#### NEW HORIZONS IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

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Edited by Michael Harvey and Ronald E. Riggio

# Leadership Studies

The Dialogue of Disciplines

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# 16. Questioning leadership: an integrative model

#### **Michael Harvey**

He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses. . . . He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. . . . you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen. . . ." But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

(1 Samuel 8:10-20, New International Version)

We search eagerly for leadership yet seek to tame and cage it. We recoil from power yet we are bewitched or titillated by it.

(James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (1978: 9)

Well, you've gotta question everything. (Football coach Rex Ryan after a 45–3 loss)

Leadership – by which I mean an interaction between leaders and followers rather than the traits or actions of leaders alone – is the most complex of human relationships. I think there are three main reasons. First, the overarching nature of leadership. It can concern itself with everything from the group's identity and aspirations to any detail which might affect the group's well-being. Second, the sheer number of people involved. All the members of a group, with their multitudinous interests, perceptions and judgments, contribute to the group's experience of leadership. Third, our profound ambivalence about it. Both the Bible and Jim Burns speak to the commingling of hope and skepticism in how we view leadership.

If there is an ancient tradition of hope and skepticism about leadership, there is a more recent tradition of hope and skepticism about thinking about leadership. A new and uncertain field of leadership studies has arisen on the hope that we can discover important truths, but many are skeptical that there is really a discipline here, or that it can contribute much of value. Against skepticism, my colleague Ron Riggio argues at the beginning of this volume that leadership studies is indeed an emerging discipline. Beneath the extravagant

diversity of methods, perspectives and purposes evidenced by leadership scholars, he suggests, there is an underlying unity of focus. In this chapter I suppose that Riggio is right, and take his modest suggestion about the disciplinary coherence of leadership studies as a challenge. What might a general model of leadership that draws on fields as diverse as classics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and management look like?

I begin with the premise that leadership happens in groups, and exists or evolved to serve fundamental group needs. As the sociologist, Philip Selznick, argued in his influential 1957 study of leadership, "certain very general activities of leaders ... reflect equally general characteristics of all human groups" (p. 23). In the model presented here, group needs are understood as a set of questions which leaders must ask and answer. In other words, to lead is to ask. The central questions – about identity, purpose and survival – are presumed to be common to all groups. But the questions are quite different one from another, so leadership is a difficult yoking-together of different kinds of inquiry. Leaders enjoy privileged but not exclusive power to ask, and to assert certain answers as authoritative. In different groups, followers have more or less capacity themselves to ask questions, to contribute to decisions about appropriate answers, and to voice doubts – but they are always quick to harbor at least incipient doubts. As for answers, they are never final because the nature of the group and the world around it are constantly changing. Leadership is thus a disorderly and unending dialectic, question following question and yielding provisional and often-contested answers. Finally, the kind of inquiry proposed here as the work of leadership is not an end in itself, but an engaged inquiry whose success is measured, not by its truth or consistency, but by its ability to spark effective action on behalf of the group by its members.

The suggestion that leadership is a kind of inquiry is not new. It is implicit, I believe, in most serious thinking about leadership, ranging for instance from Plato, who claimed that the dialectic was the critical training tool for leaders (*Republic*, Book VII, especially 532b–541b (1991: 211–20)) to Peter Drucker (see, for instance, Drucker et al. 2008, with its "five most important questions"). But the argument presented here, inspired by the interdisciplinary vision of this volume, is a new effort to present an integrated model of leadership.

Proposing an integrated model is not necessary, to be sure, in order to establish leadership studies as a discipline. Disciplines can and do contain disparate models and methods, contrasting theories, divergent levels of analysis, and violent disagreements among scholars of all stripes about issues of all kinds. Political science, for instance, contains four quite different subfields: international relations; comparative politics; American politics; and political theory. Political scientists in these four subfields largely talk past each other, explore

different questions with different methods, publish in different journals, and share little but departmental affiliation and an annual conference. But it is nevertheless instructive to see how much, if at all, we can get the different disciplines within leadership studies to talk with each other – and whether, out of this dialogue of disciplines, we can draw forth a vision of leadership and its study that is thematically coherent and productive of further research.

"[R]esearch", the scholar Robert Birnbaum drily observed in a study of college presidents, "cannot provide answers to the puzzles of leadership" (1992: xix). Birnbaum did not mean that research is useless, or provides no insights at all – but that research in any particular field is always too narrow to get at the biggest puzzles. So instead of more research, let's ask some reflective questions, beginning with the natural first question: what is leadership? It is a stock device among those who write about leadership to note the dozens, or scores, or hundreds of different definitions of leadership that one thinker or another has devised (Rost, 1991 provides the classic compilation). And yet, if we consider actual working conceptions of leadership, discipline by discipline, as evidenced in this collection of field reports, we might conclude that we are not too far from a general answer: Leaders confront and solve problems associated with group survival and well-being. Across all the chapters in this volume we find a recognition that leaders work for and within the context of a particular group. The prophet Samuel's caution to Israel, which serves as an epigram to this chapter, reminds us that this bargain between leader and followers is as much faith and hope as informed consent, and can transform into behaviors and outcomes few imagined or desired.

Defining leadership within the context of the group is the central thrust of modern scholarship in this emerging discipline, as a glance at several prominent scholars shows:

Leadership may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement. (Stogdill, 1950: 3)

Leaders are individuals who establish direction for a working group of individuals, who gain commitment from these group members to this direction, and who then motivate these members to achieve the direction's outcomes. (Conger, 1992: 18)

A process whereby an individual influences a group to achieve a common goal. (Northouse, 2009: 3)

The renowned leadership scholar Fred Fiedler made the point as concisely and emphatically as it can be made: "Without a group there can be no leader" (1967: 16). In the present volume, the group peeps out from every chapter: the Greek *polis* discussed by Genovese and Tritle; Wren's "institutional and cultural elements that form the essence of the historical context"; the setting

for Weber's understanding of charisma, as explored by Turner; the business enterprise setting for our two chapters on management; Provizer's political science emphasis on the state as the central site of leadership; and even the depiction of leadership lodged in particular communities in literary works like the *Iliad* and *O Pioneers!*, as elaborated by Warner. But the most detailed explorations of the group setting of leadership unfold in the chapters on sociology, by Ospina and Hittleman, and on psychology, by Goethals and Hoyt.

From their standpoint as sociologists, Ospina and Hittleman provide a group-centered understanding of leadership: "Leadership", they argue, is a set of group-based processes "that emerge to address organizing and action". These processes are "social and relational", so that they can only really be studied and understood in the context of a group or the community. Citing Selznick (1957), they emphasize leadership's special role in addressing the group's "recurrent problems", focusing on meaning-making, organization and action.

In their psychology chapter, Goethals and Hoyt provide a remarkably parallel perspective about what groups need, and what leaders provide. They say that leadership is best understood as an evolutionary response to "coordination problems associated with group life: problems like movement; intragroup conflict, competition and cooperation; and intergroup conflict, competition and cooperation". Leadership, they argue, facilitates decision-making and coordination. Beyond this, they suggest that leadership fulfills basic human psychological needs - people seek leaders "who confirm their worldview and make them feel they are a part of something larger than themselves". And leaders help followers make sense of the world, providing "a vision or narrative that frames past experience and points the way toward future behavior". Harvey (2006) distills this to three fundamental group needs that leadership can satisfy: survival, sense-making and managing power. Survival, in all ordinary human circumstances, comes first, as evidenced by the Israelites' insistence on acquiring a war leader, by Goethals and Hoyt's opening case of Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance, and by the business primacy of the bottom line - or, in a different arena, by Americans' arm's-length but easy acceptance in a post-9/11 world of waterboarding and other forms of torture, or "enhanced interrogation techniques" (Ross and Esposito, 2005).

As the example of torture shows, putting the group first does not ensure an ethical leadership, nor does it allow students of leadership to avoid the centrality of ethics. Instead, it places a particular ethical tension at the heart of leadership studies: on one side stands the group, understood ethically either in an ancient, tribalistic "us against them" perspective or a modern, relativistic "noone outside the group can judge that group's ethical understanding". On the other side stands the individual, raised up by a universalist perspective predicated on Christ, Kant or another absolute morality. One can choose either

perspective, and judge a group's morality from within the group or from a universalist perspective. For actual leaders, though, there isn't much of a choice: the group comes first. Max Weber, a seminal figure in the modern study of leadership, makes this point in "Politics as a vocation", one of the greatest meditations on the "ethical paradoxes" embedded in leadership (1946: 125). Contrasting the pure ethic of absolute ends and what he calls "an ethic of responsibility" – meaning responsibility for the survival and welfare of the group – Weber admits that the leader, or anyone who chooses to accept responsibility for others, "lets himself in for the diabolic forces lurking in all violence" (1946: 125–6). It is a reflection that President George W. Bush certainly confronted after 9/11 – though more likely by watching Jack Bauer in 24 than by reading Weber (see Lithwick, 2008).

With ethics in play, then, let us pursue the reflective question of what groups need. An immediate difficulty is that modern society is awash with groups, and we are all members of many of them. Can one generalize about one's membership in a state, a church, a company, a service organization, or a social club? Such groups make very different claims on one's loyalty, time, resources, labor and psyche, don't they? The bewildering array of modern groups can seem to kill in its first bloom any attempt to propose a general leadership model based on what groups need. In that light, one understands why our psychologists, Goethals and Hoyt, turn to what we might consider two ideal types, the stranded group in duress and the hypothesized early group in evolutionary perspective. A striking thing about these is that they are examples of what one might term a "total group", one that commands all of its members' allegiances, labor and aspirations. There is no viable escape in early human experience from the needs and demands of the hunter-gatherer group, just as Sir Ernest Shackleton's stranded men had no alternative to embracing his leadership except death.

Today people are members of more groups and have more discretion about joining and exiting them than in earlier eras of human existence. But that does not change the basic equation of what groups need. Groups complex or long-lived enough to need leadership (which would exclude incidental occurrences like carpools orgies, or a Disneyworld line, at least under normal circumstances) share a family resemblance. They exist for a purpose, to achieve some collective labor that requires coordination and collaboration. They seek to survive. They need members and ways of organizing them, resources and ways of allocating them, and the capacity to capture inputs and transform them into outputs. They have a setting, a culture, a history, and a claim of some kind on their members' participation and commitment. Even disputes about these things – things like how to divide and coordinate labor, what to aim at, who counts as a member and who does not, what the proper remembrance of history is and what lessons it teaches – are part of the fabric of leadership

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within the framework of the group. All of this contributes, as our sociologists teach us, to the group's distinctive social reality.

But to meet its needs, must a group turn to leadership? Are there "substitutes for leadership" (Kerr and Jermier, 1978) that might also serve? Some possible substitutes might be culture, spontaneity, heroism, bureaucracy, or pure democracy. But the evidence of history suggests that among these different mechanisms, leadership provides the best balance of creativity and authority. Culture is fundamental to the life of the group, and thus to leadership ("Cultural understanding", the scholar Edgar Schein observes [2010: 22], "is essential to leaders if they are to lead"). But culture alone, divorced from effective leadership, cannot respond to crisis. Chinua Achebe's classic 1958 novel Things Fall Apart explores this theme in colonial Africa.

As for spontaneity, in many ways the opposite of culture, it has its charms, especially for those who dream of reshaping human nature. Karl Marx mused that Communist society "makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind..." (in Tucker, 1978: 160). But it is hard to find an actual group in the world that relies on spontaneity as its chief idea.

Heroism can only be a substitute for leadership in exceptional circumstances. It's endlessly popular in stories, however, reflecting some primal desire in us for the simple assuredness of the protector figure (see Campbell, 1953 for the classic study). The essence of the hero's story is self-reliance and separation from the group; but a reliance on others, while it may be the end of heroism, can be the beginning of the leader. Indeed the transformation of a man from hero to leader is, I have argued, the theme of the world's oldest extant leadership story, *Gilgamesh* (see Harvey, 2008).

Bureaucracy is another possible substitute for leadership. It has the advantage of applying rational analysis to the problems of the group. But the bureaucrat operates narrowly within a regime of rules, and has nothing, as a bureaucrat, to contribute to the group's deepest existential questions. The narrowness of the bureaucrat's work is brilliantly explored by Akira Kurosawa in his 1952 film *Ikiru*, which dramatizes the transformation of a man dying of stomach cancer from bureaucrat to leader. Finally, pure democracy alone cannot sustain collective purpose in the face of resistance, diffidence, or anxiety: the Athenians, as Genovese and Tritle remind us, often turned to demagogues during difficult times.

Compared to these substitutes, leadership excels at making authoritative choices while preserving space for innovation and new thinking in how to meet the needs of the group. Choices imply questions, so it seems useful to reframe the problem of what groups need into this: What questions must groups and their leaders confront? This is an important reframing, for it shifts

the fundamental leadership function from action to inquiry that sparks action. Pondering the field reports in this volume, I suggest, yields seven fundamental questions that groups, and their leaders, must confront and answer:

Who are we?

Where are we?

How are we doing?

Where are we going?

How will we get there?

Why should we care?

Do we understand?

The first three questions each represent a kind of learning. The fourth envisions a desired future. The fifth, resolutely practical, is about how to align the group's people, resources and work with the vision. The sixth question concerns the group's members as human beings, and how they may be driven, through inspiration or something else, to support the group and its purposes. The final question concerns communication between the leader and followers. Let's consider the questions one by one, to see whether they add up to something suggestive about leadership.

### Learning Who are we?

The first leadership question concerns the identity of the group. Sometimes this occurs in the most literal fashion imaginable: the Old Testament Book of Numbers, for instance, is framed around two censuses that Moses conducts of

the Israelites in the wilderness, so that he will be able to gauge his people's fighting strength. Leaders and others ascertain who are the group's members, who not, and how to distinguish between them. Within groups, leadership researchers have explored the important distinction between "in-group" and "out-group" members (Danserau et al., 1975). Leaders may not be the only ones to inquire about or assert the identity of a group, but they hold a privileged place in the work of asking and asserting (see Lührmann and Eberl, 2007). Genovese and Tritle, our classicists, note that Pericles, in his funeral oration, "outlined the ideals of a democratic society and how such a society stands apart from other polities or political forms". In other words, he gave the Athenians an enduring lesson in their identity. Mitra, in her chapter on the study of art, says that the first lesson of "learning to look" is gaining a better recognition of ourselves and our identities. Ospina and Hittleman, the sociologists, cite "naming and shaping identity" as a key leadership act.

Collins and Porras, in their influential 1996 study of long-term business success, argue that at the heart of such organizational success is an enduring identity or "core ideology". The most successful business leaders, they say, "understood that it is more important to know who you are than where you are going, for where you are going will change as the world around you changes" (1996: 66).

Asking and answering the question of "who we are", by raising the corollary question of "who we are not", can serve to exclude. Adolf Hitler cast Jews out of the German nation. The French scholar René Girard (1986) has explored how, throughout history, groups have made use of the scapegoat mechanism, sacrificing some to (ostensibly) preserve the group. More broadly, the scholars Lawrence and Nohria say that the division into "us" and "them" is basic to groups; they term it the "dyadic instinct" (2002: 102).

The great African-American leader Frederick Douglass wrestled with the question of identity throughout his life, embracing the aspirations of American democracy but rejecting the bitter history and hypocrisy of American slavery and racism. "What country have I?" he powerfully asked in an 1847 speech (in Blassingame et al., 1979, vol. 2: 57). Douglass was an unrelenting asker of hard questions. When the citizens of Rochester, New York invited the well-known abolitionist leader to speak at their Fourth of July celebration in 1852 he accepted, but used the occasion to challenge their complacency. The speech he gave – on 5 July, perhaps to mark his critical distance from the customary celebration – is one of the most astonishing and arresting in American history (for a thoughtful study see Colaiaco, 2006):

What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Fellowcitizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us? (in Blassingame et al., 1979, vol. 2: 359–87)

Tension between inclusion and separatism helped shape the leadership clash within the African-American political awakening of the mid-twentieth century, between a reform and civil-rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr, and a separatist movement led by Malcolm X. In November 1963 Malcolm X famously asserted a separatist identity:

So we're all black people, so-called Negroes, second-class citizens, ex-slaves. You're nothing but an ex-slave. You don't like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex-slaves. You didn't come here on the "Mayflower". You came here on a slave ship. In chains, like a horse, or a cow, or a chicken. And you were brought here by the people who came here on the *Mayflower*, you were brought here by the so-called Pilgrims, or Founding Fathers. They were the ones who brought you here.

We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have this common enemy, then we unite – on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy – the white man. He's an enemy to all of us. I know some of you all think that some of them aren't enemies. Time will tell. (Malcolm X, 1965: 4–5)

For his part, Martin Luther King defined African-American identity within the staunchly patriotic context of American democratic idealism. He gave his most celebrated speech also in 1963, a few months before Malcolm's "message to the grassroots". He spoke at the heart of the nation, at the Lincoln Memorial, under the gaze, as it were, of the President who freed the slaves. He began his speech by citing Lincoln's example, alluding to the Emancipation Proclamation issued precisely a century earlier and echoing Lincoln's language ("Five score years ago"). Further cementing the identity of African-Americans within the mainstream of the American tradition, he quoted the Declaration of Independence and biblical verse, and built his peroration around the image of the Liberty Bell ringing from mountain to American mountain. His speech overwhelmed any superficial distinctions between black and white identity (King, 1986: 217–20).

Martin Luther King, Jr largely won the struggle with Malcolm X over the question of the identity of African-Americans. Separatism is quiescent as a political movement, and the Civil Rights movement has become enshrined as part of the grand patriotic fabric of America. But black identity as an unresolved question – a "problem", as Malcolm X put it (1965: 4) – endures in the psychology, if not the overt politics of African-American culture, especially among many young people. The most dramatic marker is the word "nigger",

considered by most Americans an unspeakable insult, the "n-word". But in broad swathes of African-American youth culture the word has quite a contrary sense, as an assertion of separate identity so potent that whites may not even utter it (see Kennedy, 2002). Today the forbidden word is a staple of some categories of popular music. Some of its uses, at least, merit attention (see Ogbar, 2007 for a sharp examination of ideas in hip-hop music). The popular rap singer Nas (Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones), for instance, offers a surprisingly complex critical interrogation of the word in "Be a nigger too" (2008). Alongside Nas's staccato repetition of the term, his questions hang in the air:

Why we fight each other in public in front of these arrogant fascists? They love it Putting old niggers versus the youngest Most of our elders failed us How can they judge us niggers? There's verbal books published by niggers Produced by niggers genuine niggers so I salute my niggers

I'm a nigger
he's a nigger
she's a nigger
we some niggers
wouldn't you like to be a nigger too?
They like to strangle niggers
blaming niggers
shooting niggers
hanging niggers
still you wanna be a nigger too?

Nas, it is fair to say, intends to shock the listener into a new sense of identity and allegiance, or at least a new willingness to question. Ralph Ellison made the same move, though on a far loftier scale, in his great novel *Invisible Man*:

In my mind's eye I see the bronze statue of the college Founder, the cold Father symbol, his hands outstretched in the breathtaking gesture of lifting a veil that flutters in hard, metallic folds above the face of a kneeling slave; and I am standing puzzled, unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient binding. (1952: 28)

The South African leader Nelson Mandela tells a striking story of his youth in his autobiography, of how a challenging question jolted him into a new awareness of identity and his responsibility as an aspiring leader. Meeting the queen regent of Basutoland (now Lesotho), he was unable to speak to her in Sesotho, her native tongue. "What kind of lawyer and leader will you be," she asked him, "who cannot speak the language of your own people?" "I had no response", Mandela relates:

The question embarrassed and sobered me; it made me realize my parochialism and just how unprepared I was for the task of serving my people. I had unconsciously succumbed to the ethnic divisions fostered by the white government and I did not know how to speak to my own kith and kin. Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savor their songs. I again realized that we were not different people with separate languages; we were one people, with different tongues. (1994: 84)

We may close this discussion of the first leadership question, "Who are we?", by considering a concise and powerful answer: "We the people." These are the three words, written much larger than the rest in the original handwritten document in the National Archives, that begin the United States Constitution. Alexis de Tocqueville, the most perceptive observer of America as a civilization, was struck by the sheer visibility of this assertion of identity as a source of political power:

The principle of the sovereignty of the people, which is always to be found, more or less, at the bottom of almost all human institutions, generally remains there concealed from view. It is obeyed without being recognized, or if for a moment it is brought to light, it is hastily cast back into the gloom of the sanctuary. . . . In America the principle of the sovereignty of the people is neither barren nor concealed, as it is with some other nations; it is recognized by the customs and proclaimed by the laws. . . . (Tocqueville, 1966: 51)

A great deal, as Tocqueville perceived, is contained in the assertion of a group's identity.

#### **Learning** Where are we?

"Where are we?", the second leadership question in our model, can be a question of irritation, bewilderment, anxiety or wonder. To be lost – and this is perhaps especially true in our modern technological age, when the gadgets fail us – is to be plunged into a remarkably powerful primal state of fear and lack of control. In all its forms, from the trivial to the profound, "Where are we?"

is one of the first questions leaders and others in the group ask. Sometimes it is asked figuratively, when complexity and confusion reign. The "where" or context in which a group exists draws the attention of every discipline that contributes to leadership studies. Wren, the historian, speaks of the study of where, or context, as key to why history matters to leadership studies.

Leaders know where we are. This is something so basic to our expectation of leadership that we may take it for granted and miss the work that goes into the gaining of knowledge. In Akira Kurosawa's famed 1954 movie *The Seven Samurai*, Kambei, the samurai leader, upon arriving at the village he has chosen to defend, walks the fields and hills surrounding it, drawing up a map and planning his campaign. The context-setting question "where are we?" often plays out quite literally in leadership, especially military leadership (both Sun Tzu and Machiavelli, in their advice on how leaders should wage war, stress the vital importance of knowing the terrain). In the metaphoric warfare of business competition, scholars in the subfield of strategy stress the fundamental importance of "external analysis", the study of a business's industry and competitive environment, including competitors, customers, suppliers, potential new entrants, and other external factors, often presented shorthand as PESTEL analysis or a similar acronym (for political, economic, sociocultural, technological, environmental and legal factors; see Aguilar, 1967).

For territory-based groups, the question of "where are we" takes on deep emotional and psychic resonance (Herb and Kaplan, 2000). In Willa Cather's novel *O Pioneers!*, explored by Warner in his chapter on literature and leadership, the setting is the American frontier, the living land so dynamic and personified in Cather's telling that it is virtually a character itself. Part of what marks Alexandra as the story's central figure and leader is her deep sympathy and even reverence for the land: "For the first time, perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, a human face was set toward it with love and yearning" (1992: 33). A striking echo of this occurs in the 2003 New Zealand film *Whale Rider* (based on the novel by Witi Ihimaera), also about a visionary female leader: "In the old days, the land felt a great emptiness. It was waiting. Waiting to be filled up. Waiting for someone to love it. Waiting for a leader" (Gavin et al., 2003).

The question of "where are we" is usually answered over time, in an ongoing exploration of the literal or symbolic terrain around the group. Sometimes, however, the question can explode into sudden, urgent recognition and action. An unexpected but powerful instance occurred with United Airlines Flight 93 on 11 September 2001. Because this flight from Newark to San Francisco had been delayed, and because some passengers and crew members used phones to communicate with those on the ground, they learned that they were not in an ordinary hijacking, but on board a missile aimed at Washington, DC. They were in a strange new reality, where the old rules and logic no longer

applied. The normal mode of action in a hijacking – "Don't worry," as a friend on the ground tried to reassure passenger Marion Britton, "they hijacked the plane, they're gonna take you for a ride, you go to their country, and you come back" – was rendered beside the point (Pauley, 2006). Once the shock had been digested, some or all understood the implications. The recognition crystallized into a swift plan of action, and a group stormed the cabin. That they died does not mean that they failed; their on-the-fly adaptation, hasty coordination, and sacrifice stand as tributes to the courage of acknowledging where you are.

## Learning How are we doing?

I begin this section with a personal perspective. I serve on my local school board, and so I encounter a good deal of information on test scores, graduation rates, teacher hiring, and so on. Reading through the school system's "master plan update", a turgid doorstop of a document required by the state, I came across a table showing that the school system, on its three-tier scale ("satisfactory", "needs improvement" and "unsatisfactory"), rates 98 per cent of its teachers as satisfactory. The other 2 per cent need improvement. Not a single teacher is unsatisfactory! Either my family is part of the best school district in America, or our evaluation system is broken. If the latter, what does that mean about our ability or will to identify, hire and train good teachers? If we can't distinguish between good and bad teaching, can we succeed in our core mission of helping children learn?

Honestly asking "how are we doing?" is a critical but contentious task for groups. In contemporary American education it has largely been forced on wary bureaucracies by external reformers. The result has been a messy hodgepodge of change, churn, and the rise of a testing culture that, ironically, can interfere with the core mission of good schools (see Ravitch, 2010). It is with this question that business contributes the most to the interdisciplinary field of leadership studies. Business leaders and their organizations have the most immediately powerful incentive - profit or die - to make an accurate reckoning. Indeed the history of modern business management is in a sense an elaboration on the question, from Frederick Taylor's scientific management to Peter Drucker's mid-twentieth-century managerial revolution to the recently ascendant quality movements like Total Quality Management (TQM), "Six Sigma" and the "Toyota way" (see Taylor, 1911; Drucker, 1974; Deming, 1986; Pande et al., 2000; Liker, 2004; and Liker and Hoseus, 2008). Even earlier, the development of double-entry bookkeeping in the Islamic world and in early modern Italy can be understood as developing a new tool to help answer this old question. On the other hand, one of the deepest critiques of

business is that it frames and answers the question of "how are we doing" narrowly, avoiding "externalities"; any costs or impacts, like pollution, that can be shifted to others (though for a hopeful alternative, see Meyer and Kirby, 2010).

One of the most consequential efforts to address the question of "how we are doing" was made by W. Edwards Deming, the American statistical scientist and management thinker whose ideas were popularized as Total Quality Management. Deming believed that the systematic use of data – in particular, careful statistical analysis of variance - could help organizations identify weaknesses and systematically improve (see also Shewhart, 1931). Deming saw his approach as more than a measurement system. He came to view it as a new philosophy of leadership, a "system of profound knowledge", as he called it, that could fundamentally transform the nature of enterprise (see Deming, 1993). Chapter 5 of his famous book Out of the Crisis (1986), entitled "Questions to help managers", consists of nothing but questions, more than a hundred in all, meant to stimulate the kind of reflection and learning he felt were vital to effective leadership. The heyday of TQM as an organizational fad has passed, but Deming's commitment to learning endures in many organizations, notably in Japan, where he spent most of his working life. Toyota, for instance, one of the most successful companies in the world, traces its famous "Toyota way" to Deming's influence: "Every day I think about what he meant to us", the president of Toyota said in 1991. "Deming is the core of our management" (quoted in Magee, 2007: 43). That management "core" is less about complex measurement systems than a basic commitment to ask questions, as one scholar learned:

I recall interviewing Yuichi Okamoto, a former Toyota Technical Center vice president, about the secret to the success of Toyota's product development system. I was expecting a description of a sophisticated process. ... Instead, he answered with an underlying tone of sarcasm, "We have a very sophisticated technique for developing new products. It is called five-why. We ask why five times." (Liker, 2004: 252)

This is Toyota's well-known five-why analysis, an attempt to get at the hidden root causes of superficially evident problems. "Asking 'Why?' five times", Liker observes, "requires taking the answer to the first why and then asking why that occurs" (2004: 253). At Toyota, five-why analysis is part of a culture that embeds the question "how are we doing?" in the everyday work of the whole group (see Ohno, 1988).

"How are we doing?" is a question that has been most systematically confronted by businesses like Toyota, facing the everyday pressures of market competition. Groups insulated from market forces, like public schools and government agencies, can often count on survival regardless of how or even whether they answer this question. But only in the short term. Eventually, all

groups face a reckoning. This is as true for my small local school system as the largest global business firm. In the end, it is a question all groups and their leaders must confront.

The kinds of inquiry implied by the first three questions in this questioning model of leadership – "who are we?", "where are we?" and "how are we doing" – are all answered by the same basic task: learning. Leadership must learn about the group's history and culture, the environment it operates in, and its condition and effectiveness. To learn to the depth demanded by leadership requires the curiosity of a philosopher or historian, the patience of a scientist, and the courage to accept the truth as one finds it.

## Envisioning Where are we going?

Our next question shifts the focus to the future, and to the group's goal. This is the most familiar and immediately appealing image of what leaders do, envisioning a stirring imagined destination: Martin Luther King's dream; John Winthrop's (and John F. Kennedy's and Ronald Reagan's) "city on a hill"; Henry V's Agincourt speech (as written by Shakespeare) with its glorious imagined future of precious memories of the battle; or, at the root of countless proffered visions in Western culture, Moses' evocation of a promised land to the ever-doubting Israelites in the Pentateuch (a vision brutally satirized in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as "Sugarcandy Mountain", a fable told to the animals by the tame raven Moses).

Collins and Porras argue that the most successful business leaders articulate a vivid "envisioned future" in a way that resonates with followers (1996: 73). They note the famous instance of Henry Ford, who was able to imagine such a future in 1907, a year *before* he introduced the epochal Model T:

I will build a motor car for the great multitude. ... It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces. ... When I'm through, everybody will be able to afford one, and everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways, the automobile will be taken for granted ... [and we will] give a large number of men employment at good wages. (Quoted in Collins and Porras 1996: 74)

To answer the question "where are we going?" some stirring sense of purpose or destination beyond the immediate task is needed. Leadership supplies this, "to help people", as Ospina and Hittleman put it, "make sense of events or give legitimacy to organizational realities and decisions." The answer to "where are we going" is perhaps rightly understood as a simplification of a more complex

reality. A group always has, in reality, a thousand purposes and desires – as many as there might be followers. Leadership, especially at times of crisis, but in ordinary times as well, directs attention to an overriding goal. In a sense, leaders capture and gather a thousand gleams and glints, and condense them into brilliant stabs of brightness that all can see, and follow. William Manchester, summarizing his portrait of Winston Churchill, characterized the great wartime leader in just this fashion: "an artist who knew how to gather the blazing light of history into his prism and then distort it to his ends, an embodiment of inflexible resolution who could impose his will and his imagination on his people" (Manchester, 1983: 4).

## Aligning How will we get there?

There is something poetic or prophetic about stepping forth to answer the question "where are we going?" The tone is very different with the next question: "how will we get there?" This is the clearheaded mood of the day after, the mindset of the one who must pay the bills, pack the luggage, or look up at the mountain and start thinking exactly what route to take, what equipment will be needed, and what the weather will be like. Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* (1999) brings home the life-and-death seriousness of leaders' attention to these mundane details.

During the 2008 Presidential campaign, frustrated by the success of Barack Obama's soaring rhetoric ("You and I together, we will remake this country and we will remake the world" (Clark and Nista, 2008)), Hillary Clinton spoke at a rally in Rhode Island from the stolid, anti-rhetorical perspective of "how":

Now, I could stand up here and say, "Let's just get everybody together. Let's get unified." The skies will open, the light will come down, celestial choirs will be singing and everyone will know we should do the right thing and the world will be perfect. Maybe I've just lived a little long, but I have no illusions about how hard this is going to be. You are not going to wave a magic wand to make special interests disappear. (Quoted in Zorn 2008)

Our sociologists Ospina and Hittleman suggest that answering the "how" question gets at the real work of leadership. They quote Selznick to make the point: "A theory of leadership is dependent on a theory of social organization" (1957: 23). Genovese and Tritle, exploring leadership in the classics, make a similar point, citing the Herodotean tripartite scheme of regimes – kingship, aristocracy and democracy – as a key step in the development of the ancient Greek understanding of leadership and groups.

Some leaders are reluctant to distinguish the "where" and the "how", and

blur the line between aspiration and attainment. This is the nature of charismatic leadership as studied by Weber (see Turner, Chapter 7 in this volume). For Weber, charisma was not merely attractiveness or appeal, but a powerful claim of magical power; "the leader as path", Turner summarizes Weber's treatment of charismatic power. Turner notes Weber's repeated citations of Christ, his ideal-type of charismatic leadership: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John, 14:6, New International Version). In terms of our questions, the charismatic leader presents himself or herself as a living answer to the "how?" question. Naturally this is a fragile arrangement, and Weber, in addition to a host of recent scholars, explored the sudden collapse of charismatic leadership – and sometimes the group as a whole – when the leader's magical power ebbed, or the curtain was pulled back. One classic study is Charles Lindholm's (1990) account of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple.

But most leaders confront the question of "how" with less magic and more method. The great American business example is surely Alfred Sloan, who took over a nearly bankrupt General Motors in 1923 and carefully reorganized it back to profitability and then dominance, along the way largely inventing the modern concept of the divisionalized corporation. Henry Ford, on the other hand, almost ruined his company during these years by proving slow to adapt to the challenges of growth and competition. Ford tried to lead his company the way he began it, with strict personal control, and only changed under duress. The contrast between Ford, the visionary and Sloan, the organizer is striking, and suggests some of the complexities involved in judging the most effective kind of leadership (for Ford see Tedlow, 2001; for Sloan the classic account – though lacking critical perspective, of course – is his own memoir (Sloan, 1990)).

In American political history, one of the most striking instances of the "how do we get there?" question comes from the interplay between Martin Luther King, Jr and President Lyndon B. Johnson. Johnson had suddenly become President after the assassination of John Kennedy in November 1963, a few months after King's "I have a dream" speech. Johnson devoted much of his early presidency to translating King's vision into reality, with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. King and Johnson worked warily together – Johnson laboring as much to gain King's trust as to navigate the difficulties of passing historic legislation. In a 1965 telephone conversation, Johnson, the former Congressional leader and master of the legislative process, analyzed the "practical political problem" both men faced:

President Johnson: I think that we are confronted with the realistic problem that we have faced all through the years, a combination of the South and the Republicans. . . . We've lost a good deal of the gain we made last November. I don't know. I have the problem . . . You know my practical political problem in the Senate. . . .

Questioning leadership: an integrative model

King: Yes.

. . .

President Johnson: So I would say there are about two things that ought to be done. You ought to have the strongest man that can speak for you – and the most knowledgeable legislative-wise – authorized to speak and authorized to tell people like the Speaker what you want. And you don't want this fight going on, and you ought to find out who you believe you can trust, if you can trust me, if you can trust the Attorney General. If you can't trust us, why, trust Teddy Kennedy or whoever you want to trust and then get behind them and see that they take the thing because I'll give every bit, ounce of energy and ability of any that I have to passing the most effective bill that can be written.

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Well, you helped, I think, dramatize and bring it to a point where I could go before the Congress in that night session, and I think that was one of the most effective things that had ever happened, but you had worked for months to help create the sentiment that supported it.

King: Yes.

President Johnson: Now the trouble is that fire has gone out.

King: That's right.
(Miller Center of Public Affairs, n.d.)

We all recognize that leadership is more than planning, and that there is something unreal about a plan by itself. "They all have a plan", the champion boxer Mike Tyson famously observed, "until they get hit" (quoted in Jackman, 1989). But the question "how will we get there?", in its cool insistence on identifying what is practical and possible, clarifies another aspect of leadership: the leader as aligner, ensuring that people, resources, capacities and tasks match the purposes and goals of the group.

## **Driving**Why should we care?

The modern era of leadership research began in the 1940s. Until then, the leading approach had been to identify the personal characteristics of effective leaders. Dissatisfied with the narrowness of this focus on individual traits, a team of scholars at Ohio State University led by Ralph Stogdill broadened their inquiry to include the working group, the context in which leadership occurs.

Stogdill and his colleagues drew up close to 2000 questionnaire items on leadership behaviors in groups. Further work distilled these to nine dimensions of leadership activity, and eventually to just two dimensions, one focused on the work of the group, and the other on its members. Stogdill and his colleagues called the first dimension "initiating structure". The term refers to how a leader attends to organizing the group, managing work and achieving goals. They called the second dimension "consideration". It refers to how a leader treats group members as individuals, and includes things like respect, encouragement and concern (Halpin and Winer, 1957). This recognition of the double nature of the leader's work is in my opinion the most significant achievement of modern leadership research. Since the Ohio State studies, remarkably, most major leadership models have identified the same basic distinction in the work of leadership, between attention to the task and attention to the group. Table 16.1, for instance, summarizes the historical overview of Peter Northouse (2009) in his influential leadership textbook. "Consideration and Initiating Structure", one scholar says, "have proven to be among the most robust of leadership concepts." (Fleishman, 1995: 51; see also Judge et al., 2004).

One might wonder why this double nature of the leader's work should exist, since from one perspective accomplishing the task serves the interest of the group's members. "What is the city," the tribunes ask in Shakespeare's Coriolanus, "but the people?" (3.1.198, in Shakespeare, 1997). But the answer is not so surprising. How things look from the perspective of leadership, which occupies a strategic perch and has overall responsibility for the survival and well-being of the group, is often not how they look from the perspective of followers, who of necessity have a narrower focus. In the group's division of labor, leaders think more readily of the whole and the future, and followers think more readily of the particular and the now. Since antiquity, thoughtful

Table 16.1 The two dimensions of leadership research

Model	Task focus	People focus
Ohio State	Initiating structure	Consideration
University of Michigan	Production orientation	Employee orientation
Style approach	Task behaviors	Relationship behaviors
Managerial Grid	Concern for production	Concern for people
Hersey and Blanchard's situational approach	Directive behaviors	Supportive behaviors
Fiedler's contingency theory	Task-related style	Relationship-related style
Path-goal theory	Directive leadership	Supportive leadership

students of leadership have recognized this distinction, often concluding that it is due to an innate selfishness or untrustworthiness on the part of followers. In the Republic, for instance, Plato makes the audacious proposal that his ideal community must be founded on a vast "Noble Lie", as the only way to get the city's followers - ordinary human beings - to overcome their natural propensity for self-interested behavior (Republic, 414b-417b (Plato, 1991: 95-6)). The irony that Plato's ideal rulers are lying philosophers has fascinated and troubled countless readers over the centuries, but the idea has remarkable staying power. The sociologist Philip Selznick, for instance, concludes his study of leadership by asserting "the necessity of the myth" that leaders must create and institutionalize (1957: 151). Machiavelli took a similar tack in The Prince, blaming human fickleness and selfishness for the inconstancy in followers' support for leaders. He concluded that leaders must be willing to lie, commit violence, or use any other necessary means to win ongoing allegiance. Because of followers' all-too-human fickleness, he bleakly warned in Chapter 6 of The Prince, all unarmed prophets fail.

But from a modern, more democratic perspective, we might simply say that the work of following is different from the work of leadership. Each has its burdens and concerns. Leaders, relentlessly optimistic (or at least representing themselves as such), inhabit an airy world of promises made and dreams always about to become real. Or perhaps it is kinder to leadership to suggest that it tends to take a Burkean view of the group; the great English conservative thinker Edmund Burke saw society as "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born" (in Clark, 2001: 261). In other words, to leaders the city isn't just the people, but what the city has been and especially what it might be in the future. This perspective, organized into three simple paragraphs on past, present and future, shapes what is widely considered the greatest and most consequential speech in American history, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (see Wills, 1992). But followers don't have nearly as much incentive to take the long view. Relentlessly sober, they inhabit a more concrete world of promises unmet and dreams ever receding - and their own less glorious work that, regardless, always needs attending to. The Israelites who followed or were driven by Moses into the desert ask repeatedly, "How will we eat today?" (Nor, unlike Moses, Joshua and a few others, is memory of the people preserved - except dismissively - in the journey's authorized history.)

What does this distinction between task and people mean for any sensible effort to put forth a model of leadership? For one thing, it means that a strategic perspective – attention to the goal, the task, coordination, organization of resources, and effectiveness – is not enough. Leaders must also perceive members of the group as human beings engaged in day-to-day work that requires ongoing, constantly reaffirmed commitment and dedication. Beyond

appealing to the beauty of the dream or the greatness of the task, leaders must be able to help followers find a meaningful answer to the everyday question, "why should I care?" Most modern leadership literature, both scholarly and popular, casts this as finding the right way to inspire or win people's hearts, whether through authenticity, transformation, empowerment, collaboration, team-building or other means. One prominent example is Kouzes and Posner's (2007) best-selling book, *The Leadership Challenge*. A darker tradition, expressed most famously by Machiavelli in Chapter 17 of *The Prince*, argues that it is wiser to rely on fear (though not hate) to hold followers' support. The largely unstated reality of most modern groups is that fear is widely relied on, either in overt ways or indirectly by ensuring that workers perceive the precarious nature of organizational survival and their employment.

However leaders choose to address the followers' question, "why should we care?", useful answers require a measure of empathy or emotional intelligence (see Goleman, 1996 and Goleman et al., 2004), and an understanding of motivation (well explored by Goethals and Hoyt in Chapter 9 of this volume). The most enduringly effective leadership, a long tradition of research suggests, requires a view of followers not simply as factors of production or fodder for the work of the group, but as individuals in their own right (see McGregor, 1960). It is in this sense, I think, that the philosopher Joanne Ciulla (1998) calls ethics "the heart of leadership".

#### Communicating Do we understand?

"Do we understand?" is the question followers ask as they interact (mainly by listening) with leaders. Leaders face an immense communicative challenge. Followers generally have less at stake, pay less attention, and are mostly preoccupied with daily concerns rather than far-off challenges or visions. They are, for the most part, rooted in the present, while leaders in a sense live in or for the future. (One suspects that 2014, the year that most of the Affordable Care Act takes effect, seems much sooner to President Obama than ordinary Americans.) The dreams and changes that leaders imagine become in a sense real to them, if they are sincere, while to the rest of us they are likely to be just words, words, words, especially because in every group there is far more promise of change and progress than actual change and progress. Nor are most followers likely to be as interested as leaders in the complexities of information-gathering, decision-making and plan formulation. They expect clarity, direction and action. Leaders must bridge this gap between the complexities they face and the clarity followers demand. To do so, the best leaders simplify without condescending. Many of the chapters in this volume speak of the importance of storytelling to leadership – not because stories are more true than other forms of communication, but because, well chosen and well told, they convey a kind of condensed truth, like Christ's parables ("true" to believers, at least).

The best communicators among American presidents – figures like Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan – are not coincidentally judged among the greatest presidents by historians and popular memory. Roosevelt was the first president to perceive and exploit the potential of radio to reach millions of citizens. Over the dozen years of his presidency, he made 30 "fireside chats" over the radio, using these informal addresses to inform, to persuade, and to forge a sense of personal connection with Americans. His first chat, meant to soothe the bank panic of March 1933, and delivered when he had been in office just a week, is striking in its uncondescending simplicity and familiarity:

My friends, I want to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking – to talk with the comparatively few who understand the mechanics of banking, but more particularly with the overwhelming majority of you who use banks for the making of deposits and the drawing of checks. I want to tell you what has been done in the last few days, and why it was done, and what the next steps are going to be.

I recognize that the many proclamations from state capitals and from Washington, the legislation, the Treasury regulations, and so forth, couched for the most part in banking and legal terms, ought to be explained for the benefit of the average citizen. ... And I know that when you understand what we in Washington have been about, I shall continue to have your cooperation as fully as I have had your sympathy and help during the past week. (In Kiewe, 2007: 1)

The humorist Will Rogers summarized the impact: "Our president took such a dry subject as banking and made everyone understand it, even bankers" (quoted in Levin and Levine, 2002: ix).

FDR's first fireside chat (or Malcolm X's message to the grassroots, for that matter) suggests the essentials of how effective leaders communicate: absorb a vast amount of information; distill and simplify the complex; take apparently discrete and disconnected phenomena and show their connection; use personal example, tone and emotion as well as words; communicate swiftly, while followers feel a sense of urgency; and rouse followers to action and commitment. After Roosevelt's death, the writer Carl Carmer wrote a poem trying to convey the impact of his voice:

I never saw him –
But I knew him. Can you have forgotten
How, with his voice, he came into our house,
The President of these United States,
Calling us friends. . . . (in Levine and Levine, 2002: ix)

#### QUESTIONING THE QUESTIONS

Presenting these seven questions and their related tasks as a model of leadership raises a host of attendant questions. First of all, why these questions in this sequence? The answer emerges from the widespread recognition by leadership scholars that the group is the natural setting for leadership. The seven questions attempt to capture the needs of a group, as recognized in fields like sociology, history and psychology: from the forging of the group's social identity, a natural analytic starting-point; to its setting and condition; to its purpose and aspirations; to its way of accomplishing that purpose. And since the most durable research finding of modern leadership studies is the importance of two kinds of leadership work, that directed toward the task and that directed toward the individual members of the group, the sixth question ("why should we care?") creates space for this distinction. The final question suggests that communication is implicit in all of the previous questions, and that leaders must ceaselessly toil to help followers understand. In some ways the sequence is similar to the classic managerial model of Henri Fayol, the late-nineteenthand early-twentieth-century French engineer and pioneering management thinker. "To manage", Fayol said, "is to plan, organize, coordinate, command, and control" (1987: 13). Like Fayol's model, this one is essentially strategic, seeing leadership as a comprehensive responsibility for the survival and wellbeing of the group. (For an interesting reading of Fayol that stresses his relevance to contemporary approaches to leadership, see Parker and Ritson, 2005.) A second question or challenge to the model is who exactly asks and answers the questions. The simplest answer is leaders, but in many situations leaders will share or delegate some of the responsibilities attached to the questions. Or groups may employ distributed leadership, so that different questions and answers are the responsibility of different leaders within a group, or different parts of an organization. Large organizations divide the tasks of answering the questions into different formal areas. But any such division creates a new complexity for leadership, which must still synthesize the pieces into a coherent understanding. The questions can also serve to challenge leaders. This is the heart of modern democratic politics. But over human history, even without formal mechanisms for debate and decision, challenges to leadership arise as struggles over whether the answers to the seven questions, as currently understood and articulated by leaders, are appropriate for the group. One of the most poignant moments in the Bible occurs with such a challenge to Moses, a kind of proto-democratic and proto-Protestant objection to his rule:

Korah . . . and certain Reubenites – Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth – became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of

the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (Numbers, 16:1–3, New International Version)

Korah challenges Moses on the fourth question, "how will we get there?" But his challenge implicates the whole of Moses' project, because it calls into question his answers about the identity, condition and aspirations of the Israelites. (The Bible has a stark answer to Korah's challenge: the earth opens up and swallows him and his fellow rebels.)

All leaders' answers are contested. A large part of the work of leadership consists of pushing back against the reopening of "settled" questions. Even the most iconic leadership myths, from that of Moses in the wilderness to George Washington during the Revolutionary War, reveal themselves upon closer inquiry as stories of dispute and discord (on Moses see Buber, 1946; on Washington see Flexner, 1994). Rivals jockey for power. Those close to the leader resent the leader's advancement and suppose that they could do better. Followers watch from a discreet distance and speculate and gossip about every scrap of information. Most leadership advice literature, from ancient texts to modern best-sellers, proposes to help leaders overcome opposition by means ranging from kindness and love to violence and fear.

A fourth question about the questioning model is, can the questions be asked in the first-person singular? Yes. Indeed "why should we care?" and "do we understand?" are perhaps just as easily interpreted as questions that individuals may ask, for the answers may be made by individuals gauging their level of commitment and understanding. All of the questions may be asked by leaders as individuals, generally as a private matter. But sharing this with followers is the exception, not the rule. A striking example of private questions comes from the life of Mother Teresa, the Catholic nun who founded the Missionaries of Charity and spent her life working to aid the poor in Calcutta. Despite her lifelong devotion to the Church and her carefully constructed persona of tranquil reverence, for most of her life she suffered intense spiritual doubts, as attested by an undated letter to one of her seniors in the Church:

The place of God in my soul is blank – There is no God in me – when the pain of longing is so great – I just long & long for God – and then it is that I feel – He does not want me – He is not there – . . . God does not want me – Sometimes – I just hear my own heart cry out – "My God" and nothing else comes – The torture and pain I can't explain. (Teresa and Kolodiejchuk, 2007: 2)

The shocking thing about the inner leadership story of Mother Teresa is not that she felt such doubts, but that she felt them for most of her life, even as she went about her leadership work. In public she showed no trace of doubt, and she asked that her letters be burnt after her death. Most leaders, most of the

time, make the choice she did: to present a simplified, more positive version of themselves and their answers, in order to avoid unsettling followers. The choices leaders make about whether and how to simplify their questions and answers, and their overall presentation of self, is one of the most fascinating and melancholy aspects of leadership. As a colleague of Abraham Lincoln observed, "He made simplicity and candor a mask of deep feelings carefully concealed" (quoted in Oates, 1977: 99). I suspect that this very flattening that leaders perforce engage in – demanded by the dynamics of decision-making, action, and authority in the group – has obscured the fundamental role that questions play in the work of leadership.

Finally, what counts as a good answer? From within our framework, a good answer is one that contributes to the survival or well-being of the group. This largely resolves Joanne Ciulla's "Hitler problem", at least for Hitler himself. In her chapter on philosophy, Ciulla considers whether Hitler was a good leader, and concludes that it is a thorny question because he was "effective", but evil. From our perspective we would ask whether Hitler contributed to the survival or well-being of his group. The answer is an emphatic no. For a time Hitler made his nation powerful, but he fell far short of his dream of a "Thousand-Year Reich", and provoked opposition that soon devastated Germany. Far from strengthening his nation, he nearly destroyed it, and made restraining Germany one of the centerpieces of post-war international relations. (The famous joke about NATO is that it was established "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down".) As a legacy, Hitler left a black mark of guilt that still stains German identity. To call Hitler effective would be like saying that someone who had maxed out his credit cards was wealthy.

#### THE LEADERSHIP CYCLE

The work of leadership is never done. There is no final answer to "who are we?" or any of the questions – only an endless iterative process as the problems and circumstances facing the group, and the group itself, change. The questions only end when the group does. To convey this ongoing nature, it is best to arrange the questions in a circle. Learning, envisioning, aligning and driving follow a roughly logical sequence and are placed around the circle. One task and question are placed at the center: communicating and the question "do we understand?" Because leadership involves working not just with but through others, leaders must labor to constantly communicate with, and be understood by, followers: "You communicate, you communicate, and then you communicate some more. Consistency, simplicity, and repetition is what it's all about..." (former GE leader Jack Welch, quoted in Slater, 1999: 55). The

Where are we?

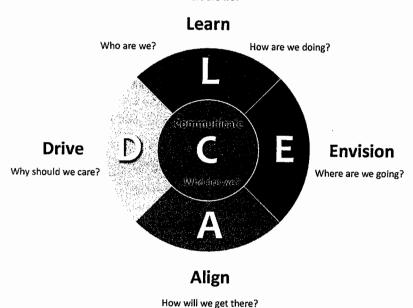


Figure 16.1 The leadership cycle

leadership model we emerge with calls attention both to the different faces of leadership, and to its underlying unity (see Figure 16.1).

This inquiry-based model helps us see that it is not enough for a leader to do or be one thing: honest, or charismatic, or "genuine", or hard-working, or prophetic, or empathetic, or organized. Leadership is the executive function of the group, and as such it is comprised of distinct tasks concerned with gathering information about the group and its environment, envisioning a goal, translating that choice into results, and ensuring that followers understand and remain committed to the task, and the group. "Leadership reconciles internal strivings and environmental pressures", Philip Selznick observed a half-century ago. "It entails a self-assessment to discover the true commitments of the organization" (1957: 62). It is this complex dynamic of endless, ongoing inquiry that the questioning leadership model attempts to capture.

Modernity has vastly complicated the nature of groups. Companies may have hundreds of thousands of employees, armies millions of soldiers, and countries hundreds of millions of citizens. This division of labor and extreme scaling-up is part of what makes leadership so confusing to contemplate. Organizationally, it is not surprising that the leadership of large groups is

broken into manageable pieces like R&D, public relations, human resources or logistics. Quite the contrary, actually: the real surprise comes from surveying a complex, rapidly changing environment filled with organizations that are faster, bigger and more dynamic than anything our ancestors experienced – and still finding leadership patterns they would surely have recognized and responded to. Leaders still, as they have always done, must learn, envision, align, drive and communicate. It is in the nature of us as individuals and as social beings who work together in groups.

The model presented here puts questions at the heart of leadership. "Ask questions about everything", wrote the great Qing Dynasty emperor Kangxi, "and investigate everything" (in Spence, 1988: 68). Summing up the nature of the CEO's work, Jack Welch observed that "a series of questions" inspired by a nineteenth-century Prussian general "were much more useful to me over the years than all the data crunching in strategic plans" (Welch and Byrne, 2001: 390). One may object that leadership is about answers, not questions. But questions must precede answers. If leaders do not ask, who will? Perhaps it is even right to say that questions are the sparks that create the possibility of leadership.

The ancient world was dominated by a style of leadership that stressed the certainty of the leader's answers rather than the questions that precede them. Even so, one finds in an ancient text like *Gilgamesh* a dramatization of the leader's journey as a questioning exploration into the heart of the human condition. We might say that Gilgamesh begins his journey with one question: "who am I?", the individual's question. He ends his journey, back where he started, with another: "who are we?", the leader's question. The answers that Gilgamesh finds through suffering and discovery are powerful affirmations of the importance of the group in our lives. So is the symbolic circle of his journey, which begins and ends in his city of Uruk. The structure of the story betrays the same circularity, opening and closing with the same words about the same place, the city built and sustained by leadership and collective labor:

Study the brickwork, study the fortification; climb the great ancient staircase to the terrace;

study how it is made; from the terrace see the planted and fallow fields, the ponds and orchards.

This is Uruk, the city of Gilgamesh. . . . (Ferry, 1992: 3; cf. 81)

The real hero of the ancient story is the city itself. It is where Gilgamesh finds the only kind of immortality available to leaders, through their service to the group.

In the end, the answers that elude Gilgamesh in his journey, and that he

recognizes upon his return to the city, are only as important as the questions that drive him. His questions spark his sense of mortality and empathy. They impel him to seek, make him willing to learn, and teach him how to lead. As for us, it is our urge to question, our capacity for wonder and imagination, that ensures that as long as we live, and as long as we depend on each other for the collective labor that makes our lives possible and meaningful, we will ask for leadership.

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