



# Rethinking Materialism from a Feminine Leadership Perspective

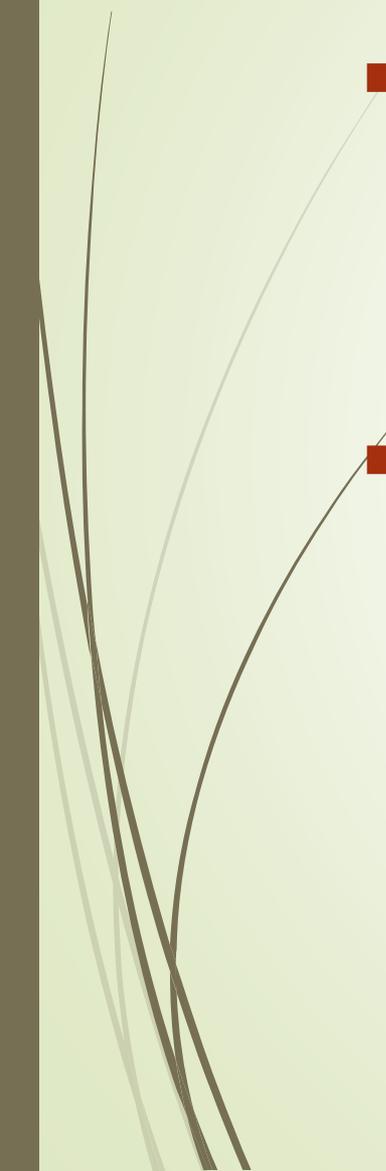
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# Two Key Questions

- What is the difference between “materialism,” which is hazardous, and “material prosperity,” which is a worthy individual and social goal?
  - What is the most effective mode of business leadership for moving society beyond materialism and facilitating the achievement of true material prosperity?
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# Materialism

- a) Human happiness resides in amassing wealth for the purpose of satisfying personal desires.
- b) As human beings, we are atomized entities capable of leading a meaningful and rewarding life on our own, locked away from the misery of others in gated communities.



## Material prosperity

- a) Human happiness resides in the ability to make a positive social impact while pursuing one's own personal growth.
- b) As human beings, we are incapable of experiencing *true* joy if we are surrounded by the deprivation and suffering of others.



# Core Values of Each Paradigm

➤ Materialism:

**Competition** to get ahead and score a **personal win**. Pursuit of **self-interest** within a **greed driven** and **uncaring** system that produces extremes of wealth and poverty.

➤ Material prosperity:

**Collaboration** to produce **win-win outcomes** based on **compassion**, **communal orientation**, and **justice**. Pursuit of **shared prosperity** within a system that provides sufficient resources for all human beings to fulfill their potential.



## Important Note

- Nowhere in the material prosperity paradigm is **wealth itself** seen as undesirable or suspect.
- The key question to be addressed is not the intrinsic value of material wealth, but, rather, **how it is earned, used, and distributed.**
- The proper expenditure of wealth in the service of collective prosperity can become a means of achieving spiritual aspirations.



# Leadership for Material Prosperity

- ▶ What are the changes required at the individual and system levels to achieve an ultimate shift from materialism to material prosperity?
  - ▶ I will focus this presentation on just one aspect of the required systemic transformation, namely ***a shift in corporate leadership models.***
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## Leadership for Material Prosperity

- The most effective **business leadership** model for facilitating a transformation away from materialism and toward material prosperity must embody the **communal values** inherent in the material prosperity paradigm.
- This reflects the shift of emphasis since the 1990's in management and leadership literature from “old management” to “new leadership.”



# From the Masculine to the Feminine

- The new leadership emphasizes such communal values as “caring” and “nurturing.”
- “A key characteristic of old-style management is the extent to which it is keyed to a money standard.” In the new paradigm, “Leadership is caring for people.”  
(Fairholm, 1991)



## From the Masculine to the Feminine

- The shift from “old management” to a “new leadership” paradigm reflects a shift from ***traits traditionally associated with the “masculine” to those associated with the “feminine.”***
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## From the Masculine to the Feminine

- From “Influence through exercise of legitimate power (position) to influence through persuasion (personal networking); competition (play hard) to cooperation (play fair); individualism (by me, for me) to collectivism (team first); and exclusionary (divide and conquer) to inclusionary (power-sharing, sense of family).” (Smith and Smits, 1994)



## From The Masculine to the Feminine

- “Modern characterizations of effective leadership have become more consonant with the female gender role.” (Eagly and Carli, 2004).
  - “Those leadership behaviors more often applied by women reinforce a company’s organizational performance on several dimensions.”  
(McKinsey and Company, 2008)
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# Moral Courage: “Soft” or “Tough”?

- ▶ Another very important characteristic required of a true leader is having the **moral courage** to articulate, uphold, and consistently behave according to core leadership values even when difficult decisions are involved.
- ▶ This is a crucial distinction to make in the context of a topic which has traditionally been reduced to a “soft” versus “tough” dichotomy, with the “tough” side (identified as a masculine trait) having been given the higher value.

## Effective Leadership for Shared Prosperity

- Although the historic socialization of women tends to lend itself more readily to embracing a caring, nurturing, and power-sharing posture in leadership, ***both men and women are fully capable of exhibiting communal leadership values.***
- In our contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century global society ***the primary attributes of an effective leader, whether male or female, reflect traditionally “feminine” characteristics.***



# Leadership for Material Prosperity

- ▶ How can we ensure that **both men and women** are enabled to exhibit these characteristics as leaders?
  - ▶ What can we do as individuals to take leadership in promoting material prosperity for all?
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Thank you!

