

# book review by john varney

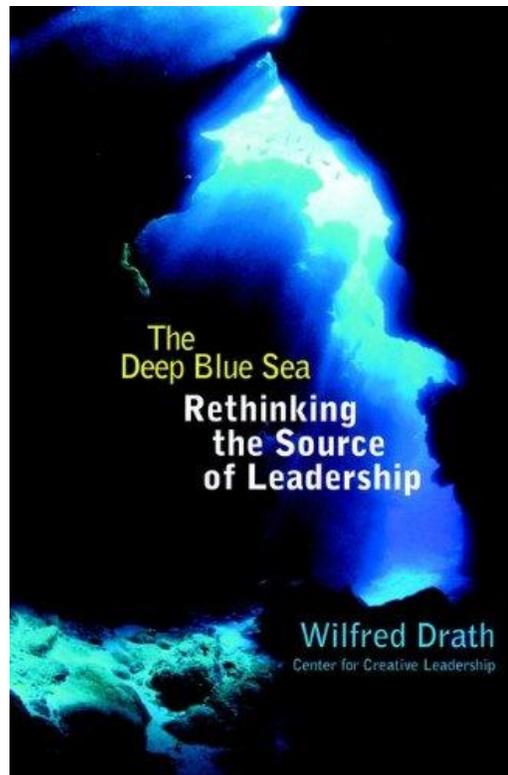
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## The Deep Blue Sea

- Rethinking the source of Leadership

Wilfred Drath

published in 2004 by Jossey-Bass



This enjoyable book gives a lucid and coherent interpretation of a three-fold pattern of leadership evolution.

This starts with the earliest idea of “great leader”; God or king whose word is absolute (but whose capacity is necessarily limited). We inherit this as control and command. Next is consensual leadership in which sense is made through influence. The emergent form of leadership is relational leadership, which is necessary in order to have deal with complex unpredictability like we have today.

These three forms of leadership deal variously with the three main leadership tasks; setting direction, creating commitment and facing adaptive challenges. That gives us a three by three matrix which is explored, amplified and illustrated with examples. That this matrix is not well known perhaps explains many of the confusions we see occurring in modern organisations.

Popular ideas identify leadership as the work of leaders – i.e. they are attached to the control and command paradigm, which assigns most of us to being followers.

There are situations in which such a mode of leadership is still appropriate, although more evolved leadership is often what is required, engaging more people in the leadership process and even leadership that people co-create through dialogue and relationship.

Drath brings a wonderful clarity to this vitally important topic and helps us understand where we are in the unfolding drama. Although it was written a whole generation ago, now is exactly the time we need to embrace his ideas. They may be helpful in enabling us to organise more effectively in a post-Covid world.

If you have not had the good fortune to come across this book, I heartily recommend it.