

The Value of Power

Western society teaches that power and wealth are desirable life objectives, while not considering their consequences. Find author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

The Value of Power

While that may seem like a strange title, think about it. What is power? When people seek power or have power, what is it they seek or have?

How do we know if we have or lack power?

I believe I have distilled the concept down to something manageable. Power is a potential.

Power is the potential to hurt others of our own kind. Wealth, in itself, does not bestow power directly. Yet we all know and reluctantly accept that those with money can commit crimes--can hurt others in some way--and buy their way out of punishment.

Sometimes that potential is realized. Hitler had power that he used. He killed, maimed and otherwise harmed millions of people. For that Hitler will forever be considered one of the most vile devils humankind has produced.

To have power as potential and not use it is one thing. To have power you use is quite another. Using power is socially unacceptable. Having power you don't use might get you anything you desire.

Does a president or prime minister of a country have power? Perhaps just the mention of the name George W. Bush would be sufficient to answer that question. The man started a war that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives (many from his own military) and destroyed untold numbers of families based on a lie. The war itself has even harmed American citizens who never left their own country, whether they believed the lie or not. If nothing else, they will pay taxes for the rest of their lives to cover loans made to pay for the war. And the quality of their health care will be reduced because the money will not be there to pay for something better from the public purse.

Power is the potential to be physical. It's not really intellectual in nature. It's the potential for sheer, overwhelming might.

Those with power can never be intellectually satisfied. They can never be satisfied in any way. What could Hitler do, for example, after he had exercised his power over so many of his own people and the people of countries he conquered, other than to keep going? Once power is exercised, it may not be stopped. President Bush (the second) was stopped only because the US constitution insists that one person may only hold the top job in the country for two terms. We might wonder what he might have done if his term had not ended. Iran would almost certainly be next on his attack agenda. Then North Korea?

Those who are intellectually satisfied have no need for power. Intellectual satisfaction itself is a form of potential. Those who are intellectually satisfied have the potential to move on to greater and more challenging thoughts, projects and ventures.

Does Donald Trump have power or is he intellectually satisfied? I suspect he would say he is intellectually satisfied because he can accomplish new business ventures repeatedly. I would maintain that Donald Trump has power, but not intellectual satisfaction. He has the money to buy his way out of trouble, but success in business should not be equated with intellectual satisfaction. Trump, like Hitler, is driven to continue his business conquests. Donald Trump is a warrior with power, even though he doesn't use guns.

I am reminded of a program currently on television, Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader? I know there are children in grade five who are intellectually more satisfied than Donald Trump. Not that they are smarter than Trump. They have more intellectual potential than Trump, thus can be excited and enthusiastic about life.

As life objectives, we can strive for power--with its potential to hurt others physically-- or we can strive for

intellectual satisfaction--with its potential to benefit humankind and give the users satisfaction unimaginable to those with power.

While the better choice may seem obvious to you, an intelligent reader, I submit that as societies we tend to put greater emphasis on power than on intellectual prowess. "Get a good education so you can get a good job" is the mantra chanted by so many parents to their children.

And it's working. Children are getting education that will make them good employees, good followers of prescribed business and human resources plans. Much evidence suggests that children are not gaining intellectual satisfaction in school or in the jobs they hold as adults. In fact, away from their jobs, where they have considerable expertise, many adults are stupid, so much so that a grade ten dropout may have a more rounded education in life experiences. Donald Trump likely pays someone to change a washer in a leaky tap, something a grade ten dropout could do.

Those who do not strive for either power or intellectual satisfaction become human puppets. They dangle on strings pulled by others. When no one pulls their strings, they hang limp and useless. When they get laid off from a job, for example, they seek another employer to tell them what to do and pay them to do it. Few attempt to use their intellect to become self employed entrepreneurs. Ironically, the post modern world is primed and ready for entrepreneurs, but they can't be found.

We don't teach children the value of independence, of entrepreneurship, of intellectual satisfaction. As a result, we don't find many adults with these values.

We make our choices, as parents, as teachers, as neighbours and as citizens, and we live with the consequences. We should not wonder, then, that people follow those with power, even if those people have evil intent.

We get as adults what we teach to children. If we teach the value of power, we get followers and power seekers.

We don't really know yet what we might get if we taught the values of intellectual satisfaction. A few schools teach this, but they are rare, they are considered "different," out of the mainstream.

These few schools tend to produce children who become adult geniuses. The kids are not necessarily born with genius, they have intellectual opportunities offered to them constantly as they respond with delight at their own intellectual satisfaction. They grow intellectually without feeling the need for power, the need for potential to hurt others.

Our children are not our future, as such. They are our potential for the future we would like our societies, our countries, our communities and our families to have. The potential becomes reality only based on what we teach our children.

Teach right. Teach good. Teach peace. Teach often.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a guidebook for teachers, parents, anyone who wants to know when and what to teach children so that they grow to become independent and well balanced adults who have the ability to achieve intellectual satisfaction.

Learn more at

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