symbols, and indirect network and cultural influence. Both Lukes and Clegg found theoretical foundation in arguments advanced by French critical theorist Michael Foucault. In general, the ideas Foucault proposed include a relationship between power and the institution (1977), power and knowledge (1977) and the operationalization of power in discourse. Overall, Foucault claims that power is "productive of both knowledge and practice" (1995, p. 1), that contains "instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application and targets (1995, p. 215). In his earliest writings Foucault wrote about one form of power—juridical. Sawicki's (1991) useful summary describes the juridical model according to the following:

1.   Power is possessed (by individuals in the state of nature, by a class, by the people);
2.   Power flows from a centralized source from top to bottom (in the law, the economy, the state); and
3.   Power is primarily repressive in its exercise (a prohibition backed by sanctions).

A cursory read of juridical power may lead to the conclusion that Foucault fails to move away from the traditional, linear, hierarchical, or individualized notions of power as postulated in previous traditional discourses on power. However, in his later writings, we find that he proposes an additional form of power— disciplinary. Clegg (1989) describes why Foucault found the juridical view of power to be insufficient.

Foucault's concern in his later work was with how those ordered totalities, such as existed in the institutional form and discursive practice, which secured the 'birth of the clinic' and the power of 'the medical gaze' as well as the 'medical subject', could have been constructed. What strategies and what organization secured these powerful outcomes? The continuity, such as it is one of the problematic rather than anything else (p. 6).

Foucault's later writings include a movement toward a more contingent, network, disciplinary view of power is summarized by Sawicki (1991):

1.   Power is exercised rather than possessed;
2.   Power is analyzed as coming from the bottom up; and
3.   Power is not primarily repressive, but productive.

It is in the introduction of the disciplinary model, as correlative to juridical power (Kelly, 1995), that we begin to see that traditional notions of power do not account for all instances when power is exercised. Foucault says, "this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body. (Foucault, 1995, 214)"

Foucault introduces juridical power with the disciplinary notion of power in order

to boost access to, "those forms of power that make centralized, repressive forms of power possible—namely the myriad power relations at the micro-level of society (Sawicki 1991, 220)." In the second definition of power, that Foucault claims expands his previous thinking to a sympatric perspective, power is "the way in which relationalforces are deployed or given concrete expression (28)." In complex systems, relations are not only important to understanding power, but according to Foucault, they are power. It is the relationship that functions in such a way as to bring about alienation, struggle, conflict, war, or their opposites. So, by way of example, Foucault's classic study of the penal system is based not only on how it has developed, but also captures society's role as introducing it as a form of disciplinary power. With Foucault, we find an examination of power still incomplete. He notes the elaborate systems it takes to create and uphold the penal system, and in *Discipline and Punish* (1995)*,* he describes the movement from a traditional view of power to the contingent. This power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who do not have it. Rather, it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against power, resist the grip it has on them. This means that these relations go right down into the depths of society—that they are not localized in the relations between the state and its citizens, or on the frontier between classes. They do not merely reproduce the general form of the law or the government at the level of individuals, bodies, gestures and behavior; although there is continuity (they are indeed articulated on this form through a whole series of complex mechanisms), there is neither analogy nor homology, but a specificity of mechanism and modality.

Foucault's version of contingent power is centered in the relationships within an institution. Foucault describes power that is created and simultaneously with social interaction and lived within the "depths of society" (p. 37). Deeper in his writing, Foucault also makes a place for added complexity by suggesting that power is related to knowledge.

The prescriptions of Foucault and complexity theory propose that the narrow, individualistic focus of these definitions of power should be broadened to account for the behavior of the system. To date, Foucault has successfully articulated an enduring theory of power that transcends the chronically deterministic, cause-effect thinking that guides the following rug merchant's behavior.

Foucault moves closer to Havel, proposing that different forms of power exist and therefore we must conceptualize of power in different ways. Similarly, Foucault argues that power cannot be understood in isolation, but must be studied in a holistic context. The anonymity of power is a significant cornerstone of Foucault's conceptualization of discursive formations. Foucault states that these discursive formations are underscored by contradiction. A discursive formation is not, therefore, an ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity of contradictions, and resolves them in the calm unity of coherent thought; nor is it the surface in which, in a thousand different aspects, a contradiction is reflected that is always in retreat but everywhere dominant. It is rather a space of multiple dissension—a set of different oppositions whose levels and roles must be described (1995).

This formulation of power introduces the flux and flow of a discontinuous pattern of relations. It points to the problem of looking at the surface, or easily observable behaviors to identify the locus of power. It infiltrates the many loci where power may emerge, in contrast to the simple, material relations posited by writers who propose power is based in the individual. It is altogether material, symbolic, and invisibly pervasive.

Havel adds a great deal of clarity in his philosophical call to action. Havel's view of traditional power is similar to the individual power of French and Raven and other traditional theorists. But his description of post-totalitarian power adds to the practical understanding of how power relations emerge and self-organize and builds on the ideas of Clegg, Lukes, and Foucault.

HAVEL'S DEFINITION OF TRADITIONAL AND POST-TOTALITARIAN POWER

For Havel (1985), traditional power, much like Foucault's juridical power, is linear, instrumental and focused on a specific relationship between the dictator and the subject, or the powerful and the powerless. He argues that dictatorships are sustained by overt power and that their strength is usually in the numbers of police and soldiers they might control. But the second form of power is subtler.

Specifically, in a totalitarian system power is "wielded openly "(Havel, 1985, p. 24). But in the post-totalitarian system the struggle is "behind the scenes" (Havel, 1985, p.33). Traditional power uses "direct instruments" (Havel, 1985, p. 24), while non traditional power is "metaphysical" (Havel, 1985, p. 31), "anonymous" (Havel, 1985, p. 33) and "more automatically overcomes the will of the individual" (Havel, 1985, p. 34). Traditional power "lacks historical roots and is distinguished from the majority on a temporary basis" (Havel, 1985, p.24). But non-traditional power moves from "clique to clique, from generation to generation, touching people at every step" (Havel, 1985, p. 31). Thus the use of power becomes a ritual that engulfs the individual and blinds them to their adversary (Havel, 1985, p. 24). Perhaps the most important distinction Havel makes between traditional totalitarian power and non-traditional post-totalitarian power is than the former is based in the promotion of ideology while the latter assumes a flexible ideology that bends and binds with the times.

Havel continues in his essay to suggest that this traditional view of power does not explain how the Soviet Union continues to control his country. Havel describes the former Soviet states and having a structure where "each country has been completely penetrated by a network of manipulatory instruments controlled by the superpower center and totally subordinate to its interests" (Havel, 1985, p. 24). Havel argues that the classical view of dictators implies a political anomaly that is too traditional in its perspective. He suggests that we must move to a posttotalitarian perspective that begins to understand and describe the relational aspects of power within the structure of institutions, and feels that the dictatorships of the Soviet block are not political

anomalies. They have historical roots in a socialist political ideology that gave them the initial momentum to exist. Institutions have emerged under this momentum.

Consider the Chinese prisoner. He was the victim of penetrating manipulator instruments for so long that his life was controlled at a level of practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984). The state would argue that the prisoner had been freed, forgiven, given a new chance: a new life. But the prisoner would say, "I could never be free."

POST-TOTALITARIAN POWER, COMPLEXITY AND STRUCTURATION

This view of power, according to Havel, is nonlinear. He suggests that this view of political power shows how in dynamic systems small changes can be amplified to produce significant results similar to complexity theory's sensitive dependence on initial conditions. In the language of complexity, it is attracted to a certain pattern of behaviors that sustain the central characteristics of the system. According to Havel, not only does the system alienate humanity, but at the same time alienated humanity supports the system. In this way, Havel, like Giddens, accounts for human agency by suggesting that within some power structures citizens comply with the will of the system because they are not conscious of their own needs. When this happens, he argues that the patterns of social forces and the power in the system come in conflict with the patterns of the individual. Havel (1985) says, "The essential aims of life are present naturally in every person. In everyone there is some longing for humanity's rightful dignity, for moral integrity, for free expression of being and a sense of transcendence over the world existences" (p. 38).

For Havel, the locus of morality and integrity is not in the system, but in the individual. He takes us back to the green grocer described at the beginning of this essay, who is in a predicament similar to the Chinese prisoner. Havel asks what would happen if the merchant stopped placing the sign in the window and started speaking his conscience. He says the green grocer would then become the target of local, personal acts of power. He would lose his job, and his children might lose their opportunity for higher education. The individuals representing the state will act with "automatism." This automatism is a tactical self-defense that does not break the rules but still allows the green grocer to occasional disrupt the rules of the game. Havel (1985) says if the green grocer goes against the automatic expectations of the powerful, that the power structure will then "spew the green grocer from its mouth" (p. 39). But this act that Havel says has the effect of saying the emperor is without clothes, also has the effect of bringing the individual's life in alignment with a larger truth, a truth which Havel says is universal and extremely important.

He says, in an argument that shows that real power is based in symbols, that "The principle involved here is that the center of power is identical to the center of truth" (1985, p. 25). As people come to understand what is "true," they come to loosely comply with a set of systemic, foundational and indirect values that are inspirational but not directive. When the green grocer does this then it liberates other individuals to do the same, and thus the small act of not putting a sign in the window can amplify through the

system and create systemic change.

In Havel's proposal, post-totalitarian power cannot predict how some event like the resistance of the green grocer may be amplified through the system and ultimately change the system. It is possible that the use of traditional power will thwart the effect of holistic power. Holistic power is systemic and foundational, but it is also emergent and indirect and, therefore, difficult to see, measure and predict. Yet the underdetermined patterns can be seen in networks, communities and language systems. These complex self-producing patterns created by the exercise of power are often best seen in the relationship between system and subsystem.

At this point it is interesting to note that Havel is leading us to conceptual space shared with Foucault, Deleause and Clegg. He is offering a reconceptualization of power that does not ignore the traditional, but simply extends it. This extension is summarized in Figure 1.

Traditional	Post-Totalitarian/Holistic
Power is:	
Overt	In/Within
Held	Emergent
Instrumental	Inspirational
Linear	Systemic
Functional	Foundational
Direct	Indirect
Physical	Metaphysical
Power is located in:	
Individuals	Fields
Interactions	Symbols
Causality	Underdetermined
Text	Context
Exercising power creates:	
Results	Relationships
Prediction	Patterns
Reactions	Self-organization
Primary relationships:	
Leader/Follower	Knowledge/Action
Powerful/Powerless	Individual/Society

Figure 1: Comparing Traditional and Post-Totalitarian Power

While Figure 1 displays the two sympatric notions of power, it does not help us see the uniqueness of Havel's contribution. Havel's unique contribution does not only distinguish and embellish totalitarian and post-totalitarian power, it shows how both exist and play off of each other.

HAVEL'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO TYPES OF POWER

As we have noted, Havel does not abandon traditional power for a more holistic perspective. He does not argue that in order to understand holistic power one must abandon traditional power. The oppositional nature of the perspectives on power has made it difficult to engage in constructive dialogue that acknowledges the problematics of power yet gives some useful explanation. It is the intent of this essay to call on power scholars to join Havel and focus on seeing the connected underlying patterns of power and thus reap a more complete understanding of the forces at work within post-totalitarian organizations and society.

Our review of the traditional and post-totalitarian power demonstrates the sympathetic nature of the numerous articulations of power. That is, power conceptualizations have an affinity, interdependence, or mutual association that reveals the lack of necessity for an oppositional rationale of power developments. Rather, we develop a sympatric perspective on power, one that reveals how the two constitutions can occupy the same range without the loss of identity.

The sympatric notions of power reveal not only the interdependence and overlap of various views, but the problematic issues as well. We acknowledge that each perspective has its explanatory value, but each is incomplete as well. Consider, for example, using power theories to understand how an airplane stays in flight. One view might look specifically at the relationship between the shape of the fuselage and the resistance in the air or the thrust of the engines and the potential speed. These issues, easily explained by Newtonian physics, are direct issues of power that provide an important but incomplete view of the forces that keep the airplane in flight. A fuller explanation adds the network of controls and communication systems that lie below the skin of the plane. They are less visible but allow the pilot to control the flight of a plane, weighing thousands of tons, with just a simple foot movement. Still to consider is the environment in which the plane flies. The traditional approach to power does not account for the invisible turbulence in the environment that constantly changes the course of the aircraft.

Aviation engineering has created interrelated theories and explanations for each of the domains described above. It would be foolish to abandon one domain in favor of another because they are clearly sympatric and interdependent yet also hold some independent explanatory ability. Havel argues that while traditional power gives birth to the totalitarian system and plays an important role in sustaining it, gradually over time holistic power becomes more significant. This is where Havel and field theory begin to have similar characteristics.

POWER AS A SYMBOLIC FIELD

Hayles (1991) argues that field theory is the most important revolution since Copernicus. She says that the critical concept of field theory is that all things are interconnected and thus there are not discrete events in human society. In a field, symbols become self-referent, connected by means of the mediating field. For Hayles (1991), Turner (1995), and others, language is the field of meaning through which social interaction is connected.

Consider the example of the prisoner offered at the beginning of this essay. The traditional view of power does not fully explain why this former prisoner continued to act as a prisoner after he had been liberated. Traditionalists would argue that the warden no longer has power over the prisoner, that the linear relationship no longer exists therefore there is not longer a power explanation. A holistic perspective would suggest that there are no longer strategic spatial forces that bind the prisoner and force him to find tactical resistance strategies. The forces that kept his schedule and defined the passing of his time are invisible to the individual and the institution yet they created a powerful field that limited his vision and controlled his behavior. The automatism created by the powerful symbolic field are "more powerfulthan the human will" (1985, p. 34), according to Havel.

The green grocer referred to by Havel in his essay is part of this automism created by the power field. Havel argues that when the sign comes from the party officals, he never even thinks that he should not place it in his window. He just simply acts because he is constrained by the metaphysics of the situation that tell him that it is more comfortable to act. Havel suggests that, "the whole power structure…could not exist at all if there was not a certain 'metaphysical' order binding all its components together, interconnecting them and subordinating them to a uniform set of rules" (1985, p. 32). He argues that the metaphysical system that integrates rules is the communication system of the power structure. Havel notes that many of the automatic behaviors that result from this power field are dependent on communication rituals (32-33).

Havel helps us see that the indirect use of power in a post-totalitarian scheme is a communication problem. Communication creates the field of power and influence by defining boundaries and creating networks of meaning. Participatory networks or systems self-define the boundaries and functions of a whole system in which all participate in power relations. This type of power creates a field within which certain behaviors are understood to be possible and while others are perceived as impossible. It also defines what is probable and what is improbable. We argue that holistic power creates a field which:

1.   Articulates and reconciles the relationship between local and global system

behavior;

2. Has an underdetermined or indeterminable source so that cause and effect of action is diffused with the system;

3. Is partially recognizable in patterned form, with subtle symbolical and material characteristics; and

4. Can only be partially accounted for when seen in a whole system, yet is the force that binds human agency.

To understand this holistic notion of power beyond Havel, we should consider first again complexity science and then structuration. Capra (1996) has described the universe as something that "appears as a dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns" (p. 69). These webs, whether material or symbolic, are often invisible or only partially visible to those who live within their influence, yet these forces can have a profound effect by defining the limits of behavior within a system. Hayles' (1991) interpretation of Kuhn suggests that paradigms act as dynamic fields that attract ideas and change them. Kuhn himself was an example of this as he proposed the notion of paradigm in his first edition, and then in the second edition postscript and throughout his life, he decried how many had misunderstood his ideas. But field theory tells us we must account for holistic and symbolic interconnectivity. Once an idea leaves our heads it is subject to the creation and recreation of others. This is the power of the field that directs the material and symbolic world.

The analysis is aided by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Latour (1988), who are both concerned with reconciling the relationship between individual behavior and global, systemic forces. Deleuze and Guittari propose a scheme that describes how signifiers take power and maintain a "line of flight" yet are still underdetermined. They argue that signifiers emerge from a point of subjectification that is similar to a field. From that point the signifier can move in many possible directions, but it is infinitely contained **within a contain of meaning** or patterns by other forces, including the subject. The signifier is subject to inherent material and symbolic deterritorialization, and thus holds organic like characteristics. Deleuze and Guittari's scheme is very similar to the idea of strange attractors found in complexity theory and appears to be compatible with Havel's post-totalitarian idea of power. Latour extends our understanding even further as he described the Pasteurization of France in a book by the same title. While an exhaustive description of Latour's project would be too lengthy, it is sufficient to note that Latour describe the dynamic material and symbolic forces that were involved in the hygienist movement in France in the latter part of the nineteenth century. His scheme is similar to Deleuze and Guittari and compatible with Havel, in that it emphasizes the symbolic over the material.

First Latour (1990) suggests that power is everywhere, even in the smallest microbe that can multiply and cause disease that demands a large social response. Second, Latour adds that it is not the material reality of disease that drives the power relationships, but rather the symbolic belief in the effect of disease. In other words, the hygienists in France were successful not because they were right, but because they were believed to the point where other contrary perspectives were silenced. Finally, Latour, like Havel, helps us see the effect of holistic power by describing the effect that it has on

individual identity. He says, "Some lose their places (the engineers, the microbes, the public authorities): Others gain places (the Pasteurians, the hygienists)" (p. 56). He goes on to describe the radical hybridization of identity that occurs as a result of this power relationship and the field that emerges around the symbols that have new meaning. Latour's analysis of the Pasteurization of France leads us directly to field theory.

An orthodox read of field theory implies an ambient determinism and would leave no place for human of natural agency. It forces us into a *power is everywhere and everything* definition with dubious utility. Fractal theory adds an essential tempering set of qualities to field theory by establishing boundary conditions and accounting for human agency, for it argues that while all systems are bound, yet within their boundaries lies infinite behavioral possibilities.

Fractual theory is based in the work of Mandelbrot who became frustrated when he tried to use Euclidian geometry to explain the shapes of things found in nature. Mandelbrot argued that clouds, shorelines, mountains, and any shape developed by nature is extremely complex and does not fall into the traditional geometric forms such as a square or a sphere. Natural shapes are self-similar and therefore recognizable as clouds, mountains, etc. (Capra, 1997; Baker & Golleb, 1990). Capra (1996) says, "The most striking property of these 'fractal' shapes is that their classic patterns are found repeatedly at descending scales, so that their parts, at any scale, are similar in shape to the whole" (p.89). Our Chinese prisoner believed within his behavioral patterns that he could not escape even after he was outside the walls of the prison. Until he broke the bottle, he was not reflexively aware of his behavioral field. The interconnectivity is only partially visible and seems to be loosely coupled and retrospectively visible in complex systems (Weick, 1995). But how do these fields form and how can they be seen?

Giddens (1984) helps us with this question. Giddens is concerned with human agency within social structures and argues that zero sum theories of power that explain the material or punitive constrains need to be extended to account for a broader range of options. Nevertheless, Giddens acknowledges that individual acts of human agency within the broad range of options emerge as structural properties of social systems that serve as constraining factors.

Giddens uses the restraints of technology to illustrate this point as does complexity economist Brian Arthur (1994). Arthur tells us the story of Paolo Uccello, who in 1443 designed the face of a clock for the Florence Cathedral. The face of the clock had 24 hours and had the hands of the clock moving counterclock-wise. At that time in history the idea of clockwise had not been established; however, by 1550, "clockwise" designs with 12-hour segments had established dominance and any other design was seen as being wrong. The Uccello clock was not bound by the systems that define what is a clock.

Arthur argues that change, agency, and arbitrary decisions are often at the core of formation of these kinds of boundaries. A second contemporary example illustrates how dynamic power related boundaries form in highly interconnected system. The VCR

(Video Cassette Recorder) industry started with two competitive systems: VHS and Beta. Both systems were marketed at about the same time with roughly the same initial market share. Arthur points out that the market was initially unstable and that anomalies occurred which began to favor VHS. As in all dynamic systems, as the market share grew for VHS it became increasingly difficult to sustain Beta, even though the technical evaluations favored Beta. Today Beta has all but gone away and the establishment of VHS in every home owning a VCR has created a power based opportunity field: you can introduce a product, but if it is not VHS compatible it has almost no likelihood of succeeding. This field is much like the paradigm field described by Hayles and Kuhn, you can introduce an idea or new technology, but you cannot control where it goes once it enters a complex system. The power of the complex system is in how it creates the boundaries within which ideas, technology and human behavior exist.

To be sure, this type of power can be fluid and dynamic or revolutionary because it has qualities with are emergent and is therefore invisible or partially visible to participants. The power field that surrounds us defines our role within the community and gives us context, but the contextual framing we experience is seen as indirect. Yet this emergence and indirectness accounts for feelings of inspiration.

Holistic power then, is the power that watches us. We experience it on an individual scale, but it is also at play on different scales, between the individual and the institution, between the institution and society. Like the behavior of the weather, bound by the characteristics of the atmospheric system, we are bound by the characteristics of our own systems.

Havel (1985) says we can venture outside those boundaries, but it is difficult. He says:

"Between the aims of the post-totalitarian system and the aims of life there is a yawning abyss: while life, in its essence, moves towards plurality, diversity, independent self construction and self-organization, in short, towards the fulfillment of its own freedom, the post-totalitarian system demands conformity, uniformity, and discipline. While life ever strives to create new and 'improbable' structures, the post-totalitarian system contrives to force life into its most probable states (p. 30).*"*

TOWARDS A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

The central argument of this essay is that power is traditional and holistic, simple and complete, instrumental and symbolic, physical and metaphysical. In other words, the traditional and holistic views of power are not oppositional, but rather exist in the same space and provide useful explanations of human behavior. But this model of power inspired by Havel is broad. Some might be quick to complain that once again power is conceptualized with extreme complexity. To be sure, power and power relationships are inherently complex and occur simultaneously at multiple levels within a system. It is grossly anthropocentric to assume that power always operates within the understanding of rational human beings. The notion of holistic power acknowledges there are elements

within any system that cannot be seen nor accounted for. The power that binds us within a system is only partially visible to any one of us at any given time. But it also calls upon us to account for power at a higher systemic level.

Neustadt's (1960) famous analysis of presidential political power could be read using a traditional power lens. But a holistic view of power adds to the traditional model, which dominated academic discourse in the 1950s and 60s. Neustadt tried to explain the relationship between General Douglas MacArthur and President Harry Truman. As he begins his explanation of how Truman used formal authority to fire MacArthur, the focus is on the individual relationship between the President and his General. But the analysis moves to a different level as the institutions of Congress and the military enter the picture. Neustadt considers how each will be affected by the breakdown in the relationship between these two historic figures. The analysis continues with a microlevel description of how Truman's congressional support will falter as a result of MacArthur's termination. But the individual and institutional analysis seemed incomplete without a description of the affect this incident has had on U.S. foreign policy and on the presidential relationship with the military. This larger, environmental discussion evokes an ecological metaphor and even leads us to consider how Neustadt's analysis has impacted how presidents use formal authority. This holistic perspective does not use the individual or the institution as a point of analysis, but rather communication processes and content as central to understanding, over time, the direction of the system.

Consider how this might play on an interpersonal level as we try to understand the relationship between and parent and an adolescent with an eating disorder. The primary mode of explanation is psychological as the parents exercise authority over the child in an instrumental way by trying to gain compliance on an appropriate diet. The functional intended outcome is for the parents to act in such a way that the adolescent eats in the desired manner. A holistic perspective takes a more sociological view and begins to look at the parents and the adolescent in a broader context. Like the Chinese prisoner, the green grocer, or the Pasteurization of France, holistic power looks at the characteristics of the relationship between the parent and the adolescent in the context of their society. It acknowledges that while the parents and institutional therapists might make strategic interventions, the adolescent might react with tactical resistance. This sympatric view of power acknowledges that power is jointly held by the parent and the adolescent. The "problem" is generally placed within an institutional context, such as a school or a psychiatric clinic, and consequences of action within the institutional structure are defined by probability. Knowledge is generally defined as a critical factor in finding the appropriate intervention.

Holistic power helps us see that while we are still concerned with the relationships between parent, child and the environment, we begin to look at the symbolic definition of beauty, the historical patterns in the family, and the network of friends and associations who act as "enablers" to the destructive behavior. It becomes less evident that one can "power" one's way out of a problem with this layer of complexity. Rather, one must deal with the foundational behaviors, which are self-producing. In this view of power, we would look at individual identity and naming as one form of power and the

relationship between family, social and media structures as other forms of power. We see how we came to name one person as the patient and look at the relationship between the family having the problems and society or, between the family and the media. In the end, our explanation for the power relationships would likely be not in psychology (traditional),but in communication that occurs within the complex system we call a family (holistic).

As we try and understand the behavior in the context of organizations, a holistic perspective allows us to look at the emergent frames of the organization. It helps us practically see what binds the organization and enables certain characteristics of the organizational culture to continue. While power is clearly underdetermined in the organizational context, it still helps us see the organizational momentum that defines individual behaviors and the communication networks which allow for self-organizing systems to emerge (Contractor, 1997). Many are vested in continuing to debate between the traditional perspectives and the holistic hoping to ignore the systemic factors in the holistic perspective for the sake of simplicity. But a more reasonable yet much more challenging approach would have us move to a higher level of complexity and begin to see power both traditionally and holistically. This will come closer to telling us why the Chinese prisoner, after he is freed, walks two steps forward and two steps back, two steps forward and two steps back.

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