

'Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly':
Noticing and naming our power

David Crawley

A scenario

Ways of thinking about power

A framework for reflecting on power and formation:

Telos, ethos and askēsis

A scenario ...



Ways of thinking about power

What is power?

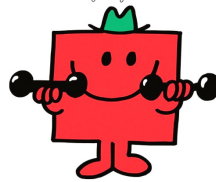
The capacity or ability to direct or influence behaviour or events

- OED

The ability to make things happen in human society – or to resist and prevent change

- Roger Preece, *Understanding and Using Power*

MR. STRONG



LITTLE MISS WISE

By Roger Hargreaves



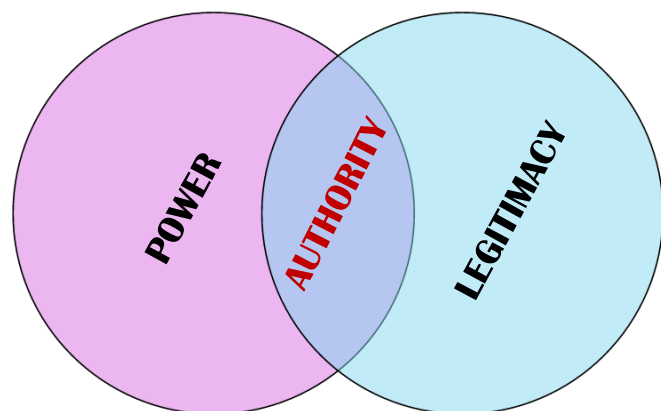
LITTLE MISS STUBBORN

By Roger Hargreaves

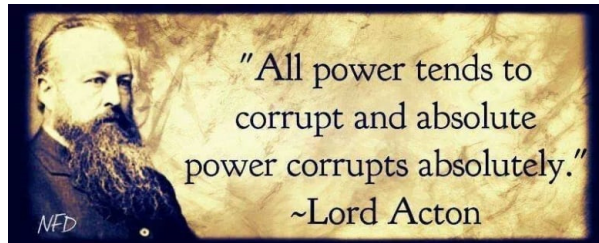


Authority

The kind of power which is exercised by one person or group over another, legitimised by a principle held to be binding on those over whom power is exercised. (Weber)



We may be wary of power, because of its abuse ...



... but let's acknowledge its desirability

"Having ideas and seeing them implemented can bring pleasure, and finding others who are inspired by [our] leadership is satisfying."

- Roger Preece, 4.

Power in ministry contexts

Positional Spiritual Reputational
 Personal
 Financial Interpretive Cultural Tradition/Status quo
 Educational Gendered
 Theological Representational
 Sacramental Pastoral/relational
 Decisional Experiential
 Inclusion-Exclusion

Power in *our* formational contexts?

Positional Spiritual Reputational
 Personal
 Financial Interpretive Cultural Tradition/Status quo
 Educational Gendered
 Theological Representational
 Sacramental Pastoral/relational
 Decisional Inclusion-Exclusion Experiential

Ways of thinking about power

Held/measurable

Who holds power? How much?
 Is that good or bad?



Systemic/shifting

What factors shape the flow?
 What are the effects? On whom?

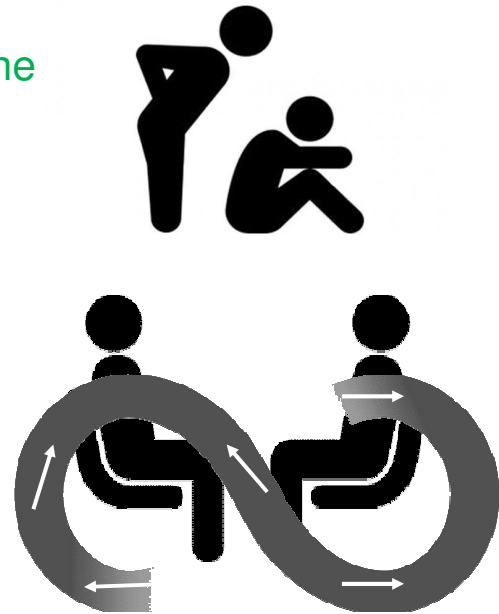


Power is not simply divided between the powerful and the powerless

Power flows through and around our relational and social interactions

Latin: *in* (into) + *fluere* (to flow)
 => *influentia* (inflow)
 => **influence**

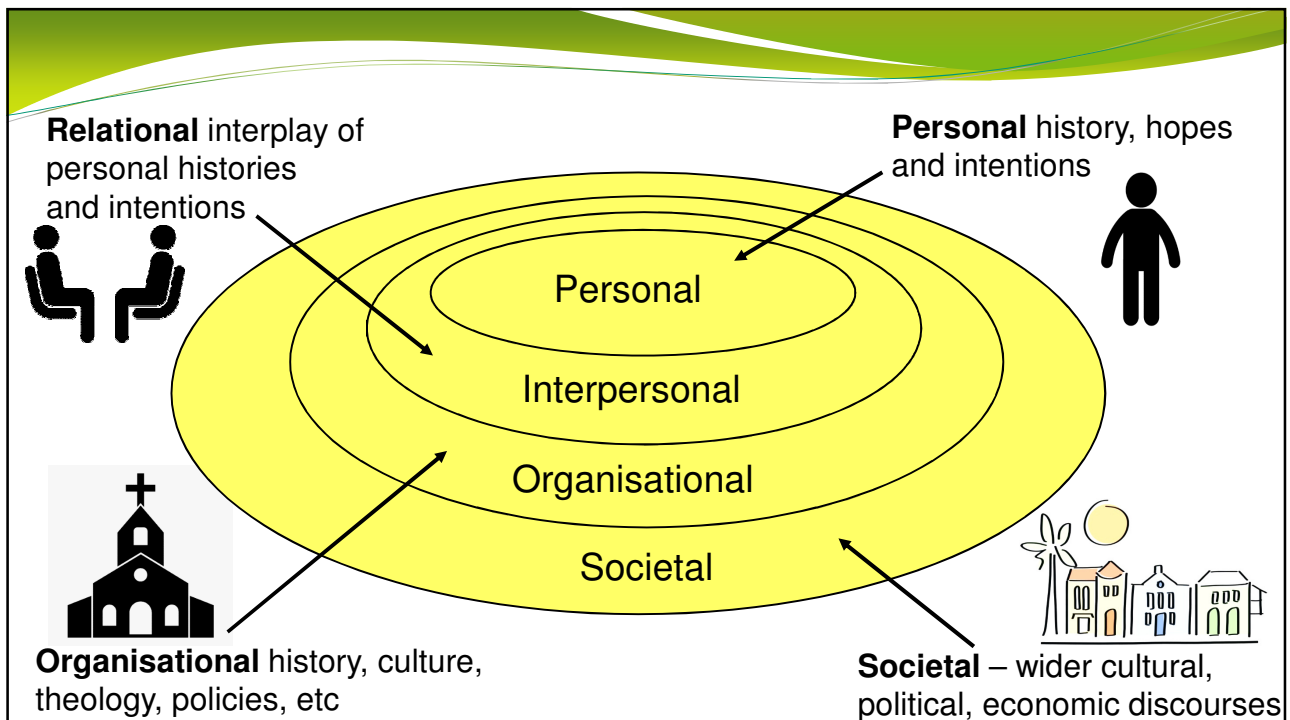
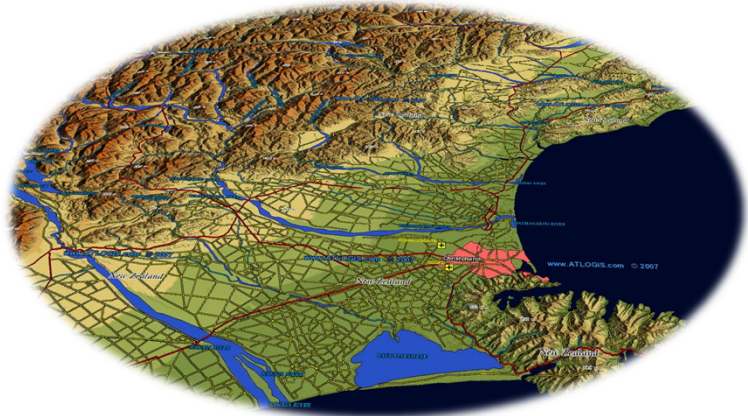
Power is at work whenever one person or group *influences* another to act, think, feel or see things in certain ways.

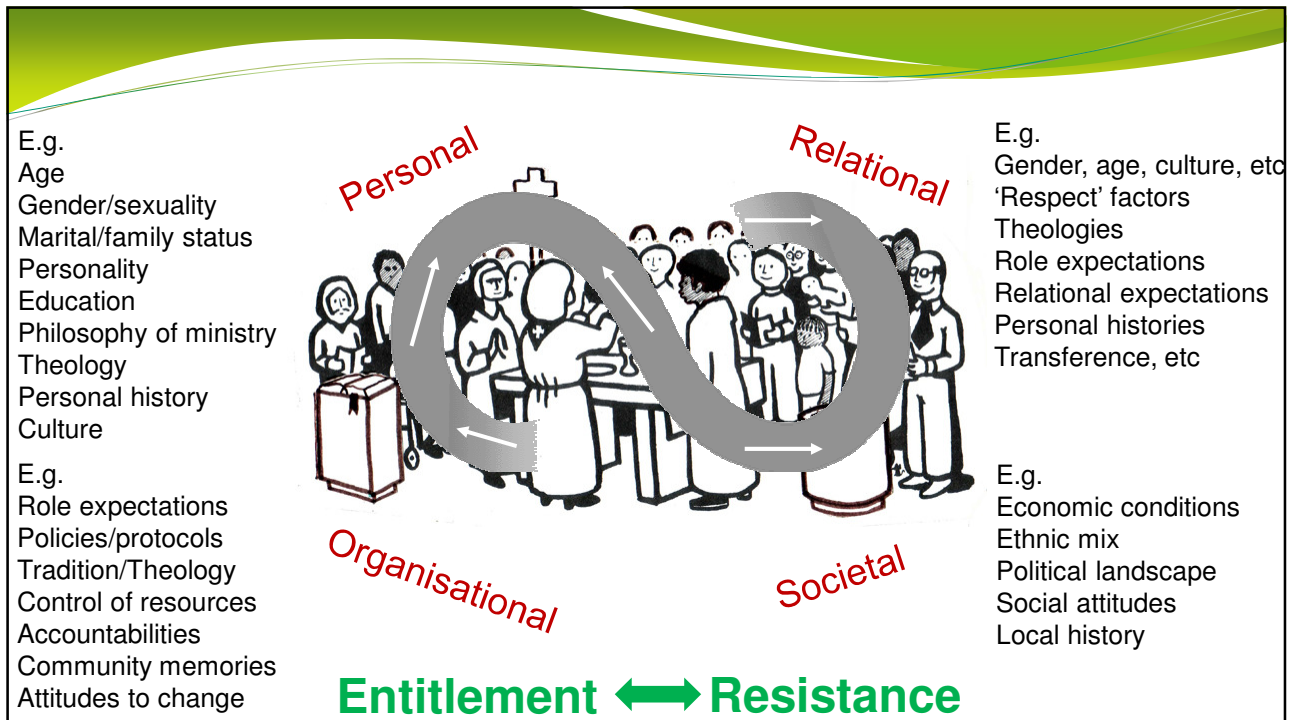


In ministry formation there are times when power appropriately flows *toward* us as field educators
 ... *for example?*

There are times when it is important that power flows more toward those in formation
 ... *for example?*

Beyond our conscious intentions, the flow of power is shaped by the *topography* of the system – personal, interpersonal, organisational and societal features





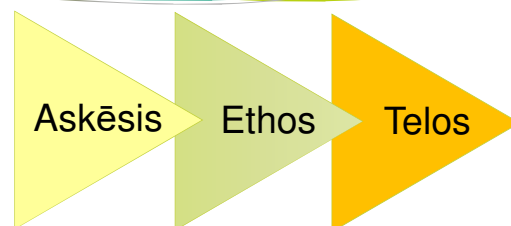
Thinking about this topography of power relations can help to explain a puzzling disconnect with the teaching and example of Jesus with regard to power.

“When Jesus is not enough”
(Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry*, ch. 6)



A framework for reflecting on
power and formation:

Telos, ethos and askēsis



Telos: *What end* (vision of life) do we want our power relations to serve?

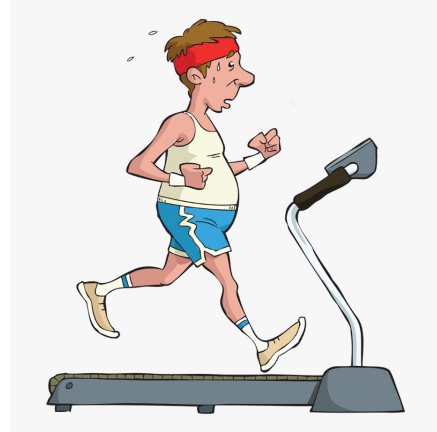
Ethos: *What values* (ways of being) serve this *telos*?

Askēsis: *What practices* (spiritual, relational, embodied) will help form us and our students in this *ethos* and *telos*?

(Informed by ideas from Michel Foucault and James K. A. Smith)

Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

(1 Timothy 4:7-8)



Train yourself [*gymnaze*] to be godly [*eusebeian*]. For physical training [*gymnasia*] is of some value, but godliness [*eusebeia*] has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

(1 Timothy 4:7-8)

Askēsis → Ethos → Telos

*“that they may take hold of the life that is truly life”
(1 Tim 6:19)*

So, *what telos* do we want our power relations to serve?

The big picture - conducting our power relations on behalf of:

- 'Shalom'/'Peace' – Isaiah 9:2-7; Eph 2:14-17
- Flourishing/wholeness – physical, social, relational, psychological, spiritual, environmental (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61, 65)
- Social transformation – “a world put to rights” (N. T. Wright)

How might these translate into a telos for ministry formation?

Rather than being pushed by beliefs, we are pulled by a *telos* that we desire ... It is not primarily our minds that are captivated but rather our imaginations that are captured, and when our imagination is hooked, we're hooked ...

(James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 54)

⇒ *We need a telos that captures the imagination!*



E.g. Laidlaw College – our *telos* (mission and vision):

A world shaped by love, compelled and informed by the gospel.

To equip students and scholars to renew their communities with a faith as intelligent as it is courageous.



Graduate Profile ...

Spiritual Directors Formation Programme:

The life of the whole person directed towards God. (Kenneth Leech)

Thomas Merton: “a spiritual Director is one who helps another to recognize and follow the inspirations of grace in his life, in order to arrive at the end to which God is leading him”

(Spiritual Direction and Meditation, 17)

What ultimate *telos* inspires *you*, as a ministry educator, to manage power relations well?



Problems around power sometimes reflect a difference of *telos/ethos*

Andy (associate pastor): “To be a human being is to be loved and held precious to God”

➡ “Attentiveness to ... the larger presence of God, shaping and moulding us together and journeying with us”

Senior pastor: To build a successful (= large) church

➡ Exercising authority as “God’s CEO” and valuing people (or not) on the basis of their cooperation with his vision

FAIL



Problems around power sometimes reflect a difference of *telos/ethos*

George: To develop a successful therapeutic practice integrating psychology and spirituality

- ➔ Start using full range of knowledge and skills as soon as possible

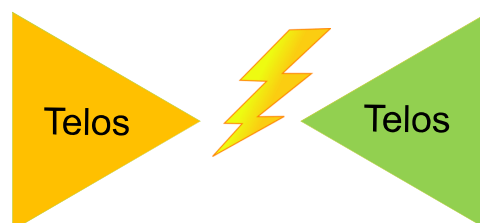


SD Formation programme: To form directors attentive to the work of God's grace in their own lives and the lives of their directees

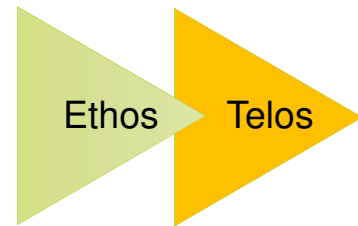
- ➔ Help directees listen to God, and place this above your own ideas and interventions



How do we handle situations where we become aware of an aspect of a student's *telos* or *ethos* that is in tension with that of the ministry formation programme?



Ethos: What values (ways of being) do we want power relations to embody, in line with our telos?



Example:

- On behalf of a *telos* of shalom/justice, our handling of power relations should benefit, rather than weaken, those who are vulnerable.

It is a characteristic of the misuse of power that vulnerable people who had hoped for help come away feeling exploited, betrayed, disempowered, dependent, etc (Johnson & VanVonderen)

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them.

(Ezekiel 34:3–4)

Laidlaw Graduate Profile ... combines *telos* and *ethos* in relation to:

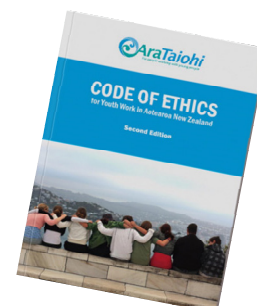
- **Formation.** E.g. *Laidlaw graduates will be known as people of **love**, who encounter others with **authenticity** and **humility**, whether sharing laughter or tears.*
- **Context.** E.g. *Laidlaw graduates will participate in diverse communities, celebrating culture and difference in **respectful** and **authentic** dialogue.*
- **Knowledge and understanding.** *Laidlaw graduates will be renewed by a participatory expression of **faith, hope and love** as primary ways of engaging with people, life and thought.*
- **Skills.** *Laidlaw graduates will be equipped to articulate their faith in dialogue with others with **confidence and intelligence, curiosity and respect**.*

AraTaiohi Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand

“The youth work relationship is both a privileged relationship and a power relationship. This is what makes ethics central to youth work. A power relationship is legitimate where power is given voluntarily and without coercion. Abuse of this power happens when the youth worker uses the power given by a young person to further their own interest to the detriment of the interests of the young person.”

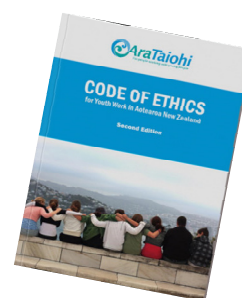


- 8.6 Once the youth work relationship has finished, youth workers will not enter into a romantic and/or sexual relationship until the power relationship is determined to no longer influence personal decision making. This decision will be made in consultation with their support network, including supervision.



Sometimes this guiding principle will require that power flow more toward the leader. Examples:

- 7.1 Youth workers will create and maintain culturally and age-appropriate physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual boundaries. Youth workers have an ethical responsibility to hold each other accountable in this regard.



Dealing with a person within your community who may place others at risk.

Ethos

Recalling the *telos* of your work as a ministry educator, what ethical principles are particularly important in guiding *your* handling of power relations?



Transferable frameworks for *ethos* thinking

Micah 6:8 - “do justly, love mercy, walk humbly”

- Holding care and justice, for those we are forming, *and* for those whose lives will be impacted by their ministries.
So we need both compassion and ethical rigour in our formation processes.
How do you manage that balance?
- In all that we do, holding together *tika* (justice/rightness), *pono* (integrity/honesty) and *aroha* (care/compassion) – “the principles by which we exercise *tapu* and *mana*” (Te Puna Hauora o Te Raki Paewhenua website).
- Dialogic vs Monologic encounter (see later)

Ethical hopes named by PhD participants ...

- Mutual respect and care, valuing the dignity of each person.
- Balancing mutual respect and responsibility for overall good.
- Acceptance of difference → hospitality and participation.
- Opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues without being cast as a 'troublemaker'.
- Knowledge of God mediated by the body of Christ, not by one/few - "discerning with", rather than "discerning for."
- Authority cannot reside in one person who is beyond question.
- Collaborative leadership.
- Authority must be used to "enlarge life," not diminish it.
- Submission is to what is discerned by the community, not to one person as the embodiment of divine authority.

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- Dialogic vs Monologic encounter (see later)
- "Walk humbly" – 1 Peter 5:2-5; Phil 2:5-11 ...

- **Philippians 2:5-11**

- ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
⁶ Who, being in the form of God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
 by taking the form of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
 he humbled himself
 by becoming obedient to death—
 even death on a cross!
⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
 and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father.

The alternatives are *not*

- Powerless pastors vs Invulnerable power.

The invitation is to exercise “power-in-vulnerability” (Coakley)

- Majority rule vs the ‘Man of God’ rules.

We are called to shared discernment – “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ...” (Acts 15:28)

“The way we make decisions as a community of leaders is at least as important to God as the ultimate decisions we make” (Hellerman, 269).

The capacity for power-in-vulnerability and participation in shared discernment presumes a depth of self-knowledge, emotional maturity and prayerfulness.

⇒ Ongoing commitment to personal, spiritual and relational formation

So we come to askēsis ...

Askēsis

Brené Brown: “Knowledge is only a rumor until it lives in the muscle” (*Rising Strong*, 7)

*What **practices** will help embed knowledge about power into telos/ethos-directed ‘muscle’?*



Sarah Coakley on Philippians 2 *and askēsis* ...

The 'spiritual' extension of Christic *kenōsis* ... involves an ascetical commitment of some subtlety, a regular and willed *practice* of ceding and responding to the divine. The rhythm of this *askēsis* is already inscribed ritually and symbolically in the sacraments of baptism and eucharist; but in prayer (especially the defenceless prayer of silent waiting on God) it is 'internalized' over time in a peculiarly demanding and transformative fashion ...

What I have elsewhere called the 'paradox of power and vulnerability' is I believe uniquely focused in this act of silent waiting on the divine in prayer. This is because we can only be properly 'empowered' here if we cease to set the agenda, if we 'make space' for God to be God. (*Power and Submissions*, 34)

⇒ At the heart of *askēsis* are rhythms of prayer and worship

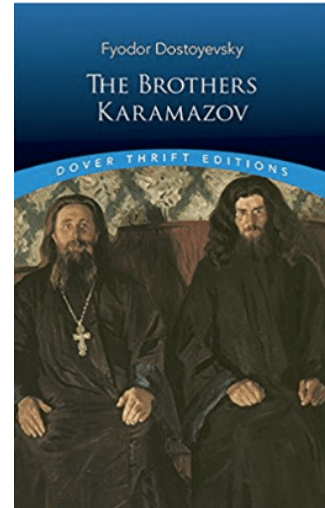
Thomas Merton (*Contemplative Prayer*) challenges the self-absorbed spirituality of those who are ...

“walling themselves up inside themselves in order to cherish their own thoughts and their own experiences as a kind of private treasure ... to build their own security, to avoid the risk and the dread implied by submission to the unknown mystery of God's will” (39-40)



“the rigid, authoritarian, self-righteous, ascetic Therapont, who delivers himself from the world by sheer effort, and then feels qualified to call down curses upon it; and the Staretz, Zosima, the kind, compassionate man of prayer who identifies himself with the sinful and suffering world in order to call down God’s blessing upon it.”

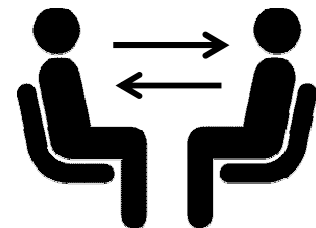
(Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 28)



⇒ At the heart of *askēsis* is the practice of genuinely dialogic encounter

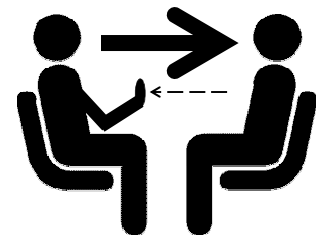
Dialogic encounter (I-Thou):

Encounter in which each party has presence, may participate on their own terms, and meaning is negotiated



Monologic encounter (I-It / Thou subsumed in I):

Encounter in which one party dominates, dictates the terms, and makes authoritative interpretations



⇒ At the heart of *askēsis* is practising genuinely dialogic encounter with the other

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Encounter in which each party has presence, may participate on their own terms, and meaning is negotiated

Monologic encounter (I-It / Thou subsumed in I):

Encounter in which one party dominates, dictates the terms, and makes authoritative interpretations

- What aspects of your own pedagogy are dialogic, and which are more monologic?
- How do you train your students in genuinely dialogic encounter?

⇒ At the heart of *askēsis* is practising genuinely dialogic encounter with the other

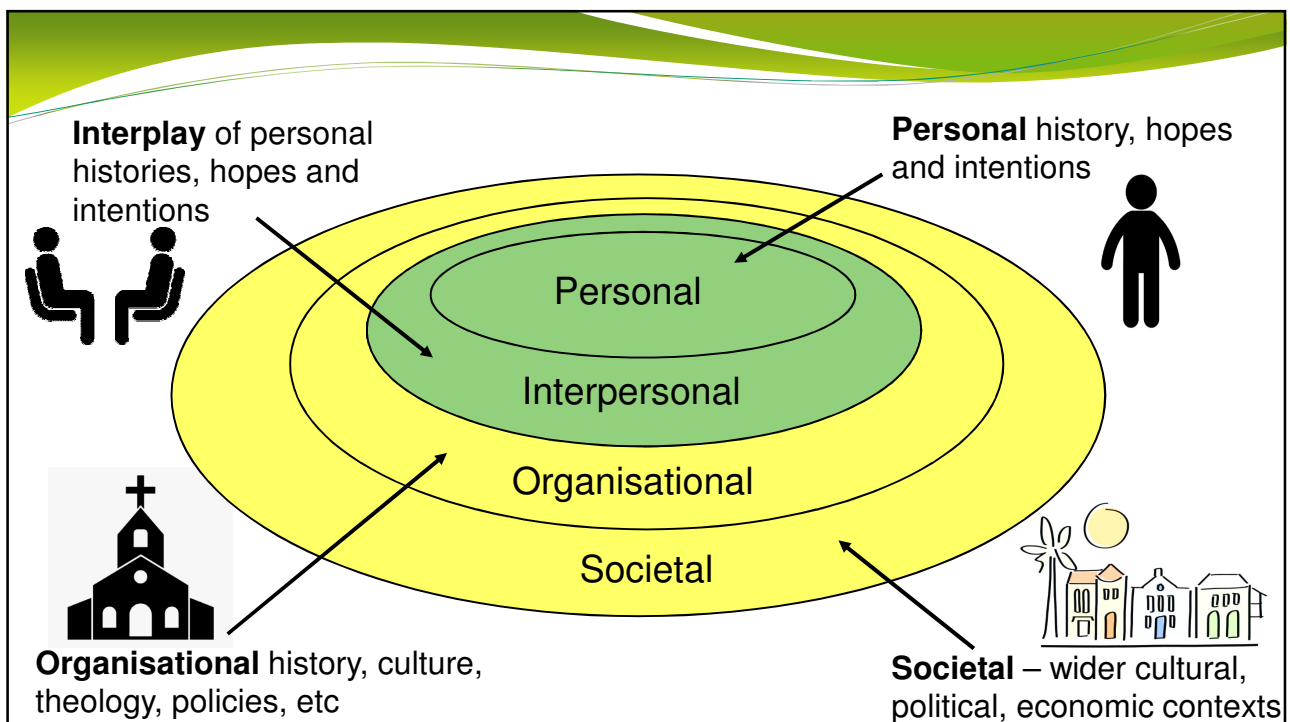
- Learning to engage respectfully with diversity
- Asking: “Whose needs are being met here?”
“What does love ask of me here?”
- Developing the capacity to encounter tension, questions and challenges
 - without becoming defensive or domineering (Simon P. Walker, *Leading with Nothing to Lose*)
 - maintaining a connected, yet differentiated and non-anxious presence (Edwin Friedman)
- Douglas Stone & Sheila Heen. *Thanks for the Feedback*

- What aspects of your own pedagogy are dialogic, and which are more monologic?
- How do you train your students in genuinely dialogic encounter?
- How do you train your students in receiving feedback about the way they encounter others?

At the heart of *askēsis*, then, are ...

- ⇒ rhythms of prayer and worship (and journalling etc);
- ⇒ practising genuine dialogic encounter with the other;
- ⇒ a willingness to see myself through the eyes of others.

What practices in my life help me to keep naming and noticing my power?



Organisational/societal

Having in place practices that help to deepen:

- The resilience and wisdom needed in the face of heavy-handed “power over” or toxic styles of leadership (Lipman-Blumen).
- The ability to evaluate the flow of power within a social system (Positioning theory).
- Critical reflection on social and cultural discourses at work in power.
- The ability and courage to keep asking incisive questions of our context:
 - Who defines the ‘truth’ of the way things are?
 - How are decisions made here?
 - Whose voices are not being heard or valued?
 - Are processes dialogic or monologic?
 - Who benefits from the current balance of power? How do I benefit?
 - Whose interests are marginalized?

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, so that even if your qualifications grant you the comfort of expertise, or your social context positions you with power, do not regard these privileges as something to be exploited, but instead focus on the priority of love. With the Spirit’s help, encounter others as they are, not who you would prefer them to be, and risk vulnerability in offering yourselves to them as fellow humans, co-learners and companions in the journey toward life.