

**Leader as Designer, Maestro,
Ethicist, Teacher and Storyteller**

by Robert Leaver



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LEADER AS DESIGNER, MAESTRO, ETHICIST, TEACHER AND STORYTELLER

by Robert Leaver

Man's chief difference from the brutes lies in the exuberant excess of his subjective propensities – his preeminence over them simply and solely in the number and in the fantastic and unnecessary character of his wants, physical, moral, aesthetic, and intellectual. Had his whole life not been a quest for the superfluous, he would never have established himself as inexpugnably as he has done in the necessary.

– *William James*

Be patient toward all that is unresolved in your heart. And try to love the questions themselves. Do not seek the answers that cannot be given to you. Because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps, gradually, without knowing it, live along some distant day into the answers.

– *Rainer Maria Rilke*

A Call for Imaginal Leaders

This paper is not about the practical side of leadership, there are more than enough good practices that can be used. It is a call for unleashing images and untapped powers. It is a call for reframing leadership through the window of the mythic.

Being a leader is being ultimately responsible for the well-being of others. Responsibility includes pointing the way for others and taking stands on things that matter. The leader paints a picture of the future and holds the longest view about that future. She carries the weight of an uncertain future. In tough situations, a leader knows what to do or who to ask. It is hard work. Leaders take risks and leadership becomes a test of strengths. Throughout it all, leaders stand apart from others, yet they create a climate of trust and followership.

Leadership is distinct from management, not better than management. Leadership and management complement each other. Managers marshal resources to achieve results, leaders shape the path on which the results will fall. A manager's time horizon is shorter than a leader's, but no less important. Managing comes from the Latin *manus*, which means “by hand” and true managing is done, hands-on, in the trenches. Full personal expression involves being both a leader and a manager and knowing when to do what.

The culture is calling for leaders to step forward with bold visions that harness the forces of change. Vision is the achievable dream that speaks to the many. A true vision resonates in the soul, it is not, a pick-me-up slogan. Such leaders are also purposeful with an ultimate, timeless result – a destination – in their mind and soul. Leaders activate followers. Leaders who lead through their character use profound skills. Leaders build communities inside and outside the organization which requires re-creating sacred space where all experience community. These leaders create the future by design. Leaders who are vulnerable and humble, leaders who use circles as well as hierarchies, such leaders are searchers who are learning how to learn.

Visionary leadership requires a deeper and broader toolbox of images and the know how of other non-business professions: designer, maestro, ethicist, teacher and storyteller. The designer orders things. The maestro orchestrates, human energy. The ethicist helps make difficult choices. The teacher opens the doors to learning. The storyteller weaves tales to inspire. Leadership requires activating these and other images.

The practical tools we have work on one level and should not be discarded, but they are not powerful enough to move a psyche. To move our culture and bring order out of chaos, we must move the psyche. Order (in addition to many other things) is required to bring safety back into the realms of our organizations and communities.

As a Leader What Are You Called to Do?

Until you learn to name your ghosts
and baptize your hopes,
you have not yet been born;
you are still the creation of others

– *Marie Cardinal*

Leaders are called to do something. They often have an itch to make the world a better place. We are all naturally purposeful. To have mission and purpose is to know what you want to serve. There are many roads to your calling. The lesson is to discern which choice best serves your natural qualities.

"Follow your bliss," says Joseph Campbell. Yet, as Michael Mead says: "bliss and blister come from the same root." Discovering your calling, or bliss, necessitates your visiting the places where you are wounded. Often your wounds are where you feel diminished. Thus, you strive to overcome; make it better. The striving can be your calling.

Mission can also be found by answering such questions as: what needs doing or completion in the universe? There is no mission without permission from an elder or mentor. So you must ask who, as a mentor, has blessed your choice? There is no mission without submission to the discipline of a craft or profession. What is your craft? All professions require teachers or disciples. Which disciples do you follow? How much of what you are is being your own disciple?

Wanted: Leaders Who Thrive on Change

Brushing out my daughter's dark
silken hair before the mirror
I see the grey gleaming on my head,
the silver-haired servant behind her. Why is it
just as we begin to go
they begin to arrive, the fold in my neck
clarifying as the fine bones of her
hips sharpen? As my skin shows
its dry pitting, she opens like a small
pale flower on the tip of a cactus;
as my last chances to bear a child
are falling through my body, the duds among them,
her full purse of eggs, round and
firm as hard-boiled yolks, is about
to snap its clasp. I brush her tangled
fragrant hair at bedtime. It's an old
story – the oldest we have on our planet –
the story of replacement.

– *Sharon Olds*

Change is the new constant. "Out there" white water froths unrelentingly. Change can be experienced only in comparison to what we know exists. We develop a level of comfort with what we know and when it goes away we are uncomfortable. Change is occurring when what we know to be true ceases to be true because, as Gregory Bateson describes, "a little chip or a big chunk of descriptive material disappears". Today, chips of descriptive material disappear at warp speed.

Another way to look at change is in the shift from order to chaos. Once upon a time, not so long ago, we lived a continuous, linear pattern. There was order in the realm. Order prevailed because the mythos of there being one "right-way" was relatively intact. As the mythos showed wear, however, bumps appeared in the line. We felt change for the first time. Then the mythos splintered and trends bubbled up; for a while change was on a continuum. Thus, change could be tracked and managed, if we got far enough in front of the trend line. Then the already weakened mythos crumbled and forces at play swirled away the pieces. Now we have chaos; when a butterfly flaps its wings in Japan, it affects the weather pattern over New York. Change leaps and growls.

The other side of chaos is order. But, our present experience is to feel only the chaos and not see the order. Such order can come in two forms. One form is the non-linear pattern embedded in chaos, the older form is order as we have often experienced control.

Leaders who care and act boldly turn toward order. Order-seeking leaders activate their queen or king as other sources of power. When the king or queen is activated, you know what you are going to do with the rest of your life. The king or queen also takes power for the sake of the community and realizes that their own well-being is tied to the well-being of the community.

Change is the leader's fuel. Change comes in four doses: some planned, some managed, some instigated, most surrendered to. By and large, you can only manage what change produces and not the change itself. The essence of change is energy, however, and energy can be contained and directed. Leaders have to pick targets and know the dosage of the change swirling around them. Go with the forces of change; use the energy for your purposes.

Begin by building a container for the energy of change. A container is a pot that "holds" water. In work place terms, a container could be a highly functioning product development team, for example. Mold the container; give it form and substance. Consider how big or small it must be. It must withstand the pressures you let into it. Have you ever played with Russian dolls? Each doll nests in a larger doll. Fashion change containers in the same way. You often start with a small one and let it explode into the next size, already designed and waiting. All containers must be crafted so they can breath in and out the air and vital issues of the world.

Be careful about the information and people you let inside each container. Remember, things "show up" instead of coming from direct cause and effect or trend lines. Find out where rich information flows and control those sources. Information is accumulated and transmitted through long-term relationships. This requires a common language and trust. Where are you building such relationships?

As you build containers, ponder questions like: Where will you be reactive and proactive? Who are the disturbers? Who are the external agents of change? Get to know these people of influence. Where is there noise, or a fad, and where is there substance? Where do you have a direct emotional experience with the world from which you are not cut off? As a leader, you and the organization can't, hide in a cocoon, anesthetized. Install back-ups and heat shields to protect the container. Discern where the reserves will be stored and the buffers set up.

Leaders Must Think in Three Realms

When geometric diagrams and digits
Are no longer the keys to living things,
When people who go about singing and kissing
Know deeper things than the great scholars,
When society is returned once more
To unimprisoned life, and the universe.
And when light and darkness mate
Once more and make something entirely transparent,
And people see in poems and fairy tales
The true history of the world,
Then our entire twisted nature will turn
And run when a single secret word is spoken.

– Novalis
(translated by Robert Bly)

Moving the psyche of a person or a culture, according to Michael Mead, requires thinking in three realms: the concrete, the psychological, and the mythological. A successful mover knows which realm of thinking is required to leverage what kind of movement.

Thinking concretely is a singular process, data is absorbed one item at a time. This is the realm of facts and human touch and seeing. It is practical, reliable and linear. Needs are found in this realm. This way of thinking is often put down as too basic and unexciting, or too painful. Yet, reverence for nature, which is so badly missing, is rooted in the concrete world.

Psychological thinking occurs when two things come together. Thus, there is a dialogue between two truths and tension rises. Thinking psychologically is relational; this and that. It is the realm of wants.

Some say the culture is too bloated with psychological thinking. Everything has become a battle of truths. Our cultural view is that all answers can be found in psychological thinking. But relying on psychological thinking alone paralyzes and limits. The psychological is seductive because, first, the concrete world has become either too messy or the facts appear confused. Second, we avoid the mythological because things happen in a non-linear way. Things get turned around quickly and that's frightening.

Full movement comes when all three ways of thinking are used together, each at it's right time. Since we have a full grasp of the psychological, perhaps it is time to let go of it for a while

and focus on the concrete and mythological. Surround the middle with facts and desire to move the psyche.

Thinking mythologically occurs when two things come together and a third thing arises out of the two truths. The mythic unifies the concrete and psychological and goes beyond any one way of perceiving. Active symbols and images dance in this realm of thinking. Mythological thinking is open and ambiguous; there is no formula. It is timeless and endless, defying definition. This is the area of mystery where there is no dogma.

Concrete	Psychological	Mythological
Fact.....	Conversation.....	Story
Need	Want	Desire

Myth is not a lie or an idea; it is a metaphor for living a life. Mythology is a public dream about knowing our place in the universe. Myth, according to Carl Jung, is a "collective dream, symbolic of archetypal urges from the roots of the human psyche." It is the wonder of what you don't yet know. Myth is the truth that is truer than the truth. Myth is the world of the invisible. Myth is experienced only in sacred space.

As William Irwin Thompson said: "You can't have a science of myth. Myth is always the relation between the known and the unknown. Myth is the horizon where technologies fail and we are left, not to our devices, but to our ontology."

Thinking myth logically means the power comes in to you. The power's are not inside you. The power can't be held. The gods are out there in the other world. They serve as activators of energy so you are moved by the powers of mythology.

We are once again asking timeless, fundamental, troubling questions once posed by philosophers like Aldous Huxley. How do you live a life? Who are we? Where have we been? Where are we headed? What is our purpose? What are our fears? Myth is about asking such questions more than answering them. Wendy Dager suggests, "talking myth logically is talking as if there is an inkling about what is inside the questions."

According to Joseph Campbell, myths provide clues to the spiritual potentialities of human life and how to live a life under any circumstances. Myths are those universal themes, evidenced in folklore, songs, and stories, embedded in the core of all cultures. To build a life enhancing myth,

it must be "handled" by many people, all of whom believe in preserving life. Such mythmakers then pass on these stories, generation to generation. A myth must focus on the individual, society and the cosmos and the relationship between them. The emerging mythology will be, according to Campbell, a society of the planet because it is the only real survival unit.

The building blocks of a society of the planet are the organizations and communities in which we live and work. When leaders move the psyches of such places, we begin to seed the mythology of the planet.

A Leader Must Think Like a System

When you are confronted by any complex social system, such as an urban center or a hamster, with things about it that you're dissatisfied with and anxious to fix, you can't just step in and set about fixing with much hope of helping. This realization is one of the sore discouragements of our century. Jay Forrester has demonstrated it mathematically, with his computer models of cities in which he makes clear that whatever you propose to do, based on common sense, will almost inevitably make matters worse rather than better. You can't meddle with one part of a complex system from the outside without the almost certain risk of setting off disastrous events that you hadn't counted on in other, remote parts. If you want to fix something you are first obliged to understand, in detail, the whole system, and for very large systems you can't do this without a very large computer. Even then, the safest course seems to be to stand by and wring hands, but not to touch.

Intervening is a way of causing trouble.

If this is true, it suggests a new approach to the problems of cities, from the point of view of experimental pathology: maybe some of the things that have gone wrong are the result of someone's efforts to be helpful.

– *Lewis Thomas*

We have a long tradition of problem solving everything. Find the cause and create the solution. We build checklists of problems and solutions and then try to solve it all, one problem at a time. This often backfires and ripples negatively through the organization because we can't envision the full consequences of each act. Blinders, or focusing only on the problem, prevent us from feeling the whole system, so things show up far removed from the solution we had in mind. As Thomas says: "Intervening becomes a way of causing trouble."

Problem solving works for some things, but it is not a universal tool. Organizations have to be viewed as living breathing systems. Here is a primer on systems thinking from the work of Peter Senge and Donella Meadows. A system is a set of interconnected elements and is both the elements and the interrelationships between the elements. A system is non-linear, so you can't predict outcomes. A system causes its own behavior -- there is no single cause, credit or behavior. If a system is the source, it is also a force for change. Since you can't control the system, look to stir it up to understand the critical dynamics.

Senge and Meadows go on to say: Build a picture of the system you have to "understand", even though it will be a complex one. Look for forces within the system that help run it. Focus on maximizing properties and relationships rather than the parts. Tune in to the long term. Actions taken now have effects decades hence. Today we feel the results of past actions.

Since systems tend to drift to low performance, keep standards absolute. Avoid using past performance as a guide for intended results. Take on a posture of continuous improvement.

Instead of problem solving in a system, a leader must learn to simultaneously leverage for change. A leverage point is a point of pressure in the system that you want to push or pull to achieve an outcome. A leverage point is often the relationship between a complex mix of problems more than a cause. You are on a search for deep power and life forces to alter the course of events. There are usually only a few effective leverage points. As a rule, they are far removed in time and place from where the trouble first appeared. You have to pick the "right points" and leverage them all.

Sometimes you can feel a leverage point when you come near it. But, some leverage points go against what your intuition is telling you to do. They are counter-intuitive. Follow the counter-intuition!

A leader wants to intervene to strengthen the ability of the system to shoulder its own burdens. Don't begin by taking over. Ask why natural, correcting mechanisms are failing. Take a cooperative posture and you will see the essential relationships in the system. In leveraging, you can assume an additive or reductive posture. Doing less is often the way to go, although our culture teaches that adding more is the best answer.

Viewing systems change through the lens of Carl Jung, you must both fix and creatively destruct. In order to fix, you find what is broken and tinker. As a creative destructionist, you destroy what is in place in order to create from a blank slate. The leader must decide the right mix of both forces. Leveraging provides you with the ability to "light many fires" and fan or cool the right ones as the change process unfolds.

Leaders Who Live Inside the Paradoxes

Our psyche has difficulty holding two things simultaneously in consciousness, so we drop one and favor the other. Thinking paradoxically requires that a leader hold both points in consciousness and work with the energy in the tension.

Paradox goes against generally accepted opinion. Paradox is a statement or pairing that seems absurd or contradictory, but is, in fact, true. In paradox you have two statements; one the negation of the other. As independent statements they hold weight, but put together they become troublesome.

To use paradox we must venture beyond dualism. The literal Buddhist translation of paradox is "not two". Gianni Vattimo says, "the deepest forces at work are paradoxical and secretly at one with each other." Using paradox, according to Vattimo, is simultaneously going beyond either statement to a place that is both an acceptance and deepening of both poles. You will find in between the poles both convalescence and a distortion. Vattimo goes on to state: "being reveals itself only in so far as it conceals itself". His quote itself draws you to the middle of a paradox, which is exactly where one should be.

For Vattimo, the world is out of balance. There is no middle; there are only extremes. Yet, the center of the paradox is the place of meaning.

As a leader, think about what it would be like to live in the center of these emerging, universal paradoxes.

Self.....	Other, team, community
Conserve	Invent
Process	Result
Masculine (separation and mastery).....	Feminine (compassion and spreading)
Doing.....	Being
Compete	Cooperate
Hierarchy.....	Flat and circular
Universal Truth (external workings of the world).....	Personal knowledge (story and the inner self)
Technology	Art, myth and nature
Economy	Ecology
Profit	The Commons

Our training tells us to choose one side over the other and then fend off the intrusion of the other energy. Working with paradox says: go to the center and embrace the creative tension inherent in these forces and strive to find where they are "secretly at one with each other." Stand in the tension, don't run from it.

Robert Johnson describes the process of living in the opposites as finding the mandorla. The mandorla is the triangle or almond shaped space that forms when two circles of opposites overlap. Instead of moving from one pull to the other, Johnson suggests we define and get inside this diamond shaped space. Here there is some possible healing, even if it is temporary.

Leaders Who Traverse the "Peaks and Vals"

The wind one brilliant day, called
to my soul with an aroma of jasmine.

In return for this jasmine odor,
I'd like the odor of your roses."

"I have no roses; I have no flowers left now
in my garden ... All are dead."

"Then I'll take the waters of the fountains,
and the yellow leaves of the dried up petals."

The wind left ... I wept. I said to my soul,
what have you done with the garden entrusted to you?"

– *Antonio Machado*

Going up and down with the energy of peaks and vals is akin to moving through an organizational life cycle of birth, zenith and decay. The tendency in organizations is to play it close to the zenith and avoid going beyond it. In effect, it is striving to always be just before the zenith or reporting you are near or at it. In practical terms, hugging the zenith is a way to add programs or products and take on the posture of growth for growth's sake.

Working with the energy of soul and spirit suggests that you go past the zenith and enter the decay. In the soul of the enterprise there is rich compost from which new life can be born. The organization will build up resiliency as it continues to move completely around the circle of birth, zenith and decay.

Leaders have been taught that change occurs only in real time. Begin by visualizing a linear plane. At one end is information or facts. The focus is on needs. We go to a workshop or conduct research hoping that someone will be swayed by the facts that are presented. This is the work of training, strategy, budgets and the statistical aspects of total quality. At the other end of this plane is development where there is integrated processes and learning from experience. Here there is a question and conversation. People and relationships come into play in this area. This is the work of organizational development.

Working only in real time is not enough to move a psyche, and moving a psyche is vital for deep change. Movement requires an expanded repertoire. Add a vertical axis of mythic time,

the time of poetry and story. It is another time. It is around and under time. It is the time of the invisible world.

Mythic time is best viewed on a vertical axis with spirit on one end and soul at the other. Spirit, according to James Hillman, is light and ascending: Promethean, where one goes for the gold. The field of organizational transformation has articulated well the role of spirit in leadership. Spirit is about stating purposes, intentions and destinations. Spirit is also about crafting visions – the force of power to move something up and away.

This is the area of desire and longing, where you are, as Hillman says, "loyal to your own freak fire." It is where the impossible comes in. It is farther and beyond. Hillman notes, "you have to be inflated to get off of the ground."

But, a purpose and vision and the process of change will fail unless the soul is honored. Soul, in part, is what Hillman calls the "dark, the wet, draped in its hidden, entangled web of ashes." Soul energy is about a descent; a dropping down. There is poverty here. Soul is patient. We must drop down into the pain of the earth and our communities and work the energy of this entangled mess. Soul is slow and convoluted.

Our heritage tells us that spirit is good and positive while soul is bad and negative. To traverse the peaks and vales of change, both soul and spirit "just are," together, with neither subordinated. Carl Jung said: "becoming enlightened is not just following the figures of light. It is about making darkness conscious." This is disagreeable, so it is unpopular, but necessary for fullness.

Understanding the shadow is necessary for internalizing soul. Shadow is the undeveloped or hidden parts of the psyche that are stored in a bag you drag around. Shadow, according to Hillman, is "ugly, limited and full of betrayal and murder. It is not about innocence."

Bags come in different tones and shapes. Robert Bly says we are born into the world as a golden ball, 360 degrees of radiance. As we encounter adults, parts of the ball are nicked or decimated and dropped into the bag. As we "grow up" more and more of the radiance gets put in the bag. Then one day, perhaps in our 30's, the bag is so long and heavy it pulls us up short or down by some event (if we are lucky), like getting fired, suggesting we should pay attention to what's in the bag.

The bag must be opened slowly and the energy dealt with carefully. What's in the bag is angry, infantile or raw. It will not take kindly to being let out. Yet in order for us to be fully

psychically alive, the contents of the bag must be internalized. In fact, the shadow must be eaten. Digestion will be tough.

Leaders have shadows. Organizations have shadows and communities have shadows. And each has a bag. The leader has to know when to go down into her or the organizations' soul and retrieve some of this vital energy, just as she must know when to go up into the light of desire. This is learning to traverse the peaks and vales.

The leader has to work with four different energies: fact, process, spirit and soul. Full change will occur when all four quadrants are embraced. You have to move laterally and up and down. Leadership requires one to:

1. Craft a spirited vision – this is swift.
2. Dig into the soul and the vital work with the wounds and fears stored there – this is slow and tangled.
3. Design an integrated development process.
4. Collect a truthful picture of the facts.

The sequence of these four acts varies. Start where you are drawn. Bu remember that at some point in the process the rug will be pulled out from under you and you will be dropped into the midst of the compost in your soul. The compost is vital for life.

Leader as Designer

The people I love the best
jump into work headfirst
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.
I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

– *Marge Piercy*

Design is inventing the future. It requires anticipation and taking the long view. It is taking charge and, according to Buckminster Fuller, "a deliberate ordering of the elements; that an intellect has organized events in discrete conceptual patterns." Design is a conscious attempt to wring order out of chaos. There is always uncertainty about an organization's future, but a design fosters some certainty by letting you know what information must be marshaled and what risks must be taken. Design tells the body of people where you are headed.

Design is creating images and artifacts that produce a desired change in the behavior of the workforce, the consumer or a stakeholder. A designer integrates many variables: the images and symbols to be used, the look of the buildings and space, the distribution of responsibility and

authority, the nature of quality for the organization, the position in the marketplace to be carved out, and the message to be sent. Keep in mind that while design is the solo work of the leader, it requires contributions and challenges from those who will use the design and be changed by it. The "rub" between the users and the designer is essential for a fitting design.

A design is not fixed; it is adaptive and evolvable. A good design breathes. A good designer weaves a porous membrane so intelligence can come in, products can go to market, and the vitality of the community can be felt. Design allows the organization to breathe in and out with the forces at play. In this way, you see the life and handiwork that has gone into the design and the stamp the organization wants to make in the world. A design demonstrates an organization's individuality.

Design involves paradox and beauty. Paradox is inherent because design involves conflicting pressures that must be reconciled. A design has to live in that almond shaped mandorla between two opposing circles of energy. There is also a design aesthetic that leads to beauty and elegance. Our culture has trouble with beauty. Yet, elegance consciously reduces the complex to the simple. Beauty touches the imaginal world; it becomes etched in our memories.

Design for an organization is not just the structure or the graphics – our common association with design. Design is the deliberate and intelligent ordering of all organizational elements for an aesthetic sense of place. The elements are in the organization and the community. There is an ecology to the mix of elements. Each competes for attention. Each is essential to the diversity. Each relationship between the organization's elements requires the "right" amount of control and tuning. Some elements need, a push to be expressed while others are to be pulled to be attracted. Design produces nimbleness and utility.

A designer must:

1. Anticipate the context -- the sources of change, the source of her ideas, and knowing what is "moving around" the process of design.
2. Discern the long-term human fit, function and utility. Will it work? Does it meet needs? Wants? Desires? Thus, only the energy of key stakeholders becomes "contained" in the design. You avoid the rest.
3. Use the traditions, materials, technology and tools of her craft.
4. Express ethics and standards as added value through quality and innovation.
5. Conform with the depth of nature and her patterns.

6. Mold an aesthetic to please and evoke feelings of awe beauty, mystery and sensuous delight.
7. Project images that reflect the full experience of life – both the peaks and the vales.
8. Define the preferred critical path: the exhaustive list of what is to be accomplished to arrive successfully at the end state – the design. Focus on the preferred rather than just the possible or probable. The critical path is about doing only "what you want deeply to happen."
9. Scan, focus and act based on the intentions of the design.

A design changes the situation in just the way the sponsor intended it. A design is anticipatory and not predictive. Design is the supreme act of control, but it honors chaos, too. A good design evolves. You experiment, learn and enhance the design.

Leader as Maestro

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and
frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down the dulcimer.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the
ground.

– *Rumi*

The very word maestro implies there is a composer and a score to be played. Absolutely! If the designer has done her work well, then the organization's music fits the context and everyone assembled is ready to play. They know the score and have contributed some bars in the formation. Music is seldom composed without the influence of external forces. A maestro helps us think about creating an environment in the work place where music can be played, where something happens.

A maestro has to weave it all together in an attempt to put forth one expressive score. She blends the soloists with the talents of others. Successful blending requires a great sensitivity to the limits and strengths of the players. It means tuning in to who they are. Get people to play fully, be demanding.

Herbert Von Karajan describes conducting this way: "You must learn what is possible to ask for or, in the language of Buddhism, you do not speak about how I impel this thing but how it releases itself. The score can't be known until it has been tried on the orchestra. And rehearsal is the process of coming to terms with great resistance. If you know the thing, you know where to apply the concentration and at the decisive moment. You have to master it to be free of the page. Conducting is the power of suggestion."

In Grand Rapids, Michigan you will find Catherine Comet conducting her heart out. Comet considers the composer as the number one maestro. "The maestro who serves best is the one who most truly implements the composer's intentions. You don't upstage the music." She goes on to say that the "search for the definitive performance is largely carried out in solitude. What the audience sees is 1% of her work and what the players see is 5%. The rest is unseen and unheard. You're in a room poring over the score."

For Comet, the musicians are served by her in two ways. "The conductor clarifies the composer's intentions. And the conductor unites someone who is sitting on one end of the stage and someone who is sitting on the other end of the stage. They need a focal point."

Here is what a maestro has to think about:

1. Interpreting the score – the action plan – of what is to be played. How tightly or loosely interpreted will this piece of music be? Is there room for improvisation?
2. Maximizing the ability and mix of the players.
3. Setting the tempo and pace of the piece to be played. Tempo is about when to come in and the deadlines to be met.
4. Drawing out the acoustics of the hall or amphitheater and remembering that such places come in all sizes, shapes and tonalities. Sound will differ from place to place.
5. Containing and moving energy – her own, the players' and, most importantly, the audience's.
6. Creating the dramatic effect.
7. When the band plays well there is "fire" in the hall. At that moment in time, community prevails. This is what leadership is about.

Leader as Ethicist

Yuanwu said:

Leaders make the knowledge of the community their knowledge; they make the minds of the community their mind. They are always wary of failing to comprehend the feelings of even one person, or failing to apprehend the principle of even one thing.

Leaders should only seek what is good, diligently striving to seek and take advice. They should question right and wrong in principle regardless of whether the matter is great or small. If the principle is right, even though it involves great expense to carry it out, what is the harm? If the thing is wrong, even though it is a small measure to get rid of it, what is the loss?

The small is a step of the great, the subtle is the sprout of the obvious. This is why the wise are careful of the beginning, sages are mindful of warnings. Even dripping water, if it does not stop, can ultimately turn a mulberry orchard into a lake. A flame, if not removed, will ultimately burn a meadow.

When the water is streaming and the fire is raging, the disaster is already happening – even if you want to help, there is no way. Of old it has been said, "If you are not careful about minor actions, ultimately they will encumber great virtue." This is what is meant here.

– *Letter to Fozhi*
Zen Lessons

An ethicist strives to give guidance about what to do, what to seek out, and how to treat others. Ethics are about "the right or wrong" of human conduct. You have to ask what is desirable or worthwhile? Ethics are about choices framed as dilemmas or paradoxes. Dilemmas are equally undesirable alternatives and paradoxes are seemingly contradictory, yet true, statements.

Where do ethics come from? How do they become part of our soul and very bones? Once upon a time we looked to mythology and traditions to guide us through the mysteries and travails of life. As Joseph Campbell said: "When the mythological layer crumbled we were cut off from these sources." Now we live in monotheism (one right view) or pluralism (many right views), although, there is little tolerance for pluralism. Instead, everyone has the "truth" and is locked into psychological combat in an attempt to wipe out the other truths.

We continue to look for guidance. Buddhists say do no harm. Christians and Jews apply the Ten Commandments. The Boy Scouts live the scout law and oath: "On my honor I will do my best..." Some time in the past, the Iroquois confederacy would gather in a common ground where weapons were left outside. The chiefs of the seven tribes who comprised the Iroquois would ponder the choices before them. One guiding principle prevailed: what impact will this choice have seven generations hence?

An organization has to develop and live its code of conduct. That code is more than a list of principles. The conduct has to ooze from the pores of the place. It becomes a covenant.

A leader as ethicist has to:

1. Discern what she has before her: a dilemma? A paradox? Something else?
2. Know the questions that are pulling her and the organization. Remember that question has the same root as quest. Often, in the spirit of Rilke, "you are living the questions".
3. Position the choice on the right continuum and know where it is: situational or universal truth? Self or the commons? In ethics, nothing is pure.
4. Distinguish, in making the choice, between the call to the heart for a value and the call to the head for the logic.
5. Tune in to the relevant truths of the profession on which the business is based.
6. Keep in full view the founding story and mission of the organization. You will find a deep well of experience and truths in there.

Leader as Teacher

I asked for one kiss: You gave me six.
Who was teacher is now student.
Things good and generous take form
in me, and the air is clear.

– *Rumi*

Teaching is a much-maligned profession. It needs reinvigorating. Teaching is the profession that transmits the culture from generation to generation drawing from the various bodies of knowledge stored in the universe. Teachers help people of all ages to learn how to think, do things, form opinions, and shape a life.

Patience, compassion, attention, drama, and a discipline to pass on might be some of the abilities a teacher has to possess. How such abilities are used set good teachers apart from others. Such teachers teach through the force of their personalities. They become instruments of change. Teaching comes in many forms, some expected, some serendipitous. Lessons have a way of showing up. The Buddhists say, "when the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

Gilbert Highet describes teaching as working with tensions: "...the best teachers give their pupils a sense of order, discipline, control, and a powerful stimulus which urges them to take their destinies in their own hands, kick over the rules, and transgress all boundaries. Sometimes their pupils complain that they do not know what is wanted: are they to be puppets? Or original geniuses? Partners? Or subdued subservient apprentices? The answer is that their teachers want to accustom them to both the essential types of mental activity: self surrender to an external aim and purpose and free development of their individual talents."

Teaching means slowing down and tuning in to the learner and what she brings to the situation. It means matching that talent with the tasks at hand.

Teaching is about letting go of the idea that you know it all. Good teachers know that the sign of true teaching is when the student becomes the teacher. They know the best way to learn something is to try to teach it.

Teachers come in many forms. In the fjords of Denmark lies New Experimental College. Born in the 60's, it thrives on the premise that the student is the highest authority. There are no teachers at NEC, only students of all ages, from many cultures. The learner decides what to learn

and from whom, and what to teach. Each person decides what he or she will stand for. You decide the point of examination, but when you are ready, the examiners will be critical and demanding.

At NEC, when a student is responsible, they become more accomplished. Here is why, in the words of Aage Nielson, the founder of NEC: "If I or another administrator aim to set up a program for the student, I may construct one which is difficult or easy. But if I am to expect the student to complete the program that I set up, I will necessarily have to be realistic, and set my expectations close to what has previously proven possible. These expectations will fall short of what a student will set for himself, because by the very act of the student's setting his own standard, he raises the standard."

At NEC there is a community of many cultures and generations whose styles and ways often are in conflict. Things get shaken up and questioned. The "ting" becomes the meeting, called by anyone to address such concerns of the community, for the community's climate is essential for learning. It is the thermometer that shows the community's temperature ("in the ting"). It is the individual asserting that something is not right enough, or enlightened enough or that some individual needs to be brought out to share her concerns with everyone else."

G.I. Gurdjieff used shock to waken his pupils: smashing a student's art or requiring a student to speak in sign language or surrender all money. Whatever it would take to break the pattern and draw out the "chief feature around which turn all his stupid, comical, secondary weaknesses." Gurdjieff once ordered a student to dig a ditch and then fill it in after he was finished. Each challenge I lasted only a brief time, for to go on too long would only lead to another habit that had to be broken. Gurdjieff was after "self remembering, learning to sense the presence of one's self, a work which might in time lead to the awakening of the true I".

What is your form of teaching? A teacher can create the climate for others to be self-directed by considering these questions:

1. In what ways can I experience this person as a thou, thus with reverence, rather than as an it?
2. What must the work place look and feel like, where are the artifacts to bring out the best in people? Remember, that nature is therapeutic.
3. What activities and accomplishments recently sparked this person? How can they be built upon? How can she be stretched?

4. What wounds does this person carry? Grief for men and pain for women.
5. What outcomes can this person be accountable for that will move this person to higher performance?
6. What is this person called to do? How can it dovetail with what this business has to accomplish?
7. What combination of these four functions is this person's pattern: thinking logically, expressing feeling, gathering facts, generating possibilities? When does this person use which function?

Leader as Storyteller

Language is like a cracked kettle
on which we beat our tunes
for bears to dance to
while all the time we long to move the stars to pity.

– *Gustave Flaubert*

The memories of memorable story: as a child tucked into bed listening to our father read to us or deep in a book before a red fire. Such stories enchant us and transport us to another time. Stories and fairy tales are myths made somewhat human. In the process, a lesson or image remains in our memories. As Michael Mead says: "stories are storehouses that can be returned to over and over."

So here are some stories about stories. They say that the way to take in a story is to listen for the detail that wakes you up. The detail could be an image, a movement – something that sticks. Enter the story through that detail. It is trying to tell you something.

From Li Young Lee: "I really value plain speech because I think the life of poetry is in people's spoken language. It is not in the academies; the academicians don't tell us how to speak, and they don't tell us how to write poetry. It is people who preserve – or abuse – the language. In a way, the poet has to freshen the language or to charge it. We have a fascination with the inarticulate – when you experience something that you can't talk about. The poet has to try to say what is not sayable. But poetry ultimately is the estate of the people of the street.

I think immigrants have beautiful stories to tell. But the problem is to make art out of it. I mean, I have hundreds of stories that are interesting and moving and haunting, but my life as an artist does not depend on whether a story is interesting; it depends on whether I can make it poetry. What happens with immigrants is they have to give a lot of their experience to memory. When my father (a Chinese who was personal physician to Mao) was imprisoned under Sukarno and then exiled from Indonesia, we wandered around Southeast Asia. We had nothing. He would tell us stories to keep things whole – so that we could remember who we were, where we were from – and we had to commit these stories to memory. As I retell them, it's the telling I remember, not the actual incident.

The problem with memory is that it changes whatever it touches. It is never that accurate. As a result, I end up modifying and revising my own experiences. It's myth making. I don't mean

I am telling lies so much as I am telling stories. And that becomes my life. I am the stories that I tell.”

And a story about storytelling from Alice Walker. Again, hone in on the detail that grabs you.

“Storytelling, you know has real function. The process of storytelling is itself a healing process partly because you have someone there who is taking the time to tell you a story that has great meaning for them. They are taking the time to do this because your life could use some help, but they don't want to come over and just give advice. They want to give it to you in a form that becomes inseparable from the whole self. That is what stories do.

Stories differ from advice in that, once you get them, they become a fabric of your whole soul. That is why they heal you. That is why, once you get it, it's sort of always there in you. That is why in *The Temple of My Familiar* the people tell their stories to each other. The structure of the book is about concentric circles formed when each person tells the other person the story that changed him or her. In touching the hearer, the story goes into the hearer's life and changes them and it goes on forever. If you stop that process, as it has been stopped to some extent by television, you have a lot of very sick people who no longer know how to do anything but give advice, which nobody wants to hear because the nature of advice is that it is brief. There is a niggardly quality to it; it lacks generosity.”

In organizations, determine what a storyteller has to work with:

1. What is the organization's founding story? Does it require re-mythologizing and telling as a new story?
2. Since story is "a storehouse", what guidance is stored for others to consider?
3. What stories can be drawn out to balance the forces of technology?
4. How do I create wonder about what is not known? The next horizon? How much of the invisible, mythological world is "right" to bring in at this point in time?
5. How do I use my voice for inflection to create proper tension and drama?
6. What alive words will dig into the soul of this person, group or the overall culture of the place?

Where Do You Go From Here?

Entering the depth work of the leader, like getting inside the paradoxes and using the images of the designer, is new territory for leadership. It is a process of zeroing in on your heart; breaking through the outer rings of persona and fear to the inner essence of your psyche. There is risk and learning involved.

If you choose to go further with this approach, the work starts with self-reflection to determine if you are ready. There are several things to consider doing.

1. Read some new books. Go against what you normally read. The attached bibliography includes some material of this contrary nature. Poetry is a potent way to get images to dance in your head.
2. Complete the two-part personal action plan that is included later in this package. Part I includes questions to assess the readiness of both you and the enterprise to embrace mythic leadership. Part II is about creating room, including the identification of five big "let gos."
3. Kick start some momentum. Design and hold a symposium on your future. Invite 12 to 15 friends and few demagogues to challenge you. You will require at least a day. In effect, build a temporary womb. Prepare and mail a written plan in advance. Hire a facilitator to structure and control the group process. Challenge the group to probe your psyche for a picture of your current reality and the strategic choices before you. This event will reinvigorate your leadership.
4. Find your voice. Find a place and space to be alone and silent for 3 to 5 days. Talk to no one but yourself and your spiritual sources. Nature is a good choice for such a retreat. Take no books or music (go cold turkey.) The raw materials are your soul, thoughts and feelings. Probe, walk and write.

And before you consider actions to take, two contrary poems:

When I am with you, we stay up all night
When you are not here, I can't go to sleep
Praise god for these two insomnia!
And the difference between them.

– *Rumi*

If you have time to chatter
Read books
If you have time to read
Walk into mountain, desert and ocean
If you have time to walk, sing songs and dance
If you have time to dance
Sit quietly, you Happy Lucky Idiot.

– *Nanao Sakaki*

Planning Your Action

Preamble: Questions are a quest. Once you have your questions they pull you and help do the change work. Questions like those below are not homework in which you write the answers and put them away. Questions are meant for pondering and holding on to for quite awhile. Perhaps one or two of the questions will become yours.

In the early 80's a rug man from India came to a party at my house. By way of introduction he asked me: "So Robert, how do you serve the world?" His question made me shiver; it stays with me.

Begin a journal or add some questions to the one you currently keep.

I. Reflective Stage Setting

Your Personal Calling

1. After reading the text, what images are most stirring in you? Whatever images are there, surrender to their power. Let them take you where they long to go. Images will do the pulling. Draw, write, and serve the images. Don't analyze the images, surrender to their pull.
2. What are you called to do on the earth? How do you serve the world? What is your deepest longing? What makes you shiver? What fire is in your belly? Where does desire pull you? What is your own freak fire? How will you tend your fire?
3. What strengths in your psyche – not yet fully present – are you most trying to call up and use?
4. When you experience your full powers, what activities are you doing? (An activity could be 'a doing' such as mobilizing others or 'a being' such as meditation.)

The Pull of the External Context

1. What profession or discipline calls you the most? In this discipline, what speaks to you the most?
2. At this moment in history, what are the people (and their culture) out there, over there and everywhere saying they most want the world to be and do?
3. What time bombs are embedded in the market? The landscape? The community?

4. What do you want to create?
5. What does the world most need that it doesn't yet know it needs?

Dig Into Your Messy Situation

1. What “noise” and distractions keep you from working more deeply?
2. Declare your fears and sorrows. What if our deepest fears are fuel to move us to a heightened state of awareness? When you talk about your fears and sorrows, you are opened to intimacy. When and how will you walk into the middle of your fears?
3. What will you say “no” to in order to move more forcefully to what your heart and calling call you to do?

Embracing the Leadership Images

What image(s) will you step into?...

1. The designer who orders the realm for the good of the whole?
2. The patient and disciplined teacher who help others learn new ways of doing and being?
3. The ethicist who lives in paradox and poses tough but essential choices?
4. The maestro who orchestrates talent to achieve aesthetic and pragmatic results?
5. The storyteller who weaves myth and mystery into tales to guide community and organizational life?

Your Preparation for Action

1. Where will you next express your essence? Where will you take a stand by declaring firm positions before the hearts and eyes of others?
2. What will you stop doing to create room to manifest your creation?
3. What are your deepest fears and nightmares about stepping into this new realm?
4. What must you learn the most?
5. Who will mentor you? (A mentor is the person who has already been where you are about to go.)

II. A Personal Action Plan

It is time to create room to work with the images that most pull you to lead by living what you are called to do. Declare three-to-five big actions that will loosen you up to move forward or downward (if it's soul work to be done) to lead. Think of an action as a big outcome you want: a project, a new profession.

For each action –

1. To go after the outcome, what must you give up? What power will you stop using?
2. What is the distraction or noise that must be stopped?
3. In a formal organizational structure, to whom will you pass the “give up” –
 - You task someone: Prescribe all the ends and the means?
 - You delegate: Prescribe the optional ends and most of the means, but still hold the authority?
 - You authorize: Give the ends and means to another to freely create everything?
4. What will you stop doing because it no longer requires doing?
5. What new powers will you activate? What are the sources of the added powers?

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Note: I have no references for Alice Walker, Li Young Lee, Herbert von Karajan and Catherine Comet. These are stories I am passing on. The sources are oral.