

LEADERSHIP: AN OPEN PALM CONVERSATION

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## Abstract

Leadership is a defining feature of the success and survival of social political institutions and worldviews. Traditional studies of leadership, however, tend to be limited to a Western masculine archetype. This viewpoint does not take into account the diversity of leadership demonstrated by various civilizations down through the ages, thus making it ill-equipped to deal with the challenges facing humanity today. In an attempt to offer an alternative view, this paper explores the meaning of leadership from the perspective of an open palm conversation, a discussion between individuals who gain understanding through an open exchange of ideas. The participants in this conversation are all representative of the Golden Ages of their respective civilizations. The aim of this paper is to provide a new inclusive understanding of leadership, one that transcends time and place, culture and religion, gender and self and offers the possibility of overcoming war, violence, hatred, poverty, and starvation.

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## Chapter One

### *Introduction and Literature Review*

#### *Prologue*

Understanding the role and functions of leadership is becoming the single most important intellectual task as the role of leaders emerges to be more crucial to the survival and adaptation of social institutions than management of control systems or efficiency audits. (Kakabadse, Kouzmin, & Kakabadse, 2000, p.165)

Bass (1990) also refers to leadership as one of the single most critical factors in the success or failure of an institution. According to Aristotle (trans. 1885), our associations with one another form the social-political institutions of our collective worldviews: “Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal” (Politics 1.2, 1253a). It follows that leadership, being crucial to the survival of our social-political institutions, is also crucial to the survival of our current worldview. However, our social institutions also shape a world where violence, war, poverty, starvation, and hatred are commonplace. Given these global atrocities, leadership scholarship should rise up to encompass and confront these challenges and opportunities as a global society. To understand what this entails, Antoine de Saint Exupery (2003) offers insightful advice: “If you want to build a ship, don’t assemble people and assign them tasks, but rather rouse them to long for the endless immensity of the sea” (as cited in Sauter, p. 10).

Leadership literature (See Bass, 1990; House & Aditya, 1997; House et al., 1999) is limited to a *voice* focused on the external roles and functions of leaders. To confront the challenges facing our global society and capture the *voices* of the

endless immensity of leadership requires an inclusive and appreciative conversation among *unique* worldviews as Saint Exupery (1944/1998) explains:

All men have the stars," he answered, "but they are not the same things for different people. For some, who are travelers, the stars are guides. For others they are no more than little lights in the sky. For others, who are scholars, they are problems. For my businessman they were wealth. But all these stars are silent. You-you alone-will have the stars as no one else has them. (p. 85-86)

Religion, culture, democracy, happiness and leadership "are not the same things for different people" (p. 85), but unfortunately tend to be interpreted largely through the lens of Eurocentrism. According to Alatas (2003), Eurocentrism "refers to values, attitudes, ideas, and ideological orientations that are informed by the notion of European uniqueness and superiority" (p. 761). Dussel (2000) and Nordenbo (1995) regard the core of Eurocentric modernity as centred upon reasoning which tends to disregard the relevancy of other points of view unless they are supported by Western (i.e. superior) moral reasoning.

The conviction of Eurocentric moral reasoning, according to Ignatieff (1995), acts as a *moral reflex* compelling the West to *do* something. In other words, the West feels it has a moral *duty* to serve in the best interests of its 'non-western brothers and sisters' (Gawlikowski, 2003). Gawlikowski (2003) relates this moral duty to the West's historical tradition of colonization and Christian missionaries' unrelenting passion to convert 'savages' to Eurocentric dogmatic reasoning. Even today, Western political, economic, and non-profit institutions continue this unconscious and non-apparent tradition of spreading 'the Word' of Western modernity to 'enlighten' their non-western brothers and sisters (Kleinman, 1995).



This *duty* to enlighten others through moral reasoning reflects the prominent “leader-enlightens-follower” theme in leadership research (Brock, 1994). Bass and Avolio (1998), Burns (1978), Hodgkinson (1996), and Sergiovanni (1991) describe this enlightening process as transformational leadership: followers are *transformed* by leaders who possess *higher* moral reasoning. A large proportion of leadership literature similarly defines and reduces leadership to a *causal* relationship between individuals based upon the influence of modern Western *interpretations* of moral reasoning (see Bardaracco, 1989; Batten, 1989; Bass and Avolio, 1993; Bennis, 1989; Blanchard, Kenneth & Peale, 1988; Burns, 1978; Covey, 1989, 1994; Davidow & Malone, 1992; De Pree 1992; Helgesen, 1990; Kouze & Posner, 1993; 2002; Manz & Sims, 1993; Sayles, 1989; Whitney, 1994 for examples supporting this definition).

Though this definition of leadership is supported by a substantial number of leadership scholars, it is an exclusive understanding that is reflective of a Eurocentric worldview. This worldview limits our understanding and imagination as Saint Exupery explains when he shows people his drawing of a boa constrictor eating an elephant and they tell him that his drawing is a hat (see Figure 1):

Figure 1. A drawing of a boa constrictor eating an elephant



Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man. (p. 4-5)

The vast majority of leadership scholarship is written exclusively for the bridge, golf, and politics of the sensible person argues Littrell (2002). Based upon a critique of Bass (1990), House and Aditya (1997), and the House et al. (1999) GLOBE leadership project, Littrell characterizes leadership research as being “primarily concerned with the relationship between leaders and their immediate followers and largely ignores the organization and culture in which leaders function, the relationships between leaders and superiors, external constituencies, peers, and the kind of product or service provided by the leader’s organization” (p. 7). Littrell critiques the rigour of leadership research as “fragmented and not systematically followed-up [and comprising of a] .... self-limiting set of assumptions, mostly reflecting Western industrialized culture” (p. 7-8). Furthermore, the “prevailing theories of leadership and almost all of the empirical evidence are rather distinctly American in character” (p. 8). As a result, the study of leadership has not yet achieved a definitive stage of theoretical development (Littrell, 2002). Adalberto and Martinez (2002), Gergen and Thatchenkery (1996), Nkomo (1992), and Ogbor (2000) all support Littrell’s critique maintaining that the majority of leadership research does not take into consideration more than eighty percent of the world’s population and is ingrained with a white-male-executive stereotype (Calas & Smircich, 1991; Parker, 2001). This obsession with defining leadership in this way does not lend itself to appreciating cultural or even feminine perspectives and ends up ‘by definition’ creating barriers to exploring the possibilities of what leadership can be (April, MacDonald, & Vriesendorps 2000; Mellahi, 2000).

To journey beyond the preaching of the sensible person's understanding of leadership, this paper will be written in the style of Saint Exupery (1994/1998) for those who understand life:

But certainly, for us who understand life, figures are a matter of indifference. I should have liked to begin this story in the fashion of the fairy-tales. I should have like to say: "Once upon a time there was a little prince who lived on a planet that was scarcely any bigger than himself, and who had need of a sheep...To those who understand life, that would have given a much greater air of truth to my story." (p. 15)

As with understanding life, understanding leadership is not just about matters of literal history, reason, and objectivity, the virtues of great scholarship revered by the academic community and leadership scholars. As the world begins exploring possibilities of cyberspace communications, the rationalization of life and language, constrained by Western logic and absolutist approaches, does not permit an appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of human experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); it is typically ethnocentric and not universal (Solomon, 1992).

To gives "a much greater air of truth" (Saint Exupery, 1994/1998, p. 15), Aristotle's (trans. 1954) theory of metaphor provides a starting point to move beyond the ordinary definitions of leadership to a language of leadership that is alive—"ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get a hold of something fresh" (Rhetoric, 1410b13). April et al. (2000) adopt a similar view calling for a new metaphor of leadership based upon holistic thinking and bringing together Eastern and Western philosophies. Internally this new metaphor guides us to "understand the dynamic forces that shape who we are and how we handle the exercise of power [and to recognize that] .... our view of reality is

only a view, not reality itself" (p. 18). Karathanos (1998) too suggests a leadership language that incorporates metaphors, stories, and dialogue.

Jermier (1985) and Taylor (2000), in a similar fashion, give a human voice to people and their situations in organizations using a conversational fictional-narrative and dramatic aesthetic theorizing respectively. These methods represent a radical departure from the normal tradition of argumentative criticism commonly associated with management and social science research.

Instead of an argumentative criticism of leadership, Porter (2001) calls for an intuitive and authentic *eclectic conversation* that focuses beyond an objective understanding of the human condition: the quest for *truth* isn't necessarily a rational or objective process as the enlightenment philosophers and traditional scientists would like us to believe (Johnson, 1993; Norris, 1997). Bass (1990) would like us to believe that leadership is one of the world's oldest preoccupations and is a vital component of understanding civilization. But this statement is based upon his exclusive Eurocentric approach which reduces leadership to an external relationship between leaders and their immediate followers and largely ignores the context of this relationship (Littrell, 2002). This preoccupation has stained the study of leadership with a limited Eurocentric interpretation which does not take into account the inclusive immensity of leadership. In his masterwork—*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790/1988), William Blake states: "If the doors of perception are cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (p. 73). What if the doors through which we narrowly view leadership were cleansed with an eclectic

conversation representing the unique knowledge of different civilizations based upon multiplicity, a universal breadth of interest, and a cast of characters that each “seemed to surpass the others in his unique knowledge” (Bodin, 1597/1975, p. 4)? To accomplish such a thing, this paper will attempt to address leadership from the perspective of a harmonious conversation that brings about a sublime sense of being that transcends time and place, culture and religion, gender and Self so that we may realize our blissful potential (Campbell, 1988).

*Premise*

As I sat on a bus headed to my home village of Gikongoro, I began to reminisce on my life back in Kigali. In the summer of 92, I had just graduated from the nursing program at Kigali University. Soon afterwards I got a job with the largest hospital in Rwanda and my husband and I moved into a new apartment building. Life was good. A year later we had a baby girl and shortly thereafter an adorable baby boy. Compared to the average family in Kigali, we were well off. Though there was political and military turmoil between the Hutus and Tutsis, I never expected it to erupt into the most prolific genocide in human history. Nevertheless, a day before my son's first birthday, my reality was massacred right before my eyes. My entire family was killed at the hands of Hutu rebels. Sadly, my life was 'spared' for the 'well-being' of the rebels. I was taken to a house full of women and told to lie on a bed beside another woman. We were both raped repeatedly by hundreds of men. Though I survived the ordeal, there were a number of times I thought of ending my life and I questioned my faith in humanity-how could so many 'humans' be so cruel and ruthless to one another? To add to my misery, I was diagnosed with HIV but this news paled in comparison to the painful memories I endured while I cried my way to sleep. I couldn't function normally-I was reclusive and bitter. I continued to work as a nurse, which gave me access to anti-viral drugs but soon the symptoms of AIDS became so overwhelming that I had to quit and that's when I decided to leave Kigali and live out the rest of my life with my family in Gikongoro.

As the bus pulled into my home village, I looked through the window and saw my dear old grandmother sitting waiting for me. Tears filled my eyes as I stepped off

the bus and ran towards her. I hadn't seen her since I graduated from nursing school. I held her for what seemed like an eternity. We both cried and laughed and started walking towards her house. As we approached her house, one of my nephews saw us and ran outside. Soon an entourage of family surrounded us.

That evening my grandmother and I sat outside sipping tea. Our conversation soon turned to our life during the genocide. My grandmother told me that she hid in a cave outside the village for three months. I couldn't grasp the idea of someone living in a cave for that long but she didn't seem fazed by it. In fact, she went on to say that she visits the cave regularly and often stays there for several days. When my grandmother asked me about my experience, I didn't go into too much detail about my ordeal but I could sense she felt my pain. I did tell her that I had lost faith in humanity and was looking forward to passing on. Once I told her this, we both sat in silence. Then my grandmother looked into my eyes and told me she could help me find what I had lost. Of course I didn't believe her.

You have to understand my grandmother is an ancient healer-a shaman. Before, returning to Gikongoro, she was an accomplished woman of many talents and the most learned person I know. As a world-renowned professor in Anthropology and Religion, she traveled the world, lecturing and learning. Then one day she gave up all her wealth and fame to come back to Gikongoro to learn and practice the ancient traditions of our people. Although I never really understood why she came back, she did mention to me that not all the answers are found 'out there', whatever that means.

My grandmother insisted that we both go to the cave the next morning. Though I was somewhat perplexed by my grandmother's desire to visit this cave in the

jungle, early next morning I found myself jumping out of her neighbour's car at a side road in the middle of nowhere. We trekked through the jungle for about half-an-hour until we reached a small clearing and then my grandmother turned to me and said. "We're here." I couldn't see a cave or even a rock, just a huge tree. It wasn't tall but it was at least fifteen feet wide. As we approached the tree my grandmother headed to a gap between the tree's enormous roots that rose up from the ground. She climbed into this hole and I followed. There was a huge opening underneath. The walls were made of rock so it had to be a cave. I followed my grandmother's voice deeper and deeper into until we reached a chamber within the cave and sat down beside each other and in the silence our adventure began.

#### *Analysis*

Lenore: Wow, this is quite a place.

Grandma: Isn't it? This is a spiritual place where our ancestors and I come to converse with the spirit world.

Lenore: Where our ancestors came to speak to the spirits? I don't under-

Grandma: Just sit back and relax and listen to the silence of wisdom.

(I sat in silence for a few moments until my grandmother asked)

Grandma: Can you tell me what's truly troubling you?

Lenore: I don't really know. I guess I'm fed up with life. I really have nothing left to live for.

Grandma: I think it's something deeper than that. Don't *think* about what's troubling you.



Lenore: Why not?

Grandma: There is much more to life than what we see with our eyes. There is something more profound. Try not to see *with* your eyes, but *through* them...into your heart.

Lenore: I still don't understand what you're talking about.

Grandma: Sit back and try not to think for a moment. Your mind is limited to the world outside the cave. But we are more than what we think. So do you know what's troubling you?

Lenore: Well, there are many things: the government, Rwandans, the hospital—I guess people in general. I still cannot understand how cruel and violent humans can be.

Grandma: How does it compare to being in this cave?

Lenore: It's nice being here. I feel secure. Outside, I felt abandoned by my people...like nobody even cared about me. If someone really *did* care then I wouldn't have gone through the horrors I endured.

Grandma: So what do you think happened or failed you? When I saw you at your graduation, you seemed quite happy to be a nurse.

Lenore: That seems like a lifetime ago...I can't *believe* how naive I was. To think that I had faith in the government, the hospital, my co-workers, and even my friends! It's as though the 'leaders' of my people failed me.

Grandma: So what do you *think* a leader is?

Lenore: Well, I think of a leader as a person who tells others how to act and think.

But the 'leaders' I knew 'inspired' the slaughter of almost a million people.

Grandma: So you see a leader as a person who influences others. Let's try to get beyond this view of leaders and followers as individuals.

Lenore: Something like leadership?

Grandma: Yes. What does leadership mean to you?

Lenore: I think of it as the relationship between a leader and me, the follower.

Grandma: You could think of it that way but I want you to look inside yourself and tell me what leadership *means* to you? Don't think of yourself as an ignorant person or a follower who has to venture outside the cave for a leader to provide you with answers. It is from within the cave of darkness that one can find the light of inner illumination and the essence of leadership.<sup>1</sup> Do you really think that leadership must always have something to do with 'leaders', that is, an external force that is greater than what is in you, such as a 'Great Man' who tells you what to do and think?<sup>2</sup>

Lenore: I don't follow? Can you explain what you mean?

Grandma: Try to 'think' with your heart instead of your mind. As I said before, your mind is not limited to this world. When I was working as a professor, I could not help but notice how my thoughts and actions were limited to the static language of modern society: the prose of science, statistics, ethics, and philosophy whose purpose is to define and control the world, the narcissistic discourse that dismisses other relevant views unless they are

communicated in an objective manner and a logical language that polarizes the world into black and white, good and evil, leaders and followers. This language of leadership, though it creates a world of prosperity for some, rarely, if ever, addresses the thoughts and feelings of the entire world. It is this same language of leadership that has failed you.

Lenore: So what exactly is the 'language' of leadership?

Grandma: I don't know but I can tell you the eagle understands this language and so do our ancestors. Our ancestors spoke the ancient intuitive tongue of poetry and myths (Graves, 1969) enabling them to experience the world through symbols and dynamic relationships whereas we speak a language buried in dead metaphors. We need to revive our language to understand leadership not as a static word but a living myth.

Lenore: The myth of leadership? Isn't a myth a lie?

Grandma: No, a myth is not a lie. It is the symbols and stories of the human experience (Campbell, 1988). I grew up in this tradition. Our beliefs and history are based upon an intuitive oral history. Only recently have we turned to written language to express who we are. Myths are our experiences that allow us to interpret and understand the world beyond words.

Lenore: But aren't myths prone to misunderstanding?

Grandma: Isn't leadership prone to misunderstanding too? It seems to be everywhere but nobody has a clear understanding of it (Burns, 1978) and yet people are *still* attempting to define it. I'll put it to you this way. There are three

types of truths: The third best truths are what we talk about everyday—politics, people, and science. This is the ‘truth’ of leadership that has failed you. The second best truths are misunderstood because they are beyond the intellect. The best truths cannot be spoken (Campbell 1988).

Lenore: So how can I understand the myth of leadership?

Grandma: Ideally, we should explore the best truths of leadership that are beyond words.

Lenore: How am I supposed to learn about leadership that is beyond words?

Grandma: As I said before, just sit back and listen to the wisdom of silence. “When the mind is still, the universe surrenders” (Lao Tzu, cited in Smith, 1970, p. 131).

(As I sat, I began to notice myself being consumed by the silence of the cave. My breath was the only sound I could hear, and it ceased. Then the hypnotic throbbing of my heart grew louder and louder and it ceased too. I felt as though I was completely deaf, no longer aware of my physical existence. As I sat in silence, I suddenly had the urge to get up and I started walking towards the hole as though I could see exactly where I was going. When I climbed out of the hole, I was met with an unexpected surprise.)

## Chapter Two

### *Research Methodology*

#### *Symbolism of Leadership*

(Once my eyes adjusted to the light, I was confronted with a small fire burning just a few yards ahead of me with five people sitting around it. At first glance, I didn't recognize any of them or the attire they were wearing, but then I noticed my Grandmother was among the group wearing what looked to be a tribal dress.)

Grandma: Please Lenore...sit down beside me. I know this may seem strange but please bear with me. We are presently experiencing a world that is complementary to everyday reality but is beyond our consciousness. We have transcended our everyday world that is bound by time and space to experience a holistic balance between materialistic reality, the symbolic world of human relationships, and the spiritual world of the cosmos (Egri & Frost, cited in Egri, 1997). The culture shock and confusion that you will experience when confronted by people, symbols, and spirits of humanity from all corners of the earth may be overwhelming but this is just the prelude to a world of leadership that is beyond words.

Lenore: So who are these people?

Grandma: To help us experience the profound myth of leadership, our ancestors have gathered the great spirits of the "Golden Ages" of modern civilization. These spirits embody the cultures, beliefs, and leadership of their

respective civilizations. So without further ado, could each of you introduce yourself to us?

Kalidasa: With pleasure! I am Kalidasa, as some would venture to say, India's greatest poet. I wrote for the elite court during the Gupta Dynasty in India. The Gupta period lasted from the fourth century until the mid sixth century AD.

Wu: I am Wu Zetian, the first and only Chinese Empress in the entire history of Chinese civilization. I reigned during the Tang Dynasty, which lasted about two and half centuries beginning in the early seventh century. Many Chinese historians consider the Tang Dynasty to be the Golden Age of China.

Al: I am al Ghazali, a philosopher and cleric who lived during the great Golden Age of the Muslim Empire, the Abbasid Dynasty. The dynasty came into being in the mid-eighth century and lasted for over three centuries.

Leo: I am Leonardo da Vinci. Although I am best known as a painter, my interests and talents in science, art, medicine, and philosophy to name but a few, embody the ideal of the European Renaissance; therefore, I am often referred to as a 'Renaissance Man'. The Renaissance began in Italy in the mid fourteenth century and lasted for about two centuries, spreading throughout Europe.

Lenore: This is quite remarkable! All of you symbolize or personify the spirit or ideals of the great eras of your civilization?

Grandma: You and I are both here to gain an understanding of the myth of leadership. Collectively, these individuals among us are living symbols or archetypes of a leadership that is not limited to a specific period or culture but encompasses the entire spectrum of human civilization. Instead of relying on an exclusive ideal of leadership that has been espoused by the West, we have here in front of us individuals who embody the leadership that created not only the 'Golden Ages' of their respective civilization but also, in total, represent the entire history of modern civilization. Even I symbolize the leadership of the indigenous cultures throughout the world.

Kalidasa: For example, I represent the Gupta period and the East Indian civilization. You see when most East Indians look back at this period, if they were to think of one person who embodies the ideal of the Gupta dynasty, most would identify this period with me, Kalidasa. At the same time, I symbolize Indian civilization. This also pertains to the other individuals represented here. Leo, for instance, is a great metaphor for the Renaissance and European civilization.

Leo: As I said before, many refer to me as a Renaissance man.

Grandma: Precisely! As you see everyone here is representative of these great civilizations that still exist today.

*Conversation as Method*

Grandma: I just want everyone to feel at home and comfortable while you are here with

Lenore and me. We are both thankful to all of you for being here and hope that together we can all openly express our feelings and thoughts about leadership. We are here not to analyze, define, or even to arrive at some sort of consensus about leadership. I am hoping we can have a free and open conversation about leadership, whatever that may be. Among my people and indigenous peoples throughout the world, civil decisions and religious practices are often conducted in an informal conversational manner and are open to most people who feel that they have something to say. Our oral traditions are vital for our well-being and survival since they are the source of everything that makes us who we are and they come to life through conversation. So much so, that that the creation myths among the Mayans (Burns, cited in Primus, 2002) and Navajos (Cajete, 2000) describe the world being formed by a conversation between the gods, in contrast to Genesis, where God commanded the world into being.

Leo: I entirely agree that an open conversation about leadership is essential to understand its various meanings and interpretations. I find the majority of discussions I have with people who have views on controversial or emotional subjects such as religion, politics, economics, and even leadership end up in an argument. To me, it would appear that most of the conflicts around the world originated in arguments. You could even say that an argument is a metaphor for war—two or more sides pitted against each other trying to prove the other



wrong (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Kalidasa: When I think of India, I see a civilization that exemplifies the conversational spirit. Our religion, government, and society in general, are full of ambiguities and there are few absolutes. This attitude is also reflected in India's most prominent religion, Hinduism. Conflicts arise from people fighting over absolutes. Case in point: Western science is primarily concerned with absolute truths and will argue using its own systematic language to prove a point. This is accomplished through a dogmatic system of reliability, validity, and falsifiability (Grosuch, 2002) making it virtually impossible to have an open conversation with different ideologies because it is confined to the language of science.

Leo: It is interesting you should raise this point because it reflects the ideology of medieval scholasticism. According to scholasticism, the most effective method of communication is through syllogism, statements of certainty and absolutes such as defining terms, using a standard method of inquiry, and stating axioms and laws as a given (Hooker, 1996a; Nauert, 1998) which eventually evolved into the scientific method. For instance, a scholastic discussion of leadership would begin by stating a certain definition or theory of leadership and applying it to any instance, regardless of context (Nauert, 1998).

Humanism came into being as a reaction to the scholastic interpretation of reality in the late fourteenth century. Early humanists believed that there was no certainty in anything, just probabilities. Humanists did not give much thought to defining or arriving at a point of certainty; the emphasis was on

being aware of the context of speech and the audience and inventing arguments based on this information. I guess this is why Cicero, the famous Roman politician and philosopher who is considered to be the prophet of the humanism movement, regarded an ideal conversation as one in which the subject and those involved in the conversation are not separated from one another. It is an intercourse between individuals that *includes* the human element (Remer, 1996). Cicero's teachings, which were adopted by many Renaissance humanists, condemn the authoritative use of ethics and morality to influence others, the reason being that individuals may dismiss their own judgments in favour of a higher moral authority. Instead of using their own powers of reasoning, they accept, in blind faith, the opinion of another (Remer, 1996). From what I gather, many leadership scholars regard ethics and morality to be the foundations of leadership.

Grandma: So what would a conversation among humanists be like?

Leo: Cicero, drawing upon the works of the pre-Socratic philosopher Zeno, provides a great metaphor to describe a conversation: an open palm intercourse linking ideas to actual *people* and their *circumstance* (Remer, 1996). Interestingly, Cicero rejects the use of reason because it is a destructive passion that can be excessive and uncontrollable whereas constructive emotions such as devotion, desire for truth, and especially friendship are the essential ingredients for a conversation. That is why conversations flourish best in friendships; the purpose is for all participants to freely join in the quest for truth (Remer, 1996). And instead of focusing on topics that may create tension and conflict, a

conversation will be more productive if it improves the common bonds between participants (Remer, 1996). All the while, there is an understanding between all participants that an ambiguous or probable result is the best that can be achieved. There is no requirement for consensus and there is an understanding that each individual is free to decide the truth for him or herself (Remer, 1996). Cicero called this the “boundless uncertainty” (p. 34) of conversations.

Kalidasa: Leonardo, I find your description of a conversation and Cicero’s thoughts regarding the process or ‘method’ of conversation to be quite insightful and accommodating. I agree that an informal conversation, like a friendship, provides a comforting atmosphere and the willingness to let go of certain inhibitions. This echoes the sentiments of the ‘Golden Rule’ of a conversation and really gets to the heart of what we’ve been discussing so far:

There is such a thing in society—Aristotle saw it long ago—as being over-scrupulous in truthfulness. Even a consummate liar, though generally vulgar, and therefore offensive, is a better ingredient in a company than the scrupulously truthful man, who weighs every statement, questions every fact, and corrects every inaccuracy. In the presence of such a social scourge I have heard a witting talker pronounce the golden rule of conversation to know nothing accurately. Demand no accuracy. No more common blunder in our society than to express disbelief or skepticism in a story for the amusement of the company. (Mahaffy, 1897, p. 112)

Wu: Speaking of friendship and amusement, I am reminded of a poem by Chuang Tzu (trans. 1969) that illustrates common bonds of friendship:

There were three friends  
Discussing life  
One said:  
Can men live together

And know nothing of it?  
Work together  
And produce nothing?  
Can they fly around in space  
And forget to exist  
World without end?  
The three friends looked at each other  
And burst out laughing.  
They had no explanation.  
Thus they were better friends than before. (p. 54).

(We sat in silence which gave me a moment to ponder how our understanding of leadership might be explored and expanded through an open palm conversation.)

## Chapter Three

### *Main Study*

#### *Leadership and the 'Golden Ages'*

Grandma: Considering each of you represent what historians consider to be the peak period of your civilizations, can you share a few thoughts as to what brought about a "Golden Age" or Renaissance in your time and the leadership you believe created it?

Leo: Well, in the early years of the Renaissance, Europe was recovering from "the Black Death", one of the worst plagues to ever affect the world with over one-third of Europe's population falling victim. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church, the highest authority at the time, was in complete turmoil because three men all declared themselves the Pope of Rome, the highest position in the Roman Catholic Church.

Wu: How could such a devastating environment bring forth the high point of European Civilization?

Leo: This environment fostered frustrations against the Church. At the time, the Church had almost complete authority over peoples' thoughts and actions. Basically, people either followed the Church's creeds and rituals or the Church authorities charged them with paganism and heresy, which were both punishable by death. This exemplified the classic the scholastic logic, "you're either with us or against us", prevalent during the Middle Ages which left no room for tolerance of other beliefs, faiths, or sources of

knowledge outside the Church. As a reaction to the suppressive authority of scholasticism and Church dogma, many nobles, beginning with a poet named Petrarch, began translating Roman literature, especially the works of Cicero. These translations of Cicero and other Roman authors created an intellectual, civil, and educational ideology that came to be known as humanism. The humanism movement is commonly referred to as the catalyst of the Renaissance (Nauert, 1998, Rendall, 1985).

Wu: So what was the Renaissance and humanism all about and what does this have to do with the leadership that created the Renaissance? Has it anything to do with being a 'Renaissance man'?

Leo: Well, I have to first turn to Cicero to give you some background as to what is meant by a Renaissance man. Cicero's primary teaching was *eloquence*, meaning acting as a gentleman or a proper lady. The ideal person or what came to be known as a 'Renaissance man' was a combination of eloquence, wisdom, and service to the public good and state (Carroll, 1993; Hooker, 1996a) and was representative of the virtues of the humanist education curriculum. The leadership of the day was personified by people of honour and dignity based on the supposition that gentlemen or lady can choose between right and wrong based upon their own virtue (Carroll, 1993; Nauert, 1998; Rendall, 1985). No longer is an individual bound by sin but is the center of their world—we can become what we want. To be honourable is to act like admirable individuals, and most turned to God for their inspiration.

Kalidasa: So what you're saying is something like 'follow in the footsteps of honourable respected people and you too will have honour'.

Leo: Yes, it sounds like the common definition of leadership used in the West today.

Wu: So why did it end?

Leo: At the time, Christian humanists such as Erasmus, a prominent theologian who translated the Greek Bible into Latin, didn't have any major issues with the Church except for its inflexibility, arrogance, and suppressive authority. Rather, humanists wanted to reform Christianity into a more tolerant religion that reflected the humanist love of humanity based on his own virtues and merits and promote a passive attitude towards conflict (Remer, 1996). However, the logical scholastic school of Luther and Calvin challenged many of Erasmus' arguments and the debate that led to the Reformation. The exchange between Erasmus and Luther created a severe division in the Church. Luther used logic to frame his message in absolute terms. He asked, 'Is the Bible the word of God, or isn't it?' (Carroll, 1993; Remer 1996). Luther believed to disobey the Bible was to condemn God and to suffer eternal damnation. Erasmus needed a principle to hold the foundations of his argument together. Though he realized that humans alone could not compare to the Word of God, Erasmus countered Luther by advocating the greatest virtue of the humanism movement, namely that the love of people creates tolerance for others. The practice of tolerance during the Renaissance is symbolized through the harmonious

coexistence of Greek, Roman, Medieval, Gnostic, and Christian thought to create one of the greatest intellectual, artistic, and political movements in Western history. This intellectual and artistic movement coupled with the Reformation formed the foundations of modernism and the society we live in today (Carroll, 1993).

Grandma: It doesn't really make sense that a tolerant era such as the Renaissance would evolve into the world we have today?

Leo: Good point! One of the downsides of humanism was its concept of humans as being innately selfish (Carroll, 1993). In addition, Luther used Biblical scriptures advocating man's inherent evil nature to create a society of fear and piety. This ideology succeeded in creating the Reformation and signaled the beginning of the end of the Renaissance. There was no room for ambiguity in Luther's vision that created the Protestantism movement and planted the seeds for capitalism, democracy, and the modern judicial system (Carroll, 1993; Weber, 1905/1958). Furthermore, Scottish intellectuals of the late seventeenth century such as Hobbes did not agree with the early humanists' use of Cicero's idea of probable knowledge, that is, that there is no certainty in the world (Hooker, 1996a). Hobbes rejected both rhetoric and conversation as a means to wisdom (Remer, 1996). He was also one of the first intellectuals to promote the modern ideology of leadership by calling for a decisive authority to resolve matters of ambiguity commonly associated with morality. Like Luther, Hobbes believed in absolutes and saw humans as



evil and selfish creatures that could not be trusted on their own. There was no room for tolerance or creativity in Hobbes' or Luther's vision and the leadership of the Renaissance was left in the darkness during the age of Enlightenment (Remer, 1996).

Kalidasa: Well I think the main reason why the Gupta period is considered the Golden Age of Indian Civilization is the rise of Hinduism in India. Before the Gupta Empire, Buddhism was the faith of the ruling Emperors and the large majority of Indians. When the Gupta Empire was established, the Emperors were all Hindus and they encouraged and promoted the practice of Hinduism throughout India. During this period disparate rituals, teachings, and practices were crystallized into the modern form of Hinduism (Smith, 1958).

Leo: So I gather that the leadership that led to the Golden Age of India is found in the teachings of Hinduism. But isn't the caste system a vital tradition in Hinduism?

Wu: A Chinese Buddhist named Fa-Hsien, who spent several years in India during the late Gupta period, mentioned in his writings that the caste system was well established at the time (Smith, 1958).

Kalidasa: There is no denying the fact that with the rise of Hinduism, the caste system became a defining force during the Gupta period. Although the caste system had been around for over three thousand years before the rise of the Gupta Empire, it was never as strict or widespread until the Gupta Empire (Smith, 1958). Previously, Buddhism was the prominent faith of

the Indian Emperors and India. The Buddhist Emperors did not promote or practice the caste system with the same zeal as the Hindu Emperors of the Gupta Empire.

Leo: To determine an individual's life at birth doesn't sound like a tolerant society. Besides, isn't the Gupta period regarded as the downfall of Buddhism in India?

Kalidasa: *Intolerant?* That is quite a profound statement to make considering the fact that many consider India to be the last refuge of tolerance. Where else did a large scale, non-violent revolution take place? Has there ever been a more tolerant political leader than Mahatma Gandhi, a self-professed Hindu? The Gupta Empire never really suppressed or intimidated Buddhists. Instead many considered the practices of Buddhism and Hinduism to be quite similar. So similar in fact, that Hindus ended up incorporating many fundamental practices of Buddhism such as meditation and non-violence into their own teachings (Smith, 1995). Furthermore, the Buddhist influence on Hinduism reduced the role of the caste system in religious matters (Smith, 1995). Many felt that there was no need to differentiate between Hinduism and Buddhism and eventually most Buddhists in India converted to Hinduism. I think the greatest example of religious tolerance during the Gupta Empire can be found at the caves of Ajanta and Ellora about four hundred kilometers from Bombay. Beginning in the Gupta period, these caves became a sacred area of worship for Hindus, Buddhists, and Jainists, a religion whose golden rule is non-

violence. Paintings and sculptures from these religions adorn the walls symbolizing the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of these faiths. The religious harmony of these caves captures the leadership of this period, a leadership that was welcoming to different points of view.

Al: It is interesting that both of you mention tolerance because many Muslims consider tolerance to be the primary reason for the rise of the Abbasid Dynasty, the Golden Age of the Muslim Empire.

Leo: Religious tolerance? Isn't Islam built upon the faith 'There is no god but al-Lah'?

Al: There is no god but al-Lah. This is the fundamental belief and answer to everything in Islam. During the Abbasid Dynasty, considered to be the Muslim Empire's Golden Age, Islam was only a century old. By the mid eighth century, Muslims had established mosques as far west as Spain and as far east as China. The large majority of North Africa and the Middle East converted to Islam. Never in the history of mankind has a message from the divine touched so many people in such a short period of time (Smart, 1996; Smith 1991). However, with such an overwhelming growth in the numbers of faithful, there were also major growing pains that needed to be resolved. Muslim clerics debated as to the rightful descendants of Muhammad and how to best practice the teachings of the Qu'ran (Smart, 1996). These debates fractured Islam into three sects: the Sunnis, Shias, and Sufis (Smart, 1996). The Sunnis represented the orthodox view of the Qu'ran and practiced strict accordance to it. The

Sunnis condemned the use of priests acting as mediators between Muslims and al-Lah since a mediator is considered to be a form of idolatry—a practice condemned in the Qu’ran. On the other hand, the Shias were a sect that advocated the use of rituals and priests to help Muslims fulfill the teachings of the Qu’ran. Finally, the Sufis interpreted the Qu’ran in a mystical sense (Smart, 1996). The Sufis revised the “creedal assertion: ‘There is no god but al-Lah’ to read there is *nothing* but al-Lah” (Smith 1991, p. 263). This meant that separation between al-Lah and the person is sinful and must be overcome so that the person becomes one with al-Lah (Armstrong, 1994, Smart, 1996; Smith, 1991). But the Sufis didn’t preach one single path to experience al-Lah: there are as many roads as there are humans (Vaughan-Lee, 1995). These three sects of Islam established themselves during the first century of Islam and considerable conflict arose between them. However, the Abbasid Dynasty encouraged tolerance instead of fighting between the Sunnis and the Shias (Sindi, 1999). The peace that resulted within the Muslim empire allowed people to actively pursue artistic, economic, and intellectual interests that best reflected the teachings of the Qu’ran.

Kalidasa: So what was the leadership that produced the Abbasid Golden Age? Was it religious tolerance?

Al: I just want to clarify that leadership to a Muslim has nothing to do with idolatry. The Qu’ran teaches Muslims not to worship false idols or prophets. In other words, it is up to individuals to love al-Lah as best they

can and do what is necessary to show one's servitude to al-Lah.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the Muslim understanding of leadership does not share the same views as the Western 'Great Man' or 'heroic' theories of leadership.

Leo: So there is no such thing as leadership?

Al: Leadership isn't about leaders influencing followers or idolatry. As I mentioned before, according to the Qu'ran, leadership is an individual pursuit to show one's dedication and love for al-Lah. During the Abbasid Dynasty, education was a primary means to show devotion and love for al-Lah. As the Qu'ran states "The scholar's ink is holier than the martyr's blood...Seeking knowledge is required of every Muslim." (Turner, 1995, p. 17). Seeking knowledge compelled Muslims to learn how to read and understand the Qu'ran and to learn from all cultures, faiths, and regions. This quest for knowledge eventually led Muslim scholars to obtain Greek, Roman, and Byzantine literature from Constantinople through trade and tolerant relations with other Empires (Sindi, 1999; Turner, 1995) and to find new techniques to reproduce the Qu'ran and other classic literature. Using the technology obtained from Chinese papermakers, paper mills were soon established in Baghdad (Sindi, 1999). To add to the intellectual atmosphere developing in Baghdad, the first modern university, or 'House of Knowledge' was established. This pursuit of knowledge was aided by free education for those who wanted to study the teachings of the Qu'ran. The combination of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Chinese, Indian, and Muslim thought cumulated to produce the strength and endurance of the

Abbasid Dynasty. Tolerance and the pursuit of learning are the essence of the leadership that created the greatest era in Muslim history (Sindi, 1999).

Wu: Did you know the first emperor of the Tang Dynasty received an embassy from Muhammad himself (Xie, 2003)?

Al: I wasn't aware of that. It does say in the Qu'ran to seek learning as far as China, though (Sindi, 1999).

Wu: After hearing about the passion and devotion of the newly converted Arabs, the Emperor helped them build a mosque in Guangzhou and regularly encouraged trade with them (Xie, 2003). I myself, and the Tang Emperors received Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and Nestorian Christian missionaries and permitted them all to openly spread their teachings and establish churches and monasteries in China. Foreign religions weren't just tolerated in China but also respected, especially Buddhism.

Al: Let me guess: you believe that education and religious tolerance was the leadership that created the Golden Age?

Wu: Yes, education and religious tolerance played an important role in the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty. But I'd like to add that I think that Chang'an, the capital of China at the time, is a shining example of the leadership that created the Golden Age of Chinese civilization. During the Tang Dynasty, Chang'an was the largest city in the world with over one million inhabitants (Xie, 2003). Churches, mosques, monasteries, and shrines could be found throughout the city. Trade and foreigners were

prevalent: it was the heyday of trade along the Silk Road which ended in Chang'an. It was the first and only cosmopolitan city for several hundred years and the precursor of the modern metropolitan city. It was a milieu of tolerance, of different cultures and religions co-existing alongside each other (Hooker, 1996b; Xie, 2003).

Al: You mentioned earlier that you were China's first Empress. Was there anything special about the Tang Dynasty that would allow a woman to rise to such a level of authority? When I think of a Chinese woman, I picture a petite lady with bound feet who is physically incapable of becoming an authority figure.

Wu: Confucian the bureaucrats detested idea of a female rising to such a high level of authority. To maintain my authority, I had to act like a man; I was not 'ladylike' to many Confucian bureaucrats and diminished their influence in government by providing resources and autonomy to competing institutions, primarily to Buddhist monasteries and temples (Xie, 2003). Buddhism experienced a Golden Age during the Tang dynasty. With the prolific expansion of Buddhist monasteries throughout China, Buddhism became one of the most important and influential institutions during the Tang Dynasty. Farmers in need of money or grain borrowed from monasteries (Hooker, 1996b; Xie, 2003). If one was in need of help or an education, a Buddhist monastery was the first place to go. The Buddhist scriptures and Taoist practices integrated with one another to create Chan or Zen Buddhism which became the most

prominent form of Buddhism in China (Smart, 1996; Smith, 1991). The prosperity of the Tang Dynasty wasn't limited to the borders of China. Japan and Korea greatly benefited from the Tang Dynasty, thanks to Zen Buddhists who educated the people and established economic, judicial, and political institutions (Xie, 2003). The rise of Buddhism brought one of the most sought after fruits of leadership the world has ever known: peace. Buddhists practiced a selfless leadership stance towards economic development that was, at the time, a far cry from the self-interested Confucian bureaucrats who eventually succeeded in diminishing and almost destroying the Buddhist faith in China (Xie, 2003).

### *Leadership and Religion*

Grandma: All of you stressed your religious beliefs when explaining several aspects of the leadership of the Golden Ages. What role do you believe religion plays in leadership?

Kalidasa: I have some reservations about using the word *religion*. In the West religion has been associated with monotheism; a belief in a single, all-powerful God or supernatural being. This definition does not fit well with the infinite nature of Hinduism or the non-godlike ideals of Buddhism. The West has used this concept of religion to classify and differentiate people whereas I see religion as a worldview to bring humanity together. Religion should not be limited to scriptures or dogmas but should reflect the integrated web of ideals of being human (Smith, 1991). When I look at



India, I cannot help but notice how our 'religious' beliefs have been integrated into everyday life. Our beliefs are a defining feature of being Indian and shape our lives and worldview; therefore, I feel religion is the ideal starting point for a cross-cultural discussion of views of leadership.

Leo: I don't think religion has anything to do with leadership. Does anyone else agree with me?

Al: Leo, I understand your skepticism but I'll have to agree with Kalidasa. Let's take a look at the ideology surrounding the Western concept of religion. Religion, in the Western tradition, attempts to identify, define, and measure different worldviews and beliefs, enabling the West to determine and justify what is and what isn't a religion. Even if one used the more inclusive definition of religion as a worldview, several Western ideologies also come to mind: science, capitalism, consumerism, materialism, human rights, democracy, and, of course, leadership. Considering the devotion of the faithful to these worldviews makes me think of these Western ideologies as religions.

Wu: Let us not forget that many of these ideologies grew out of Christianity: the modern nation-state and capitalism from the Protestant Reformation (Weber, 1905/1958), and the modern corporation from the Rule of Benedict (Tredget, 2002). Capitalism regards economic development as the measure of a nation's greatness. The rich culture and history of China are irrelevant when seen through the lens of the economic church. I think Kalidasa has a valid point when he refers to the West's preoccupation with

imposing their values on others *believing* they are in the right based upon their superior values (Alatas, 2003).

Leo: When did this preoccupation begin?

Grandma: I think of it as an unrelenting fixation for absolute truth. In the West, Christianity is seen as the largest, most powerful force the world has ever experienced based on the absolute greatest leader of humanity: Jesus Christ.

Leo: True. Christians believe Jesus is the absolute of both the divine and humanity—the pivotal figure of Christianity.

Wu: It's like as Archimedes said 'Give me somewhere to stand and I shall move the earth' (Carroll, 1993, p. 2).<sup>3</sup> Jesus became the point around which everything revolved.

Leo: Exactly. Jesus is the foundation of Christianity: He died for the sins of humanity. He overcame humans' sinful nature by overcoming the inevitable fate of all sinners: death (Cox, cited in Deloria, 1973; Smart, 1996). His resurrection meant that He overcame humans' evil nature and His followers, Christians, spread His Word so that others could be redeemed from sin and experience salvation. He had, as the Bible says, *charisma*: "the gift of grace" (Weber, 1915/1947, p. 328).

Grandma: Is charisma an inherent gift or grace to influence, assemble, and delegate tasks based upon moral reasoning?<sup>5</sup>

Leo: That is the popular view of charisma but it only represents one aspect of charisma. There is an immense understanding of charisma found in the

Bible. St. Paul describes charisma as “Gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, effecting of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, various kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues” (I Cor,

XII, 8-10, ASV).

Grandma: I gather from your description that charismatic leadership is something quite profound and misunderstood.

Leo: To describe the charismatic leadership of Jesus is beyond words; therefore, misunderstood. His resurrection from the dead meant that God had prepared a special type of existence for Jesus’ followers. By following the teachings of Jesus, just as His disciples did, a person can overcome his sinful nature, his alienation from God and enjoy the peace of everlasting life in heaven. No other religion offered everlasting life or the possibility of reincarnation of the body (Deloria, 1973). The Catholic and the Orthodox Church represented Jesus’ reincarnated body on earth (Smith, 1995), an institution that is everlasting and the ultimate authority for the teachings of Christ mediated through theologians and priests.

Kalidasa: Sounds like the description of the modern corporation—an entity with the same rights as a human that can exist forever.

Leo: The Christian Church can be considered to be a precursor to the modern day corporation.

Grandma: Can it be inferred that Christianity is also founded upon the Western view of leadership?

- Wu: As well as individualism?
- Leo: If you mean the individualistic leadership of perceiving success in terms of personal monetary wealth and power, then yes, Christianity can be considered a catalyst to the modern ideology of Western leadership. The Protestant movement preached a *personal* or *individual* relationship with God or Jesus whereas the Catholics and Orthodox Christians accepted the *authority* of the Church (Carroll, 1993; Smart 1996). This personal relationship with the divine brought with it the Protestant work ethic: God helps those who help themselves (Weber, 1905/1958). It also led to the belief that worldly success was a sign of God's grace and one's career or faithful labour was a calling from God to fulfill His will on earth (Weber, 1905/1958). Wealthy Christians were the chosen ones while being poor or non-Christian was a sign of spiritual damnation.
- Grandma: Do you see any linkages between the Christian Church, the Reformation, and leadership?
- Leo: Those who are faithful to the beliefs of the Christian Church or the Bible are saved and rewarded. Those who differ in their beliefs are wicked, sinful, and charged with heresy. Christians are born into sin and are looking for a way to escape their sinful nature. Modern leadership too can be thought of as being about people searching outside themselves for something or someone to guide them towards worldly success.
- Kalidasa: I think this idea isn't isolated just to Christianity and leadership.

Leo: I was just about to say that. I think leadership to the Western mind, is part of a larger manifesto or determinism to find a 'way out' of the human condition (Dussel, 2000). I believe the origins of this ideology began with Socrates and the Bible: preaching that a person's nature is inherently evil resulting in a generally negative attitude towards the human condition. Human intuition and heart are the *cause* of this predicament and the 'way out' is through the search for absolute truth. Returning to Archimedes, his "Give me somewhere to stand and I shall move the earth" (Carroll, 1993, p. 2) could be seen as trying to find a 'way out' of one's predicament. In this way, the Bible, scientific materialism and pure reasoning, the modern nation-state, and even leadership are all intellectual tools to repair the inherently evil nature of human beings.

Kalidasa: Doesn't this reflect the Muslim view of the human condition considering both Islam and Christianity arose from the Semitic tradition?

Al: Leo does make a good point but you're not quite right assuming that Islam and the Qu'ran view human nature as inherently evil. On the contrary, Muslims believe that human nature is unequivocally good and should be treated with dignity and respect (Smith, 1991).

Leo: So what would leadership be to a Muslim?

Al: Islam is about the peace that comes from surrendering one's life to al-Lah (Smith, 1995). By doing so, one become a servant or slave to al-Lah and is freed from degrading forms of self-imposed slavery such as greed, anxiety, and ambition.

Grandma: Anything else?

Al: Well, the leadership of Islam is explicitly detailed in the Qu'ran. Unlike the Bible, which can be interpreted in several different ways, we believe there is no need for interpretation in the Qu'ran. It is direct and explicit and must be read in Arabic to be understood correctly. The Qu'ran provides the answer to every question: "La ilaha illa llah" (Smith, 1995, p. 160). There is no god but al-Lah. According to the Sunnis who make up almost ninety percent of the Muslim population, the Qu'ran is so clear and direct that there is no need for authority figures to interpret the teachings of the Qu'ran.

Leo: Is this not a form of fundamentalism?

Al: If you mean Christian fundamentalism, then no. Fundamentalism that is associated with Christianity rose up during the 1920s in the United States as a reaction against the threat of the Darwinian evolution theory (Smith, 2001). Evolution challenged the creationism teachings of the Bible and thereby threatened the very authority of the Bible. Muslim Fundamentalism is as I described earlier. It has grown in recent times as a reaction to the Western educated ruling minority (Smith, 2001).

Grandma: As you mentioned earlier, the Qu'ran states that there are to be no false idols in Islam.

Al: Yes. The Qu'ran contains all there is to know about leadership in Islam. Islam considers faith and politics, religion, and society as inseparable (Smith, 1991). Because Islam is so powerful a force and all encompassing

among its followers, it has become the second largest faith in the world (Smith, 1991).

Leo: Didn't Islam spread primarily by the sword?

Al: The Qu'ran doesn't teach pacifism if that's what you mean. In a similar fashion to the Canon Law of Catholicism, there is such a thing as a just or holy war as a means of "defense or to right a horrendous wrong" (Smith, 1995, p. 168). But no Muslim holy war ever rivaled the Crusades, where the Christians drove out or murdered the entire population of Muslims and Jews when they conquered Spain. When Muslims invaded modern day Turkey, we didn't drive out all other faiths. Instead we demonstrated tolerance by allowing Jews and the chair of the Eastern Orthodox Church to remain in Istanbul. Even racism "has no place in Islam" (Smith, 1995, p. 168). On a more personal level, being a Sufi, I see leadership as a way of experiencing al-Lah in the present, in my lifetime and not waiting till death. It is a mystical leadership – a path to enlightenment - that requires three types of knowledge: love, ecstasy, and intuitive discernment (Smith, 1995).

Leo: What is this mystical leadership you are seeking? I see no role for a 'leader' here such as Western eyes might search for. This is clearly a self-guided journey.

Al: As in Christianity, for a Muslim the separation from al-Lah is a sin. Therefore, leadership for a Sufi is the ability to transcend this separation: to become an empty shell and find nothing else inside, only al-Lah (Smith

1995). These experiences allow me to forget about myself, forget about Islam and move into a boundless existence. As Rumi rightly said: “I am neither Muslim nor Christian, Jew nor Zoroastrian; I am neither of the earth nor of the heavens, I am neither body nor soul” (Smith, 1995, p. 175).

Leo: All this talk of mysticism and boundless existence reminds me of the spirituality of Hinduism.

Kalidasa: I doubt that a Westerner such as you can comprehend the vastness and spiritual nature of Hinduism. It takes an open mind to grasp Hindu leadership that contradicts both Western and Muslim thought, since Hinduism is anything but monotheistic.

Leo: Though I may not be familiar with Hinduism, I am truly interested to learn about it. Please continue to educate us. Tell us of your religious teachings and practices.

Kalidasa: Hinduism says you can have *anything* you want, including whatever leadership you are seeking. But what is it that we want? Hinduism says that we want pleasure, fame, wealth, power, and success. But these, according to Hinduism, are not what we really want and you can never have enough of what you don't really want. These wants are finite in nature and are not eternal—the interest fades as time passes. So leadership in Hinduism can be thought of as a Path of Renunciation (Smith, 1991).

Al: It sounds like the leadership of Hinduism is about denying life.

Kalidasa: Of course you can interpret it that way, but as the Yogi once said, “Your renunciation is far greater than mine, for I have renounced the finite for the



Infinite whereas you are renouncing the Infinite for the finite. If people could be satisfied by following their impulses, the thought of renunciation would never arise” (Smith, 1995, p. 21). Leadership is anything but a definition; it is all about the infinite.

Leo: But what does *infinite leadership* mean?

Kalidasa: To put it in more precise terms, leadership begins with the quest for meaning and value beyond oneself. It is looking beyond finite pleasures towards the infinite. Pleasure, fame, and success are not what we really want—these are all finite in nature. The duty of the Hindu is to serve others; it emphasizes the community over the individual. But the community is also limited to history, a finite pleasure that passes with time. The leadership of Hinduism is beyond everything that appears to be good in this world. Why? Because pleasures, fame, and success are limited, wear out, and are finite (Smith, 1995).

Al: Sounds like Hindu leadership is not of this world.

Kalidasa: Not exactly. What we really want is to be, to know, and to be happy. Why limit ourselves to seek finite pleasure when we can experience it in infinite degrees? What we want is infinite leadership—liberating everything that distances us from infinite being, infinite awareness, and infinite bliss (Smith, 1995).

Leo: Impossible! No one can have everything in infinite degrees.

Kalidasa: Well what I’m about to tell you will probably upset you: what we truly want, we can have. We can have the leadership we want. And something

even more profound: we already have it! (Smith, 1995).

Wu: This has got to be an illusion.

Kalidasa: True, life is an illusion. Who we are never dies and is unrestricted in consciousness and bliss. We just have too many distractions that prevent us from realizing this. The leadership of Hinduism looks to clean out a path stained with distractions and illusions to allow the light of the Self to radiate. This is achieved through overcoming the desires of the ego, knowing the knowledge that brings knowledge of everything, and not being bounded by physical reality since the mind is infinite and there is nothing beyond the mind that remains to be known (Smith, 1995). The Hindu view of leadership is an infinite journey from one life to the next. It is a continuous and never ending process with the infinite spirit.

Wu: Sounds too good to be true. So good in fact that Siddhartha Gautama founded Buddhism as a reaction to the perversions of Hinduism.

Kalidasa: That is true, but it was a reaction to the institutionalized form of Hinduism that is reflective of all modern faiths today, including Buddhism. Gautama saw the virtuous components of Hinduism—ritual, explanations, traditions, grace, and mystery—as perverted by hierarchy and authority. So Gautama preached a religion devoid of authority. Buddhism is not concerned about that which cannot not be known, such as the belief in the supernatural or divine idols. It is also individualistic and requires intense self-effort; it is up to the individual to tread his or her own path with no assistance from anyone else (Smith, 1995).

Wu: Don't forget Buddhism preaches equality and believes women are as capable of reaching enlightenment as men (Smith, 1995). This is a key reason why I supported Buddhism during my reign.

Kalidasa: If I were to describe the essence of leadership in Buddhism, I'd equate it with the ultimate realization of the Buddhist-*nirvana*. Nirvana is "incomprehensible, indescribable, inconceivable, and unutterable" (p. 77) and extinguishes the boundaries of the finite self. Likewise, there is negative nirvana too. It is achieved when private desire restricts the boundless self.

Wu: Buddhists differed in their methods to realize nirvana and split into two main schools: Theravada and Mahayana (Smart, 1996; Smith, 1991; 1995). The Theravada attitude is that no one saves us but ourselves, and the leadership of Theravada is an individual experience whereas the Mahayana doesn't reach nirvana until "the grass itself is enlightened" (Smith, 1995, p. 85). In other words, when reaching the brink of nirvana or leadership, the Mahayana renounces that prize and returns to the world to make it available to others. The Mahayana school of Buddhism is the associated with the Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.

Al: How would you define *Zen* and its relationship to Buddhism?

Wu: I'm glad you asked that question. *Zen* means meditation. It comes from the Chinese word *Chan* that derives from the Sanskrit *Dhyana* (Smart, 1996).

Al: So it originated in India?

Wu: Yes and no. The practice of meditation in Buddhism originated in India and was brought to China in the sixth century. As I mentioned earlier, this school of Buddhism had many similarities with Taoism because it was based primarily on the practice of meditation and contemplation rather than scriptures and doctrines (Smart, 1996). Eventually the teachings of Taoism were incorporated into Chan Buddhism. In fact, it was so similar to Taoism that the Chinese government did not target Chan Buddhist monasteries during the Buddhist persecutions in the late ninth century (Smart, 1996).

Kalidasa: What made it so similar to Buddhism?

Wu: The first verse of the Lao Tzu's (trans. 1995) Tao Te Ching beings: "The Tao that can be told/is not the eternal Tao" (¶ 1).

Kalidasa: Like *nirvana*?

Wu: Yes. The Tao transcends definition; it cannot be perceived or even clearly conceived, and it is too vast to fathom. Tao has been interpreted for the Western mind as the way of ultimate reality, the way of the universe, and the way of human life (Smith, 1995).

Leo: So the Tao is the leadership of Taoism.

Wu: It is the Way—the knowledge that to live wisely is to live in a way that *conserves* life's vitality by not expending it in useless draining ways, the chief of which are friction and conflict. The Tao reduces the friction of relationships, conflict, and nature to a minimum. And Qi, meaning to breathe, removes the obstacles that reduce the Tao's flow (Smith, 1995).

- Leo: If that's the case, couldn't a ruler lead without lifting a finger?
- Wu: A ruler who has mastered the Tao could order an entire kingdom with his or her mystical moral power. It is a leadership that rejects self-assertiveness and competition: "the ax falls first on the tallest tree" (Lao Tzu, cited in Smith 1995, p. 138) and teaches to honor the handicapped, those less fortunate, and nature.
- Grandma: So what has Taoism to do with leadership?
- Wu: Lao Tzu's (trans. 1995) Tao Te Ching has a few passages about how a leader should act: "If you want to be a great leader, you must learn to follow the Tao. Stop trying to control. Let go of fixed plans and concepts, and the world will govern itself" (¶ 57); "When the Master governs, the people are hardly aware that he exists. Next best is a leader who is loved. Next, one who is feared. The worst is one who is despised" (¶ 17).
- Al: These are some great sayings but I don't see these teachings being practiced in Chinese society.
- Wu: Well you can thank Confucius for that. Confucius believed that people were naturally greedy, jealous, selfish and sinful. He also thought that human intuition is *evil*, making us act in an unsympathetic manner to one another and future generations (Smith, 1995).
- Leo: Why is he so revered throughout China, if not all of South East Asia for that matter?
- Wu: Most of South East Asia has been influenced or educated by Confucian thought in one way or another. Initially, Confucians believed people were

inherently *evil* and must be *educated* to learn the right way to live. As time passed, Confucian teachings evolved to emphasize that people are good and this ideal has been taught in China for the last 2,000 years (Smith, 1995).

Grandma: So what is Confucian leadership?

Wu: Confucian leadership begins with *Ren* meaning humanness: the mind is incorporated in the heart. Unless the heart feels for an action, reason will justify further self-interest (Smith, 1995).

Kalidasa: How is this manifested in a person?

Wu: Confucius uses the term *Chun Tze* to denote a superior person or humanity at its best. For instance, Confucius says that what “A superior man seeks, is in himself. What the mean man seeks is in others.” (Analects, trans. 1979, XV.20).

Kalidasa: Can you explain the importance of *guan xi*?

Wu: How could I forget *guan xi*! *Guan xi* means *relationship*, which is literally the central node of Confucian thinking. Confucius believed that without human relationships there was no self. The self isn't an entity. It is constructed through its interactions with others and is defined by the sum of its social roles: a node where lives intersect (Smith, 1995).

Grandma: So empathy is central to the notion of the self?

Wu: Excellent observation! By expanding empathy, one becomes more of an ideal human or *Chun Tzu*. Of course Confucius saw a ‘natural’ order to achieve empathy: from the self, to family, to community, to nation, and

eventually humanity. Shifting one's center of concern from oneself to family transcends selfishness, and from oneself to community transcends preferential treatment. The move from community to nation overcomes parochialism, and the move to all humanity counters chauvinistic nationalism. Lastly, "in its fullness, humanity forms one body with heaven, earth, and the myriad things" (Smith, 1995, p.117).

Kalidasa: I didn't know the extent or importance of relationships or *guan xi* in China.

Wu: It is a central characteristic of leadership to many Chinese. So much so that Chinese prefer negotiation and mediation to legal action in courts. To resort to legal action is considered a disgrace, a confession of the inability to work things out. Why do you think that in Japan there is one lawyer for every 25 in the United States (Smith, 1995)?

Leo: Shakespeare would be proud!

Grandma: I must add that China seems like a melting pot for religious zeal.

Wu: It has been said "Chinese are Confucian in ethics and public life, Taoist in private life and hygiene, and Buddhist in matters relating to death, with a healthy dash of shamanistic folk religion thrown in for good measure" (Smith, 1995, p. 120). Speaking of which, we haven't heard anything about shamanism or the tribal traditions of indigenous people.

Al: Considering these ancient traditions are the precursor to all established religions and societies (Bellah, 1964), I think learning the nature of these ancient traditions can give us great insight regarding the leadership practiced before the birth of civilization.

Grandma: Thank you. But I don't consider shamanism to be a religion in the Western sense of a worldview that *explains* the world around us. My beliefs are about *experiencing* the world.

Kalidasa: But isn't that true for all religions?

Grandma: Not necessarily. Most of the religions we have been discussing come from literate cultures. Literate cultures tend to regard religion in terms of scriptures and doctrines interpreted through the *intellect* (Deloria, 1973). Whereas religion is a set of beliefs or faith based upon a conscious *choice*, for my people, and other indigenous peoples around the world spirituality and leadership are based upon an *oral* tradition of *sharing* who we are, our experience, and our survival.

Wu: Taoism is also an oral tradition that has its roots in the ancient spiritual practices of China (Smart, 1996). One of the central teachings of Taoism is that the Tao is in everything and everyone.

Grandma: Our people, too, share this wisdom that all things, both living and non-living, have a spirit or soul (Seamus & Day, cited in Egri, 1997). In the same fashion, leadership is found in all living and non-living things. We learn leadership from the trees, the mountains, the sky, and our ancestors. When my people speak of leadership, it is not subjugated to the precision and phonetic control of modern language. Instead, it is alive with rhythm, intonations, pauses, posture, chanting, narration, melody, and silence (Smith 1991). The leadership becomes part of us, ingrained in who we are and does not seep out through ink and paper.



Leo: So leadership is a living spirit?

Grandma: Put it this way, my people do not separate the *sacred* from the *profane*.

Everything is *sacred*. We dress and participate directly with the spirit of the mythical being, be it a plant, animal, or one of our ancestors. We do not have priests or congregations, meditating, or spectators. All present are involved in the ritual and become one with the myth (Bellah, 1964). You should keep in mind that religion and spirituality preceded language (Bellah, 1964; Donald, 1991). We were able to sing the song of spirit long before we spoke the language of humankind. Instead of thinking about a world through words, we feel it from the heart. This is the very nature and leadership of who we are.

Leo: Can you explain how you could *feel* leadership?

Grandma: We are feeling it right now! We feel it through our relationship with one another and our relationship with nature. We cannot feel leadership alone: it grows from the womb of Mother Earth. The Earth nurtures us giving us the greatest leadership of all and there is no reason to challenge it, defy it, fashion it, or escape from it (Smith, 1991). Even Einstein realized something similar to this when he said everything is relative, but I think it's more like everything is related (Cox, cited in Deloria, 1973).

Al: I recall you saying you were a shaman. What does that entail?

Grandma: I, like Mother Earth, am here to serve the needs of the community and nature. I help members of my community to communicate with the spirits to give them the healing and guidance they are seeking (Eliade,

1951/1964). But as I look upon my own community, especially in recent times, it is difficult if not impossible to help them.

Wu: Why is that?

Grandma: At one time, indigenous people thrived all around the world. But with the onset of colonization, our language, practices, beliefs, and even our very existence were threatened. Many have perished and we have lost so much that makes us who we are. All of this makes me think of another aspect of leadership that all of you might be able to shed some light on.

**Comment [FE1]:** When she says "our" does she mean indigenous peoples worldwide or her own people? Do you want her, as much as possible, to speak on behalf of indigenous peoples or what George Manuel called The Fourth World, then you need to reinforce that in the text. Perhaps...

Indigenous peoples once thrived around the world. But through the processes of colonization, the languages, practices, and mere existence of many of our peoples is threatened, and many have perished, much has been lost.

*Leadership, violence, and patriarchy*

Wu: What aspect of leadership is that?

Grandma: I'll put it to you this way: What will the twentieth century be remembered for?

Leo: That's obvious: World Wars I and II.

Grandma: Is this a history to be proud of? An entire century summed up by two World Wars?

Al: Isn't history told by the sword?

Grandma: That may be the case but not all religions or societies are as violent or expansionary as others. I won't beat around the bush but what I'm trying to understand is why certain religions or civilizations are more violent than others? Just look at the two most prominent religions today—Christianity and Islam. These two monotheistic religions account for countless deaths for the sake of their God or state (Galtung, 1998).

Al: Why single out Christianity and Islam. All civilizations and religions have  
a history of war and violence.

Comment [FE2]: . A question.

Grandma: I completely agree, but other civilizations limit war to their region whereas  
the Muslim and European Golden Ages are also known as periods of  
global exploration and colonization. Although these Golden Ages brought  
great prosperity and tolerance within Europe and the Middle East, the  
indigenous people of Africa and the Americas endured violence, death,  
and exploitation at the hands of these 'great' Empires.

Kalidasa: The same goes for India. The Muslim Empire invaded India and the  
Europeans raped the land of its resources and the people of their  
spirituality. What sort of leadership gives people the right and the will to  
commit such acts?

Wu: And China will never forget the Opium War.

Al: I cannot deny the destruction that has come to your people at the hands of  
mine.

Grandma: But Muslims did show some mercy and tolerance compared to the  
Europeans (Galtung, 1998; Smart, 1996; Smith, 1995). African slavery  
and the horrific and prolific genocide of Native Americans were both  
carried out by Europeans!

Kalidasa: You mentioned monotheism earlier. Is this what connects these two faiths  
and their violent aggressive natures?

Grandma: When I think of monotheism, I think of an absolute universal truth  
(Galtung, 1998). It seems to be logically pleasing to have just one

almighty God. The spirituality of my people could never comprehend or try to come to terms with only one absolute.

Leo: Institutional Christianity preaches a God who is universally valid and demands undivided faith from His followers (Galtung, 1998). The clarity of such a logical system made it easier to teach the Word and enforce doctrines.

Kalidasa: Not to mention persecuting heretics and non-believers. The classic “you’re *either* with us *or* against us” is dogmatic, rigid, and intolerant. But I sense that where there is an intellectual desire for clarity, a monotheistic faith is quite satisfying (Galtung, 1998).

Grandma: This may also explain why defining leadership is so satisfying to Westerners.

Wu: In contrast, China can be said to have a *both-and* view towards faith. Confucius AND Taoism AND Buddhism coexisted in China until the Communist revolution (Galtung, 1998).

Kalidasa: This oriental *both-and* view applies to Hinduism and its pluralistic nature as well. Hinduism has a pluralistic approach enabling individuals to *choose* their God or Gods, including the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim God. This allows for diversity of beliefs and accommodates the eclectic nature within individuals (Galtung, 1998). But I can comprehend the power of a monotheistic religion.

Leo: That may explain why monotheism among Europeans and Muslims is a quest for a universal truth...

Kalidasa: Or more like, 'we know right from wrong, good from evil. Listen to us and you will be saved'. "People are much more likely to be cruel not when they're doing something bad, but when they are convinced they're doing something good" (Lewis, cited in Pearcey, 1999, p. 3).

Wu: Like Human Rights, the moral neo-Christian attempt to define what a human being is (Ignatieff, 1995)...

Kalidasa: Or the Western scientific quest for the 'Theory of Everything'...

Grandma: And the reasoning to justify why the world *needs* a universal definition of leadership...

Al: You forgot the other side of the equation—the 'or'.

Leo: You mean *Satan*?

Wu: The classical scapegoat of dualistic monotheism. If something goes wrong, the blame doesn't fall upon rationality but irrationality (Galtung, 1998). To be irrational is to be a sinner in the eyes of the Lord.

Al: The definition of Western leadership based upon a dualistic rationality, where one side is favoured over the other, does offer a sense of clarity and satisfaction to the mind. At the same time, there is a sense of self-righteousness that characterizes leadership as hierarchical, domineering, decisive, and deterministic (Galtung, 1998). Does anyone know where these beliefs originated? To me they seem quite widespread among all civilizations despite religion, race, or ethnicity.

Grandma: The characteristics you mentioned seem to be common to all societies so they must be something we all have deep within our psyches but perhaps

not everyone shows them to an equal degree. To me they represent masculine traits.

Al: I never thought of it that way but, come to think of it, they do sound like masculine traits. So the current view of leadership is exemplified by masculinity?

Wu: Leadership as a mental, intellectual concept does fulfill our desire for order and stability in our lives (Greenfield, 1983; Neumann, 1954).

Al: Something like a hero or father figure?

Grandma: How about a god or gods?

Al: And social institutions—Uncle Sam.

Leo: But don't religion, law, government, and employment give people peace of mind, a sense of comfort (Newmann, 1954)?

Wu: They also bring conflict, violence, discrimination, intolerance, and death (Boozer & Maddox, 1993; Greenfield, 1983).

Al: Leo, doesn't the Bible preach masculine values? I recall that God created Adam in the image of *Himself*?

Leo: "God created mankind in his own image" (Genesis 1:27, KJV). In Genesis 2, God, symbolized by the wind, blew the 'breath of life' into humans, thus making them conscious and aware (Newmann, 1954): "And the Lord God formed mankind out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7, KJV).

Wu: So God is the procreator by breathing consciousness into humans;  
inspiring and giving them the intellect and will to create their own world  
(Newmann, 1954)...

Grandma: And escape their primal, savage ways (Newmann, 1954)...

Kalidasa: Giving individuals the desire and intelligence to differentiate themselves  
from others....

Wu: And thus the conscious ego was born, the quintessential essence of  
masculinity (Greenfield, 1983)...

Grandma: And the foundation of Western culture and leadership as an unrelenting  
quest to move forward, to break out of our limitations, to conquer new  
challenges, and to understand what it means to be human.

*The Ego and returning to the Source*

Leo: Are you implying that masculinity, Western culture, leadership, and the  
meaning of being human are to be found in the ego? To me the ego, at its  
basic level, is self-awareness, differentiating the self from the other  
(Greenfield, 1983). By distinguishing ourselves from the other we come to  
know ourselves through the other.

Wu: Confucius says that we know nothing of ourselves except through our  
relationship with the other (Smith, 1995).

Grandma: Who is this 'other' that enables us to experience self-awareness and why  
do we have this unrelenting desire to be detached from it, thus controlling  
it?

Leo: The Bible says that consciousness or the ego is the seed that God breathed into Adam (Newmann, 1954). As the story goes, the wind or spirit travelled over the waters to breathe consciousness into humans, thereby giving them a sense of stability and control, and an understanding of their place in a world that is separate and subservient to them (Greenfield, 1983).

Grandma: So the 'other' is nature, our physical reality?

Wu: Isn't nature symbolized by the female Mother Nature?

Grandma: Not to mention darkness, lunacy, ambiguity, irrationality, evil, and unconsciousness (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Al: While Father Sky, sun, light, good, order, and consciousness symbolize the male (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Our Father, through his paternal nature, nourishes our ego and self-awareness.

Leo: You could even say that the ego is like having a personal God who talks, directs, and even does favours for us. God nourishes our ego, making humans the centre of all things (Newmann, 1954).

Grandma: Thus creating a leadership that forges an "autonomous rational human self by separating it from the primordial unity with nature" (Tarnas, 1993, p. 6). An independent self fueled by religious, scientific, and philosophical perspectives of Western culture, all of which are influenced by decisive masculinity.

Wu: At the expense of the 'other' symbolized by the feminine.



Leo: The Bible clearly states that God the Father, who lives in the sky, is the procreator by breathing into Adam and giving him consciousness to escape his bondage with nature, Mother Earth (Neumann, 1954).

Grandma: And with the advent of the Reformation and the onset of the inquisition, the feminine 'other' was conquered through witch-hunts and the conquest of 'primitive' nature in favour of industrialization and the beginning of the age of reasoning (Tarnus, 1993). Though a patriarchal leadership did exist prior to these events, the confiscation of property along with the brutal torture and death of people, mostly women, destroyed any influential opposing voices thus clearing the path further for a male-dominated society.

Al: Which reached its climax with the strivings of 'great' men such as Churchill and Hitler, and ultimately, the atomic bomb.

Grandma: It is somewhat disturbing to think that the current study of Western leadership was spawned in the twentieth century, an era marked by two World Wars, genocide, AIDS, poverty, and starvation...

Al: Symbolizing the residue of the West's unrelenting mission to impose its superior morality and intelligence through material science, capitalism, communism, law, and individualistic democracy (Tarnas, 1993)...

Leo: A tradition completely dominated by men and male perspectives from Socrates to Freud, Ptolemy to Einstein, St. Paul to John Paul II (Tarnas, 1993)...

Wu: It makes you wonder if this is progress or tragedy. These Western ideologies end up manifesting themselves in the leadership we experience on a daily basis.

Grandma: Yet the West wasn't a dominant force in the world until the Renaissance.

So what happened during the Renaissance?

Leo: The Renaissance brought the ego back to its full glory. It put humans at the centre of everything, meaning a person could become whatever his or her will desired (Carroll, 1993). The dignity of an individual was projected through the perfection of God (Tarnas, 1993). But there was one important difference between the Renaissance and modernism. Renaissance men overcame peoples' fear of uncertainty and thrived on the feminine trait of ambiguity. It was a time where artists and scientists were one and the same. There was not one path to the truth but many, and in the rhetorical tradition people had the dignity and will to choose their own path (Nauert, 1998; Remer, 1996; Rendall, 1985). There was no precise way to describe the leadership of the Renaissance. But let us now return to Luther, the Reformation, and scholastic intellectuals such as Hobbes and Rousseau. They cringed at the very notion of an individual's ability to choose based on probabilities (Remer, 1996). They all believed there is an absolute authority that all people abide by—a categorical imperative. For Luther it was the Bible, for Hobbes it was logic and scientific materialism (Remer, 1996), and for Rousseau, an eighteenth century French political philosopher, it was the state (Pearcey, 1999). The Age of Reason was born

paving the way for further liberation of the ego from the fear of ambiguous unknowns.

Wu: Evolving into modernism and individuality that spawned ideologies such as capitalism, communism, scientific materialism, democracy, and nationalism (Carroll, 1996).

Leo: A sense of individualism based upon the tradition of a Semitic patriarchal religion, Greek rational philosophy, and Euro-American objective science which has fed the ego to such an extent that the spirit has become non-existent to the point where we consider ourselves to be *pure ego* (Tarnas, 1993)...

Al: An ego so pure that each individual becomes a one person army completely independent of 'others' but absolutely dependent on the modern state (Rousseau, cited in Pearcey, 1999)...<sup>6</sup>

Kalidasa: An ego that stands tall and recites its resounding anthem: 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...'

Grandma: And the modern priests of the ego such as psychologists, psychiatrists, managers, politicians, and celebrities of the mass media nurture our sense of individuality, self-respect, self-esteem, assertiveness, presence, and conviction of opinions (Stout, n. d.) to fuel the sense of 'excellence' in the individual. In Latin, excellence means *to go faster* (Whithouse, cited in Boozer & Maddox, 1993). You could go as far as saying that the Western interpretations of leadership act as fuel to drive the modern world's rat race.

Kalidasa: Don't be too hasty discounting the twentieth century, for a hasty person drinks tea with a fork. And many of the British elite with imperialistic egos did just that while witnessing Gandhi's silent revolution, the largest non-violent revolution ever against British occupation. Gandhi reinvigorated the Empire of Spirit by revitalizing the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jainist teachings of non-violence and transcending materialistic desires.

Grandma: How do Hindus transcend materialistic desires?

Kalidasa: The whole point of Hinduism is to forever free oneself from selfish desires and break away from the ego or the false self. Hindus believe all religious paths can be legitimate routes to the Divine Reality be it God, Goddess, nirvana or ecstasy. The infinite leadership we seek is to become our divine being and realize ultimate reality by returning to the source through the synthesis of the self and the other. For many Hindus, the worship of the divine Goddess and divine God, be it Siva and Shakti or Yogi and Yogini, represents the union of the male and female to form a state without form, gender, or self (Bhakta, n. d.).

Wu: Buddhism and Taoism do not promote or even acknowledge the self. There is no self, just the Way in Taoism, the unity of the Yin and Yang. Likewise, in Zen or Chan Buddhism the goal is to transcend the self through meditation and the pursuit of enlightenment and thus the distinctions between life and death disappear: "When Zen realization is achieved, never again can one feel that one's individual death brings an end to life" (Smith, 1995, p. 91). While Buddhism, in its non-

institutionalized form, is somewhat gender neutral, Taoism teaches the appreciation of the female and feminine myths and symbols. On the other hand, Confucian thought is the exact opposite. Mastery of the self is the ultimate realization of human freedom and is, for Confucius, the perfect ruler (Smith, 1995). Also, women, and feminine traits, are subordinate to the male. A woman is supposed to obey her father before marriage, obey her husband after marriage, and her sons as a widow.

Leo: Sounds very similar to Paul the Apostle's attitude towards women:

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife...” (Eph 5:22, DARBY).

Grandma: This is quite a contrast to our ancient past. Almost all ancient religious artifacts dating back before the dawn of civilization are sculptures symbolizing the Earth Goddess and reflecting the matrilineal social order for most of early human history (Gmbutas, cited in Marler & Wright, 1998). As I mentioned earlier, my people do not separate the sacred from the profane (Bellah, 1964). All is sacred and the spirit is everywhere. Our ceremonies reflect the masculine and feminine of life. Through these ceremonies and myths we return to the spiritual source, Mother Nature. The lodge and cave symbolize the womb, the mountains represent the pregnant belly just as the trees represent the umbilical cord and the floods the amniotic fluid released at birth (Renggli, 2002), along with the stone symbolizing the egg and the moon, the menstrual cycle. The path leading to the female is the symbolic male such as the stem of the sacred pipe or

the path leading into the cave or lodge (Brown, 1982). We become the spirit by eliminating our self-awareness and becoming part of the scared (Bellah, 1964), reflecting the androgynous and scared unity of our rituals and beliefs (Beyman & Kremer, 2003). This is quite a contrast to the unreachable God, a concept which creates antagonism between the dichotomies of the sacred and the profane, good and evil, male and female. The Biblical story of the masculine procreator God soaring over the waters of Mother Earth in Genesis II as well as the myths of the good Hero conquering the evil serpent both symbolize the emancipation of the good masculine over the evil feminine (Greenfield, 1983). While the leadership of the indigenous people is becoming one with the 'other', the Western ideology seems to point to leadership as a great force or 'hero' who will liberate us from the unknown feminine.

Leo: I agree that the Bible is fraught with masculine symbolism at the expense of the feminine but the central teaching of the New Testament is an unconditional love for the Lord (Smith, 1995). Jesus says the greatest commandment in the Law is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40, NKJV). But what is love? Of course, being a male-dominant religion, Christianity is obsessed with finding out the literal truth, which means defining and following the instructions of a literal

definition. But I believe that love isn't a definition but a symbol. To the Greeks and Romans the female Goddesses Venus and Aphrodite both symbolized love.

Kalidasa: Is the Mona Lisa your own personal love goddess?

Leo: If someone tried to figure out all the hidden meanings in my paintings, they could write a book about it, a guaranteed best seller! You could say that the Mona Lisa is a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics representing a Goddess of Love. So love requires one to seek out the feminine and it is through love that one transcends the ego. Jesus was a man whose human ego had disappeared, and who dedicated his life to the love of God. So much so that his disciples could see the actions of God through Jesus: The statement, "We have seen his glory, full of grace and truth" (Smith, 1995, p. 213) characterizes charismatic 'gift of grace' leadership as experiencing a love that transcends the self.

Wu: Just as Lao Tzu (trans. 2000) says: "And with someone who dotes on his life as if it *were* the whole world,/To him we can turn over the world" (p. 94).

Al: Islam is the inner struggle or jihad to dedicate or surrender one's life completely to al-Lah (Sakinah, 2002). This represents the leadership of renouncing money, status, and worldly ambitions and in doing so becoming free of all other kinds of servitude (Smith, 1995). For Sufis, it is the leadership of remembering al-Lah at every moment in every breath and forgetting the ego (Vaughan-Lee, 1995). al-Hallaj expresses this best:

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I:  
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.  
If thou seest me./thou seest Him,  
And if thou seest Him, thou seest us both. (Armstrong, p. 228)

Jesus, among Sufis, is considered the prophet of the interior and some even amended the profession of faith to say: “There is no god but al-Lah and Jesus is his Messenger” (Armstrong, 1994, p. 225). But love also has a dark side. An old Persian tale tells that Satan loved God so much that he wanted him all to himself and refused to bow to his creation, humans. For refusing, God cast Satan out of heaven (Campbell, 1988). Love is not a selfish emotion but a joyous union with the Beloved. Is there a greater hell than to be away from the one you love? The separation between God and us is the greatest sin and to overcome this gap, we must overcome ourselves and be one with God.

Kalidasa: It sounds like all these religions have strong mystical traditions of transcending the ego through love, darkness, intuition, silence, meditation, and unconsciousness.

Wu: All of which reflect feminine qualities and are not ‘man-made’.

Al: Mysticism is *passive*. It is an intuitive knowledge of knowing that we are already one with the infinite and, as Rumi, the great Sufi poet, explains, there are many paths to this truth: “Ways of worshipping are not to be ranked as better or worse than one another” (Armstrong, 1994, p. 242).

Kalidasa: Mysticism is the ability to penetrate our being more deeply than any religion that solely relies on the intellect (Armstrong, 1994).



Al: But both Islam and Christianity in the orthodox tradition are *active* monotheistic faiths ensuring that God's will is done on earth and are not much concerned with the passive approach of mysticism (Armstrong, 1994).

Grandma: Is this true of Christianity?

Leo: You could literally say that the Western mystic traditions were lost with the lost Gospels. In the Gospel of Thomas (1995), Jesus, when speaking about Mary to Peter, teaches the greatest leadership principle to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven." (§ 114).

Grandma: The greatest principle of leadership is to become male? This passage contradicts everything we've been talking about so far.

Leo: Let me finish. Before making this statement Thomas writes:

Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, "These nursing babies are like those who enter the (Father's) kingdom." They said to him, 'Then shall we enter the (Father's) kingdom as babies?'

Jesus said to them, 'When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter the (Father's) Kingdom'. (§ 22)

In the Catholic tradition, our *body language* embodies this leadership too.

We stand and recite symbolizing the masculine and kneel in silence

symbolizing the fetal position during mass.

Al: Islam too stands and kneels five times a day during prayer...

Wu: And all religious traditions symbolize prayer with the unity of the left and right hand.

Grandma: But there is also the *sound* of leadership which is best represented among indigenous cultures throughout the world by the beating of the drum. Father Sky descends to come in contact with Mother Earth creating the sound of life, the beat of the heart and awareness. This is the sound of the greatest and oldest story ever told, the story of our leadership at birth when we cross the great threshold into the unknown (Campbell, 1947).

Kalidasa: As I mentioned earlier, Hindus believe in an infinite leadership that comes into being through the sound of AUM. It is the essence of all reality symbolizing the great renewal process of being: A for *creation*, U for *preservation*, and M for *dissolution*. All words produced by the human voice originate and cease in AUM (Kumar, 2001).

Grandma: Like the cyclical nature of life: birth, death, and re-birth. Where time is continually repeating itself and becomes eternal (Cajete, 2000).

Leo: Sort of like the Christian view of the *creation, fall, and redemption* of humans and of the modern world as well. Humans are *good* but born into *sin* and spend their entire lifetime trying to *redeem* themselves from their sinful nature. Even the modern society, according to Rousseau in his revolutionary work, the *Social Contract*, follows this same model: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (Pearcey, 1999, p.1).

Individuals must break all social ties that are confining their freedom, thus

Comment [FE3]: Spelling of this person's name is inconsistent.

“releasing the individual from loyalty to anything except himself” (p. 1).

Whereas Christians look towards the Church for redemption and liberation from sin, secular individuals enter a social contract with the state to liberate them from the chains of society. However, the Western worldview is linear, not cyclical: one’s entire life is consumed and preoccupied with redeeming and liberating oneself from the chains of ‘the other’.

Al: Leadership can also be reduced to a linear causal relationship between individuals where leaders liberate or transform followers.

Wu: In the same manner leadership, like linear time, can be thought of as a progressive path to realize foreseeable goals in an efficient and effective manner (House, 1971); a leadership that educates us to spend an entire life setting and trying to achieve goals so that we may be redeemed (Deloria, 1973).

Grandma: But “when you’re on a journey, and the end keeps getting further and further away, then you realize that the real end is the journey itself” (Durkheim, cited in Campbell, 1988, p. 285). It is difficult to comprehend leadership as a renewal process if one is fixated on efficient and effective attainment of goals and objectives through a one-dimensional scientific interpretation of reality. While the West interprets everything as relative and dependent upon the situation,<sup>7</sup> my people experience the world on numerous levels beyond the senses. Leadership to my people is an understanding that the world around us is not relative but related (Cajete, 2000).

Kalidasa: Speaking of dimensions, I almost forgot about the fourth dimension of AUM—*silence* (Campbell, 1988; p. 286).<sup>8</sup> It is through silence that we return to the source and experience the supreme ordeal: the expansion of consciousness and spiritual growth (Campbell, 1947). It is the place where we experience leadership as “moments of epiphany, of revelation, of the radiance” (Campbell, 1988, p. 287), and it is in silence we listen to the creation of the Dawn:

Listen to the Exhortation of the Dawn!  
Look to this Day!  
For it is Life, the very Life of Life.  
In its brief course lie all the  
Verities and Realities of your Existence;  
The Bliss of Growth,  
The Glory of Action,  
The Splendor of Beauty;  
For Yesterday is but a Dream,  
And To-morrow is only a Vision:  
But To-day well lived makes  
Every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness,  
And every To-morrow a Vision of Hope.  
Look well therefore to this Day!  
Such is the Salutation of the Dawn! (Kalidasa, trans. 1948, p. 301)

Lenore felt the warmth of the rising sun touching her shoulders. She turned to look into its radiance and when she looked back into the circle, she was alone with her thoughts in the stillness of the new day.

## Notes

1. Many Pythagoreans were philosophers and as well shamans. They worshiped the God Apollo who was not only the God of Reason but also the God of the Underworld. It was quite common for Pythagoreans to set out on vision quests by entering into the darkness of caves to experience inner illumination. Plato used this idea in his Allegory of the Cave, albeit in a reverse way: those inside the cave were ignorant prisoners and illumination could only be experienced by escaping this prison.
2. James Burns in his groundbreaking book *Leadership*, published in 1978, was one of the first scholars to characterize leadership not as a person but as a process. Prior to Burns' work, leadership scholars were primarily interested in the traits that set leaders apart from non-leaders (e.g., Great Man theories). Burns departed from this notion and saw leadership as a relational process between leaders and followers founded upon moral reasoning (Sorenson, 2000)
3. The servitude of Muslims surrendering themselves to al-Lah reflects Greenleaf's (1998) servant leadership theory. Individuals achieve the leadership they are seeking by expanding their empathy to fellow colleagues and institutions. It is a leadership of self-awareness where one realizes that by serving others his or her interests or satisfaction is being served as well.
4. Archimedes (320 BC) entire saying "Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand, and I will move the world" refers to the power and limits of technology. Many regard the greatest invention humans ever created as language. Literate cultures look towards reasoning and abstract absolutes such as the Word of God or universal laws

for guidance while oral cultures, whose traditions precede and transcend language, tend to be more reliant on the symbolism of nature to arrive at an understanding.

5. Charismatic leadership theory (House, 1977), transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1993; 1998; Burns, 1978), and visionary leadership theory (Sashkin, cited in Mello, 2003) all share a common meaning: “leaders infuse ideological values and moral purpose into organization that induces commitment and organizational citizenship” (Mello, 2003, p. 351).

6. Rousseau’s idea of absolute commitment to the state is similar to House and Podsakoff’s (1994) outstanding leadership theory. The influence of outstanding leaders creates an atmosphere where followers are committed to the vision of the leader, place the well-being of the organization above themselves and their fellow colleagues, and exemplify outstanding corporate citizenship.

7. Situational leadership models and theories are based upon the notion that leadership style is *relative* to the situation. Some of the more prominent theories and models are: The contingency model (Fiedler, 1967) which argues that leadership style is either task or relational oriented and is relative to the different categories of situations: relations, task structure, and position power. The Path-Goal leadership theory (House, 1971) suggests the objective of leaders is to choose the appropriate leadership style relative to the situation so that goals of the organization can be achieved in an efficient and effective manner. There are several other contingency or situational leadership theories such as Hersey & Blanchard’s (1969) situational theory where the appropriate leadership style is relative to the subordinate’s maturity

and readiness and Vroom's (1964) model that determines the appropriate leadership style when making a decision.

8. Silence, according to Cicero (106-43 BC), is one of the great arts of a conversation: "there is not only an art, but eloquence as well." Dorothy Nevill (1826-1913) explains that "The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." Yet according to Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) "Silence is the ultimate weapon of power." Lastly, as noted in the text of the thesis, Campbell (1988) says the best truths are beyond words.

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