



PREFACE

The Dance of Leadership is about understanding leadership not as a science but as an art. Here we bring together the experiences of artists, musicians, and especially dancers, on the one hand, and leaders in business, government, and society, on the other, to clarify the artistic elements of leadership. The result is a new way of thinking about leadership, a new language for describing the act of leading. When leadership is exercised, groups and organizations are given purpose and direction, and people are “energized”—their lives take on new emotional meaning and their interpretation of the world shifts, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes dramatically. And that is an art, not a science.

The lessons contained here can be employed by anyone who aspires to lead, at any level. They apply to leadership in families, in small groups, in clubs, in large organizations, even in whole societies. For some these ideas will come naturally. For others, more work will be required. In either case, these ideas will provide a new focus on what leadership is about and will enable all of us to work more consciously on building our leadership skills. Like other arts, the art of leadership resists explanation, but it can be made more clear and accessible to those who wish to practice it.

In the development of these ideas, we have been helped and supported by an important group of friends and colleagues. We want to give special thanks to Vesna and Louie Ajic, Jess Alberts, Maria Aristigueta, David Baker, Dick Bowers, Terri Brower, John Bryson, John Byrne, Heather Campbell, Kelly Campbell, Russ Cargo, Tom Catlaw, Linda Chapin, Howard and Marilyn Coble, Don Coons, Bob Cunningham, Craig and Lisa Curtis, Cyndi and Don Cutler, Mary Ellen Dalton, Peter and Linda deLeon, Michael Denhardt, Michael Diamond, Tom Downs, Suzanne Fallender,

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We also deeply appreciate the time we spent with those we interviewed and those we have worked with in *The Dance of Leadership Workshop*. By convention, we note without citation where we have drawn quoted material from our interviews, and a list of interviewees is contained here as an appendix. We have also drawn on the experiences of many workshop participants, though we have chosen to fictionalize their stories, which appear scattered throughout the text. The wonderful insights that all these people have provided are the raw material from which this book has been constructed. We deeply appreciate their contribution to the dance!

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Exploring the Art of Leadership

A corporate executive describes his job as finding the speed to take his company around the corners just on the edge, "right before we go off the cliff, not slower, not faster."

A member of a work team waits until just the right time to make her suggestion and, in capturing the moment, activates and energizes the group.

A college basketball coach acknowledges that he is doing his best coaching when all he has to do is sit there and watch his team play.

A little girl on a playground skips and dances and twirls from group to group. As she does so, the rhythm of each group changes to match her own.

Each of these people, from the corporate executive to the little girl on the playground, is leading. But they are also taking part in a dance. They are moving expressively and rhythmically, leaping into the future with confidence and imagination. They are acting based on intuition and empathy, relying on their "feel" for the situation. And they are fully in the moment, completely present to what is happening here and now. Leaders like these excel because they can sense what is around them, because they have practiced their craft, and because they trust themselves and others enough to modify and improvise their steps as they go. They are engaged in the dance of leadership.

If you listen to leaders talk about what they do, they will tell

you that there is at least a significant part of leadership that relies on forces that can't be explained in rational or scientific terms. That's why so many leaders say, "Leadership is an art, not a science." There is an aspect of leadership that remains a mystery. There is that "special something" that some people seem to have, either innately or by training and experience, that sets them apart. But no one seems to be able to tell us how to prepare for and build this more "artistic" side of leadership.

In this book, we take seriously the notion that leadership is an art and we explore some of the ways people in business, government, nonprofits, and other organizations develop the artistic side of their leadership. If leadership is an art, then one way to learn about leadership and especially about how leadership might be developed is to study the more traditional arts, to see how people in those disciplines approach their work, and then to apply those lessons to the art of leading.

That was our approach here. We began by first learning as much as we could about art, music, and especially dance, then conducting a series of in-depth interviews with some of this country's premier artists, especially dancers and choreographers—people such as David Parsons, whose Parsons Dance Company is one of the leading exponents of modern dance; Liz Lerman, whose Liz Lerman Dance Exchange has brought dance together with civic dialogue for Americans of all ages, races, and interests; and Septime Webre, artistic director of the Washington Ballet and one of the truly "cutting edge" choreographers in contemporary ballet.

From these artists, and many others, we learned about some of the elements that artists, musicians, and dancers consider as they construct their art. We learned about the importance of space, time, and energy in shaping the human experience, we learned about the many and varying rhythms of human interaction, we learned about the importance of images and symbols in communicating human emotions, we learned about improvising with creativity and spontaneity, and we learned about the importance of focus, passion, and discipline in a performance and indeed a career.

Perhaps most important we learned that artists, musicians, and dancers clearly believe that these artistic elements can be taught or at least improved upon. While leaders might say that "timing

is everything” or realize that much of their work is actually “improvised,” artists not only understand these ideas, but they have developed approaches and strategies for *learning* the skills applicable to these problems. Art, even the art of leadership, can be developed, and those in the more traditional arts can provide excellent advice on how to go about that.

Having learned some of the lessons that the arts hold for leadership, we turned back to the world of actual leaders and asked how these ideas might apply. In some ways the parallels were obvious, as in the examples of “timing” and “improvisation.” But beyond that, thinking of leading in terms of art gave us new insight into what leaders do and how their skills might be improved. In order to test these ideas, we conducted in-depth interviews with a number of important and thoughtful leaders in business, government, nonprofit organizations, the military, higher education, and the world of sports. These interviews included people such as George Fisher, who was chairman and CEO at Kodak and previously CEO at Motorola; Jane Hull, the first woman to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives in Arizona and later secretary of state and then governor; and Phil Fulmer, who guided the Tennessee Volunteers football team to a national championship in 1998 and was recognized by the Football Writer’s Association as the national “Coach of the Year.” With these leaders, and many others, we talked about the artistic side of leadership and discovered that many of the ideas we had drawn from the arts did indeed resonate with their experience and, in many cases, caused them to understand that experience in new and more textured ways. Most important, they helped us develop new ways of thinking about how the skills of leadership might be taught and learned more effectively. In this book, we will use the words of these artists and leaders to convey some central ideas about the art of leadership.

In the remainder of Chapter 1 we will explore more fully how we see the connection between art, music, and especially dance, on the one hand, and leadership, on the other. We will also outline a new way of viewing leadership, one drawn directly from the arts. In Chapter 2, we examine some of the lessons that this new perspective suggests, starting with the idea that artists see the world in a way quite different from others, that they see the

world in terms of an especially intense and textured interplay of space, time, and energy that brings special context and dynamism to the work they do. In the chapters that follow we explore the more specific lessons we can draw about the dance of leadership, ideas such as the rhythms of human interaction, including the important notion of timing (Chapter 3), working with images, symbols, and metaphors, especially in interpersonal communications (Chapter 4), improvising with creativity and spontaneity (Chapter 5), and the importance of focus, passion, and discipline in art and leadership (Chapter 6). In the final chapter (Chapter 7), we consider how thinking of leadership as an art can assist in the development of leadership skills.

What Is the Art of Leadership?

Consider the experience of Ron Bennett. Ron worked for many years as an executive with a company making household appliances, such as washers and dryers. He directed a research and development unit, most recently working on computer-controlled dispensing of detergent based on how dirty the clothes are. Ron came to observe over the years that while some of the managers of his division were more successful than others, the successful ones didn't always use the same style or approach. One of the most beloved and successful managers had been Chris Ramsey. Chris was gregarious and warm, and made people in the whole division feel a sense of camaraderie that had not existed before. He was enthusiastic and always ready to offer words of support, encouragement, and congratulations for a job well done. Although Chris had been promoted to the corporate office a year earlier, staff still talked about what a genuinely caring person he was and how he somehow made them feel important and want to do their very best.

But the new "boss," someone who had been brought in from the outside after Chris left, was quite different. From his first day on the job, Phillip Hornback almost seemed to be the opposite of Chris. He was more dignified than warm, and a bit of an introvert. His reputation was as an honest and honorable man, and he showed himself to be respectful of others' ideas. But he was quiet and tended to watch and listen rather than lead discussions at staff meetings. Although he was never unkind, when he did speak

he was matter-of-fact, task oriented, and focused on setting and achieving short- and long-term goals.

Ron at first found this approach unsettling, and was concerned about how other people were reacting to such a different leadership style. He asked several of his longtime friends in the division what they thought. Somewhat to his surprise, they were very positive. Laura Evans, whom Ron considered one of the most thoughtful people in the division, felt that it was “about time” that someone came focused on accomplishing tasks and setting and achieving ambitious goals. “Someone needs to focus on goal setting and performance measures and make sure that we’re getting the work done.” After all, she said, “If we can’t show a consistent profit, we’re all going to be looking for jobs somewhere else. And we’re all way too old for that!” More importantly, she said, “he seems like a good, decent man. I trust him.”

Likewise, Jim Jacobs, Ron’s closest friend, seemed to have a favorable impression of his new boss. “You know, Phillip’s style is not what we are used to,” Jim told Ron, “but I completely respect him. He really has some good ideas about how we can improve the work we do here. And his technical expertise is just superb. I’ve never seen a nonscientist that knows washing chemistry better. He’s helping me to be better at what I do. He’s going to put us out front, you know.”

Ron mulled over his friends’ comments. How could two such different leaders inspire trust and confidence among the same people doing the same work?

Many people say that they don’t know anything about art, but they know what they like. The same could be said of leadership. Most people would be hard pressed to define good leadership, but they know it when it’s there and they miss it when it’s not. In the case of both art and leadership, different individuals react differently. One person may respond quite enthusiastically to a painting or a piece of music while another may find it atrocious. A particular approach to leadership may deeply move one person while it leaves another flat. To the untrained eye, it may seem entirely subjective. But the more you know about either art or leadership, the more you are able to discern differences between good and bad, profound and trite, inspiring and boring.

Good leadership, like art, touches us. It stimulates not just our minds, but our emotions, and makes us come alive. Certainly we expect that leadership will help us to accomplish things we might not otherwise accomplish, and so we look for results. But leadership also touches us in more personal ways. Good leadership excites and activates us. Good leadership inspires and encourages us (that is, it gives us courage). Good leadership makes us feel better about ourselves. It is this emotional side of leadership that provides the energy to move and to change small groups, large organizations, and even whole societies.

Leadership is about change, moving people in new directions, realizing a new vision, or simply doing things differently and better. Change, in turn, involves deeply rooted human values. These are the ideas and commitments—about oneself, about others, and about one’s work—that people cling to based on faith and conviction. It is in large measure because of these values that significant change is almost always accompanied by emotional turmoil.

Put simply, people are attached to their values. When people choose to follow another with energy and resolve, when they commit to engage in a shared effort to transform a group, an organization, a community, or a society, they do so based on an emotional connection, a faith in something better, a belief that the change is both well thought out but also consistent with their own ideals and values. We may go along with monetary incentives, management reports, and performance targets, but only leadership that touches our emotions and is consistent with our values will engage our full energy. Real leadership speaks to matters that express deeply seated feelings, emotions, and indeed, basic human values.

Since the world of art speaks in the language of feeling and intuition, it’s not surprising that many leaders have considered leadership an art. For example, Max De Pree, chairman emeritus of Herman Miller, Inc., draws an analogy between the leader of a jazz group and a leader in industry. In this view, leaders are seen as rarely able to write and conduct a “symphony” that others play. More often, they are called on to be fully integrated into the performance themselves, to play along with others, like the leader of a jazz ensemble improvising: “By establishing the theme, the

leader of the ensemble . . . can chart the basic pattern and direction in which the performance will move. By setting the tone and the tempo, the leader gives focus to the spirit and energy of the group. By modeling effective and responsible performance in their own solos, leaders can energize and articulate the performance of others. But it is the performance of others that is critical.”

Similarly, a number of writers on management have at least alluded to the connection between leadership and art. For example, management theorists James Kouzes and Barry Posner write that “Leadership is a performing art . . . [in which leaders] enact the meaning of the organization in every decision they make and in every step they take toward the future they envision.” In much the same way, professors Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal argue that managers who would lead in the future will require high levels of personal artistry to respond to the ambiguous and paradoxical changes they will face: “Artists interpret experience and express it in forms that can be felt and understood, and appreciated by others. Art allows for emotion, subtlety, ambiguity.”

Though there are a few references to the parallels between art and leadership in the management literature, even these are typically brief and passing metaphors, acknowledgments that some leadership skills are difficult to describe in rational terms. And while several writers examine certain approaches or behaviors that are rightfully described as artful, at least in the sense that they can’t be explained scientifically, the art of leadership has not been developed in any detail. Moreover, these works fall short of suggesting that leadership may share even more with art than the simple metaphor of leadership as an art might suggest. Our position, to the contrary, is that if leadership is an art, then there may be much to be learned about leadership by asking how those in the visual arts, music, and especially dance approach their disciplines, and then by translating that material back into the world of leadership.

In addition, we want to focus specifically on leadership and not management. We want to understand the act of leading wherever it occurs, but since leadership and management are so easily confused, we need to begin by distinguishing between the two. Management, we would say, is concerned with rational processes that largely operate within a given space and time, while leader-

ship is concerned with more intuitive processes that move beyond the existing limits of space and time. Management works within a world of order and regulation, while leadership works within a world of openness and change.

But the matter is more than a little confusing because there is some overlap between these terms. We want managers to lead. And we recognize that leaders often engage in behaviors that are more like management than leadership. It helps if we think about leadership not as a particular role in a group or organization but as a function or activity that many people engage in from moment to moment and day to day. We tend to think of leaders as those “at the top,” those in formal positions of power and responsibility. But leadership can also be viewed as a specific type of action, so that we can distinguish between the act of managing and the act of leading. What is it that people do when they are leading? What is distinctive about leading as a human activity? We think that the essential element of leading is the effect this activity has on others, specifically the fact that leadership energizes other people. (We’ll explore this definition in more detail later.)

We find leadership of this type highly artistic. Leadership, like art, rarely involves algebra, calculus, or analytic geometry. There’s no scientific answer to the most difficult problems that leaders face, and those problems are not amenable to solutions sought through the application of rational analytic techniques. In both art and leadership there is always incomplete information and, indeed, that’s a central part of the problem. If there were complete information, then perhaps we could apply scientific techniques. But information is never complete. Leaders, like artists, have to move from moment to moment, trying one thing and then another until a path reveals itself and they can move on. The cubist painter and poet Georges Braque once wrote, “In art there is only one thing that counts: the thing you can’t explain.” One might also say that the only thing that really counts in leadership is that which you can’t explain.

The difference between management and leadership is quite similar to the difference between science and art. Indeed, some have said that the artistic dimension of leadership is exactly what distinguishes it from management. When you draw up lists of

personality traits of good leaders, such as honesty, credibility, intellect, insight, strong communications skills, and so forth, you find that those lists contain many items that apply to managers as well as leaders (indeed, all that we just mentioned do). But if you identify those tasks that leaders undertake and the skills that they need beyond those of managers, these are the items that associate most easily with art. They have to do with perspective, intuition, rhythm, timing, and developing a sense of the situation. Business executive Chester Barnard put it well many years ago when he wrote that, for executives, the essential skill is “the sensing of the organization as a whole and the total situation relevant to it. It transcends the capacity of merely intellectual methods, and the techniques of discriminating the factors of the situation. The terms pertinent to it are ‘feeling,’ ‘judgment,’ ‘sense,’ ‘proportion,’ ‘balance,’ ‘appropriateness.’ It is a matter of art rather than science, and it is aesthetic rather than logical.”

At its core, leadership is an art, not a science. Without art, leadership is bound to only those solutions that rational analysis and managerial control can provide. Without art, leadership is merely management. Regardless of the context in which one works, from church groups to small businesses, to nonprofit organizations, to large corporations, to communities, to the military, and to the top levels of government, more than management is needed from our leaders. It’s not surprising, then, to find the following definition of leadership from one of the most significant public leaders of our time, former secretary of state Colin Powell: “*Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.*”

Drawing Lessons from the Arts

Raul Martinez almost got it. Raul had served since the early eighties as vice president for corporate giving for a major health care products firm. He considered himself someone who was deeply engaged in the community and he thoroughly enjoyed being able to guide corporate investments so that community groups would benefit. Consequently, he often found himself at cultural events, ranging from community arts performances to the Pennsylvania

Ballet. He also considered himself a student of leadership. After all, he was in a position from which he could watch major corporate leaders interact not only with people inside the company, but also with people at all levels in government, in nonprofits, and in the business world.

One night, while watching a particularly outstanding performance by a local jazz dance group, Raul suddenly recognized that what the dancers were doing was the same thing he tried to do at work. The dancers were trying to connect with the audience, to draw them into the music and the dance. They were trying to build an emotional connection with people in the audience that would energize and excite them. When the dancers succeeded, they seemed to then draw on that energy from the audience and build on it. And, Raul reflected, that's exactly what leaders do. He thought, "If only we could bottle the energy that's on that stage tonight and take it into the corporate world." But it was a passing thought, one that would have been considered a little "on the edge" back at the office and one he didn't even recall the next day.

What is it that the arts have to say that is really relevant to leadership? This is the question we asked as we began this book. As we have said, our thinking was that if leadership is an art, then it only makes sense for those interested in leadership to draw upon other artistic disciplines. There are many artistic fields in which there is a long and substantial intellectual tradition and in which devices for training those entering the field have been well worked out. That's why we have schools of art, schools of music, and schools of dance. People in the world of art understand what art is all about and they regularly develop the artistry of aspiring painters, musicians, and dancers. Maybe they know something that those of us interested in leadership don't.

We began by learning as much as we could about art, music, and especially dance, and by talking with some of the most notable figures in those fields. We wanted to learn how they approach their work and how their ideas and approaches might help in studying and learning the skills of leadership. What we found was striking. Not only are art and leadership closely parallel; in many cases they seem indistinguishable. Take, for example, the

following quotation: “We must be willing to take risks, committed to the experience, and ready to be vulnerable and open to the self-discovery that is a natural product of the process. We must be willing to listen to others and to be generous with them. An active balance of self-fulfillment and response to others’ needs has to be maintained. Basically we need the courage of our own impulses and responses qualified only by a healthy concern for the people we are working with.” While we might easily assume that this quotation came from an important leader or a best-selling book on leadership, in fact the quotation comes from an introductory text in dance!

The dramatic similarity of those lessons being taught in schools of dance and those we find essential to leadership suggests that the parallel between art and leadership is extraordinarily compelling. This conclusion was reinforced as we talked with dancers, choreographers, and artistic directors working with major dance companies. While we draw lessons from all the arts here, we focus in this book primarily on dance and choreography. Why do we think these fields might prove particularly helpful in generating lessons about leadership?

First, dance takes place in a moment in time, then the moment and the dance are gone forever. Unlike painting, in which the artistic products are available for people to see at any time, dance, like music, is fleeting. The performance occurs and then it’s over, left resident only in your memory. Dance is, in many ways, an illusion. It’s not something you can hold in your hand. It’s not something that you can touch. It’s not something that you can smell. It’s not something you can come back to and revisit the next day or the one after. But, the irony is, as choreographers Lynne Blom and Tarin Chaplin point out, “to create the illusion, you need the reality of the articulate human body, sweating and thumping along.”

Leadership is, of course, very much the same. The act of leading is not something that can be captured and preserved, even in these days of digital cameras and streaming video. Leadership occurs in a moment and then it is gone. As Walter Sorrell puts it so eloquently and in a way that speaks to leaders as well as dancers, “Life only lasts the very moment of our awareness of it, and all that remains is, as in the dance, the memory we can retain of it.” For the leader

to touch someone's emotions, something must happen in an instant. For that moment, there must be some sort of connection, a shared experience, a shared meaning, a shared emotion.

But then the moment is gone and another appears. So, like dance, leadership is illusory, fleeting, momentary, fragile. And yet it needs the physical actions of the leader to make it happen. There is something about the reality of the leader's tone, the leader's speaking, the gesture, the inflection, or another of a million subtle cues that "connects" with others and compels them to follow. And it has to happen in a moment or it won't happen at all.

Second, dancers and choreographers have to work within a certain structure, the structure of a particular time and a particular place, and with the interaction of many people (which itself imposes structure). There is a great deal of creativity that is involved in dance, yet that creativity occurs within the context of relatively specific structures. Septime Webre, artistic director of the Washington Ballet, told us that because those in dance have "to marry a high degree of structure and discipline with great creativity, we [in dance] can view the world in ways that accept structure. There's a certain amount of structure that's set and I believe the world is healthier because of that. A society that has structure and order provides for freedom. It provides for and fosters creativity." Note that other artistic disciplines are less constrained by structure than dance; for example, a visual artist who works alone may be less concerned about the interaction of his art with that of others. But note also that Webre's comment was that structure actually spurs creativity.

Obviously, leaders work within the limits of particular structures as well. For the leader, those structures include the groups or organizations or communities within which the leader acts. The leader is bound by the history of those involved, their established patterns of interaction, and their expectations about appropriate leadership behaviors. It makes a difference to the leader whether people in the group or organization "go way back" together. It makes a difference what their values and beliefs are. It makes a difference what they think about the person who would lead, whether it is someone coming from the outside or someone who has been there all along. These conditions structure what leaders can do. And yet they also contain elements of freedom,

little openings into which the leader can move to offer insight, support, and direction.

Third, like the other arts, dance is, to a great extent, a skill-based discipline, though, as we will see, one supported by significant personal resources. Just as the painter needs to know the proper brush stroke and the musician needs to be able to sustain a smooth vibrato, the dancer must learn endless sequences of positions and movements. Dance is not just an intellectual enterprise and it can't be learned in more than a rudimentary way just by reading books or watching other dancers. Dancers must acquire specific skills through a combination of instruction, practice, and psychological discipline.

It's more unusual to talk of leadership as a skill-based discipline, but that's exactly what it is. There are certain skills that leaders employ. There are things that leaders do that cause others to follow. Many who lead actually employ these skills without conscious preparation, and indeed they often wonder why others perceive them as leaders. A major corporate figure recently told us, "people are always coming up to me and complimenting me on my leadership. But I don't really know what I'm doing. It's just natural to me." This is probably one of those cases where some of the skills of leadership are simply "built in."

For others, leadership may not come so naturally. But the skills of leadership, especially those associated with the art of leadership, can be more clearly defined and developed over time. To do so, of course, does not involve merely reading biographies of famous leaders or watching other leaders in action. Rather, just like learning dance, learning the skills of leadership requires a combination of instruction, practice, and psychological discipline. But it is clearly possible to improve one's leadership skills. So in answer to the classic question about whether leaders are born or made, we would say "both"—that is, some skills seem natural to some people, other skills have to be developed through learning and reflection, and sometimes simply through time and experience.

There are a number of reasons to suggest that learning more about how artists, musicians, and especially dancers approach their work can aid in understanding the world of leadership. Both dance and leadership combine deep personal commitment and insight with specific skills to help us bring the future into focus. Both work

within specific structures, but do so with an eye toward deriving the greatest possible creativity from the context within which they occur. Both ultimately aim at establishing a sense of moving forward together. As one critic remarked, “When you boil it all down, that is the social purpose of art: the creation of mutuality, the passage from feeling into shared meaning.” And, we would say, that’s the purpose of leadership as well—achieving shared meaning.

A New Language for Leadership

People tend to think of universities as being a little more open and responsive than other institutions, but they certainly have their share of hierarchy and top-down leadership, just like other places. That’s why Jeff Rich, a young faculty member in political science, found his new dean, Mary Augustine, so remarkable. Not only was Mary always open and engaging at a personal level, but as a leader she seemed to be steps ahead of others. Mary just seemed to have a special talent for engaging others and aiming their work in the most positive directions.

While Mary had good ideas herself about modernizing the curriculum and about how to attract more and better students, her real skill was in bringing people together to discuss such topics fully and completely, then guiding them to consensus. Her approach was not to plant ideas, and certainly not to manipulate the group, but rather to try to discover what each person felt and where the group would find common ground. “It’s amazing,” she once told Jeff, “how these people come up with such good ideas, ideas that are much better than any I might have come along with. You just have to release the right energy and things go in amazing directions.”

Jeff was especially impressed at how Mary had the capacity to take a number of good and often very complex ideas and boil them down to a few statements that seemed so simple but captured everything that the group had said. She had the capacity to capture just the essential elements, but, in doing so, made the ideas accessible to everyone in the group and to those outside. Finally, Jeff observed, Mary was able to move the group to act, at just the right time and with just the right momentum. As Jeff watched her in action, Mary never seemed to be “in charge,” at

least not in the old-fashioned top-down way, yet she was undoubtedly one of the very best leaders Jeff had ever seen.

As we noted earlier, we are interested in identifying exactly what leaders do that causes other people to follow. For this reason, we are interested in the act of leading as opposed to what those in formal positions of leadership do. There are two reasons for this view. First, we think that leading is something that people do at all levels of society and in all areas of human endeavor. Some lead more formally and more often than others, but all are capable of leading and in fact do so from time to time. Second, even those in formal positions of leadership engage in a variety of activities, some of which involve leading, some of which involve management, some of which involve other things. We are interested in identifying some of the essential elements that distinguish the act of leading from other human activities.

We recently heard someone who had coached Olympic athletes point out that while different basketball players or different golfers seem to shoot the ball or swing the club in different ways, those differences are largely differences of personality. An engineer studying the basic human motions involved in the shot or the swing would point out certain elements of speed, torque, and acceleration that are indispensable to the success of the shot or the swing. The essentials stay the same even though the personalities differ. Similarly, while leaders may appear to be different based on their personalities and the situations they find themselves in, there are certain essentials that they share, often without even knowing it. They do certain things that cause others to think of them as leaders, and to follow. While the personalities of leaders make different leaders seem quite different, there are essential skills that all possess.

What is it, then, that is distinctive about the act of leading? What is it that causes others to become vitalized and begin to move in a new direction? Our answer is that the essence of leadership is its capacity to “energize,” for the leader to touch and to move people, to animate them in pursuit of a better future, one in which problems are solved, one in which progress toward important goals is made, and one in which the human condition is improved. In part, this can be done as the leader works with oth-

ers to come up with good ideas about how things should be done and then communicates in a way that people find objectively convincing. (Note that while “coming up” with good ideas might be something the leader does alone, it is increasingly more likely a matter of the leader assimilating and integrating the good ideas of many others.)

But even generating good ideas is rarely enough. In order to energize others, even in the pursuit of objectively “good ideas,” the leader must connect with them at a more personal level. As we said earlier, people can get interested in explanations and justifications, but they are rarely “energized” without some kind of an emotional commitment. For this to happen, the leader must trigger, stimulate, or evoke an emotional response on the part of potential followers so that those people will become engaged and active. Only when people are “moved” emotionally will they begin to “move” psychologically and physically.

The capacity to energize others through touching the emotions is the key to the art of leadership. To the extent that we can learn how leaders make that emotional connection, we will improve our capacity to lead at whatever level we find ourselves. We can enhance our understanding of the art of leadership by looking at other artistic disciplines, because in all its variations, art aims at arousing or inducing feelings such as pleasure, pain, joy, anger, tenderness, elation, shock, fear, or wonder. By learning about the artistry of emotional connection, we are able to identify the “essentials” of leadership and to suggest ways in which individuals at all levels can increase their capacity for leadership.

The act of leading involves shaping and giving direction to the energy that individuals have and the energy that is constantly exchanged between and among people. This energy is the “raw material” of artistic leadership, and understanding and working with and through the rhythms of social energy is an essential leadership skill. The best leaders have a special sensitivity to the shifting rhythms of human emotions. And they have a special talent to touch and move people and groups at a very basic level. The actions that these leaders take and the expressions they make trigger a certain emotional response in others, people who are then much more likely to be “energized” around whatever issue they face. Leaders are in the business of shaping

and giving direction to human energy as it flows through space and time.

Obviously, such a view of leadership is quite different from the traditional view of leadership as giving orders or creating structures for control. Perhaps that is what leadership once was, but no longer. Looking back, we can outline the traditional tasks of leadership, the old “job description” of the leader, as follows: the leader’s role is (1) to come up with good ideas about the direction the group or organization or society should take, (2) to decide on a course of action or a goal to be accomplished, and (3) to exert his or her influence or control in moving the group in that direction.

But this “job description” no longer works. While perhaps suited to the formal leader of decades past, this view simply doesn’t fit circumstances today. No one individual can be expected to come up with all the best ideas about where the group or organization should be going. Moreover, having one individual decide on a course of action not only limits the options available, but also limits the commitment of the others to the course chosen. And, if anything, asserting excessive power or control in trying to move a group is likely to backfire over the long term. Most people don’t want to be told what to do; they want to be a part of what is being decided and undertaken.

In contrast to this traditional view of the leader’s role, leadership today is exercised by one who: (1) helps the group or organization or society understand its needs and its potential, (2) integrates and articulates the group’s vision, and (3) acts as a “trigger” or stimulus for group action. This view recognizes that all members of the group have aspirations not only for themselves but for the groups and organizations and communities and societies of which they are a part. Involving many people in assessing the potential of the group, then constructing an image of the future together, is both more effective in the long run and morally the right thing to do. The leader’s role is to bring the group together, to facilitate its discussion of future possibilities, and to provide an initial “push” to get things moving.

The leader should aid in creating an open and visible process through which members of the group can express their needs and interests and in which the leader helps maintain the integrity of

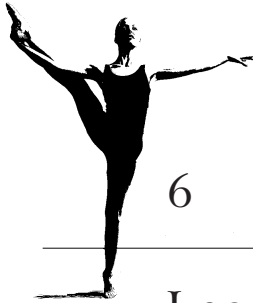
the group process and a dedication to the group's vision. This is not at all to say that the leader must just sit back and wait for the group to act, for the process of bringing forward ideas, stating them in terms that are meaningful to people, and communicating them in a way that resonates with people throughout a group, organization, or society is extremely hard work, indeed, much harder work than simply trying to control people. But it's also much more likely to result in a clear direction and sustained energy on the part of the group.

Think, for example, of the way things happen when a small group is brought together to address a problem or complete a task. Often the conversation will swirl around inconclusively for a while (sometimes a long time) until one person makes a suggestion that others pick up on and begin to act upon. People's reactions may be based on the substance of what was said or on the way in which it was presented or, most likely, some combination of both. But, in any case, we would say that where people react with energy and enthusiasm, leadership has been exercised, or, to say it in a different way, an act of leading has occurred. The act of leading need not have been an act of the formal "leader" of the group, even if there is one, but leadership has still occurred. So you can think of leadership retrospectively: when you see that a group has been energized, you can say that an act of leadership is likely to have just occurred. In cases such as this, what's critical is not a scientific approach, but the artistry of the leader.

Reprise

So what is it that leaders do, consciously or unconsciously, that causes others to follow? We think the answer lies not in the leader's providing explanations, but in the leader's connecting with people in a way that energizes them and causes them to act. The leader must touch not only the "head" but also the "heart." The leader must address basic human values and do so in terms of the future. What distinguishes the act of leading from other human activities is that the leader makes an emotional connection with others around issues of personal values and energizes them to move in a new direction. As we said earlier, leadership energizes.

But leadership also provides meaning. The world of art is one in which artists, musicians, and dancers help us sort out the complexity and the meaning of our lives. The philosopher Suzanne Langer writes, “A dance . . . expresses the nature of human feeling—the rhythms and connections, crises and breaks, the complexity and richness of what is sometimes called man’s ‘inner life,’ the stream of direct experience, life as it feels to the living. . . .” Certainly we should expect no less from leadership. We should expect and in fact demand that leadership help us to confront both our dreams and our demons, to comprehend our most exalted moments and those in which we fail to live up to our best, and to give us strength to express our inner being. To engage in and to respond to this kind of leadership, we will suggest, is to enter into the dance of leadership.



Leading from Within

What makes the difference between good dancers and great dancers? It's not technique; it's focus and concentration. As one dance instructor put it, "Just having a taller ladder gets you to the roof, but it can't get you to the moon."

A major corporate executive confesses that many of the most important decisions he made in his career were more a combination of confidence and good luck than planning and analysis.

A highly successful entrepreneur laments the fact that "You have a dream and everybody wants to steal it away from you. They try to take it away from you by saying things like, 'Why are you doing that? It's silly.'" He recommends that you just move ahead.

The vice-president of a leading computer company tells us, "There is a sense of integrity, of honesty, that when you are put to the test, you have to answer. There is part of that personal cloth of who you are as a human being that shows most clearly then."

Several times we have mentioned the fact that both dance and leadership occur "in the moment," then are gone forever, remaining only in our memory. While poetry, sculpture, architecture, painting, and writing are available as finished products to which an observer can return, dance, drama, music, and leadership can be accessed only in the moment. As choreographer Merce Cunningham remarked, "Dance is concerned with the single in-

stant as it comes along.” For this reason, there is a sense of immediacy in dance and leadership that is lacking in other arts.

Dance and leadership take place in the moment, yet that moment and those that follow it are ones filled with meaning. Through these connected but ephemeral moments the dancer or leader must communicate something special, something that connects with the audience and causes them to respond with emotion, insight, or commitment. Dance and leadership are both momentary and fleeting, yet they can have great impact. But only if they bring forth the total education and experience, ingenuity and artistry of the dancer or leader. It’s as if there is a lifetime of preparation compressed into a single instant.

In that moment, the artist may connect emotionally through the use of certain techniques or skills, but these only form the base upon which the real drama unfolds. Broadcaster Hugh Downs used an interesting metaphor to make this point: “You need a carrier wave. In radio, amplitude modulation radio (AM), works by way of a very high frequency radio wave, called a carrier wave. But imposed on that is a sound wave. Without the carrier wave, nothing will go across. The carrier wave is the ability you have, the technique. Superimposed on the carrier wave there can be a very artistic way to say the words. You’ve got to have something to put on it, a broadcast that means something. You’ve got to have a technique on which you impose something that is almost mystical.”

The artistic leader, as we have seen, has a variety of skills and abilities that he or she uses and that have the effect of creating a sense of emotional connection and stimulating people to move in a new direction. The leader needs to understand the rhythm of the group or organization; the leader needs to be able to improvise with creativity and spontaneity; and the leader must understand how to communicate in images, symbols, and metaphors. But beyond these elements of skill that constitute the leader’s “carrier wave,” the leader, like the dancer, has to call on a variety of inner resources that are essential to his or her artistry.

Those inner resources are the subject of this chapter, but discussing them is difficult because they contain such interesting and complex contradictions. Again, the world of dance is instructive. Septime Webre of the Washington Ballet talked with us about one of the most

fascinating contradictions in dance—the fact that in order to reach the highest level, the dancer or choreographer must be extremely focused, disciplined, and dedicated to his or her work and, at the same time, be highly creative, spontaneous, and artistic. These are two quite different sets of skills, one tending toward order and convergence, the other toward disorder and opposition. Yet both are needed for the dancer or choreographer to be successful. The dancer or choreographer must engage in extraordinarily difficult work and have the discipline to stay with that work even under the most trying circumstances. He or she must also demonstrate extreme creativity, the creativity of shape and pattern and movement.

There is a related contradiction we have already noted: that between structure and creativity, or between planning and spontaneity. While these characteristics seem at odds with one another, there must exist a certain structure for dancers to follow (at least in most dance forms). At the same time, there must always be room for interpretation and self-expression in order for the dance to remain fresh and engaging. We asked dancer and choreographer Ron Brown about how much of his work is choreographed and how much is improvised. He responded: “It’s all choreographed, but dance is in the moment, so it feels different every time.” Approaching the contradiction from the other direction, however, we recognize that while it is important to allow for creative expression, the structure of the dance, including both its genre and its choreographed movements, sets limits beyond which the dancer or choreographer cannot go and still be taken seriously. The individual who is obsessive in terms of discipline may be considered rigid and overwrought; the creative individual who knows no limits may be considered erratic or even hysterical. The artist must reach just the right plain of commitment and creativity without going beyond the limits that the structure of the dance permits.

The same is true of leaders, especially those who lead at the highest and most visible levels. Leadership is hard, hard work. It requires an enormous capacity for focus, discipline, and commitment. At the same time, the leader is expected to exercise a certain creativity and artistry, not the same kind of artistry as the dancer or choreographer, but artistry with respect to bringing the right people together at the right time, drawing forth a vision of the organization, saying just the right words to stabilize or mobi-

lize the group or organization, and establishing a flow of energy in the direction that is selected. The leader need not *necessarily* be creative with respect to the substantive work of the group or organization, although the leader's good ideas contribute just as do those of others. And, of course, a person perceived as creative may instill confidence among others and connect emotionally in that way. But the leader must be an artist with respect to human energy, especially that energy expressed in human relationships.

The leader must also stay within the bounds of the structure within which he or she works. Different situations impose different structures or limits. It will probably be inappropriate for the member of a small group or team to give a long-winded speech from behind a podium, no matter how eloquent it might be. On the other hand, the leader of a large organization sometimes has to rely more on speeches to large groups than on individual conversations with everyone in the organization. The leader has to have a clear understanding of just how far he or she can go and still be believable within the context in which they work. Phil Fulmer's use of the "synergy stick," for example, probably stretched the limits of what a football coach can get away with, but it remained within those limits. We also suggest that expectations with respect to the balance between discipline and creativity would be somewhat different in the military or on the flight deck from those in a school or an art museum.

Focus and discipline may often contend with creativity and artistry, but both must be available to the leader. In this chapter we will discuss both the "inner disciplines" and the "inner resources" we consider necessary for artistic leadership. Our discussion of the inner disciplines will include attention to focus and concentration; hard work, passion, and discipline; and a curious blend of confidence and humility. Our discussion of the inner resources will include attention to making meaning and effecting change. In either case, we think it appropriate to view this cluster of ideas as constituting a capacity for "leading from within."

The Inner Disciplines

During the course of our work on this book, we witnessed a number of marvelous dance performances, but none stands out more

clearly in our memory than a rehearsal of the Washington Ballet that we attended. We had interviewed Septime Webre, artistic director of the ballet, over lunch, after which he invited us to join him and his dancers for an afternoon rehearsal. We enthusiastically agreed and soon found ourselves in a large studio, about the size of a performance stage, with Webre, the rehearsal director, and about fifteen to twenty young dancers. We noticed immediately that nearly all of the dancers were wearing at least one bandage somewhere on their bodies, typically on an ankle, a wrist, an elbow, or a knee. And as they began dancing we saw something that you never really see sitting in the audience at a performance, that is, what incredibly hard work they were doing. We could see them sweating, we could hear their gasps for breath, and we could feel the impact when bodies came crashing together.

After an hour or so of large-scale company productions, they came to a piece choreographed by the brilliant Singaporean choreographer Choo-San Goh, who had been resident choreographer at the Washington Ballet but who died at an unfortunately early age. A young man and a young woman began with a beautifully lyrical segment, building in intensity until she was in the front right of the stage and he was in the back left. She ran full speed diagonally back across the studio and leaped headlong, arms outstretched, into his grasp. They continued their amazing performance to its conclusion.

Something early on in the piece had not been all that they desired, so they decided to go through the piece again. They started slowly, then once again they got to the point where she was in the front right and he was in the back left. Again, she ran full speed and leaped into his arms. But this time something went wrong. No one was sure exactly what happened—perhaps his elbow hit her ribs—but she simply crumpled in a little ball on the floor. Others rushed over to help, asking repeatedly what was wrong. She just lay there for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, she began to move, ever so slowly. With the help of others, she got to her feet, though still not able to stand fully upright. Someone asked if she could stretch and she slowly, very slowly began to raise her right arm. She had only reached the point where her hand was about even with the top of her head, when someone said, “Okay, let’s do it again.”

To our amazement, she and her partner immediately went back to the beginning and started through the dance again. They completed the early, more lyrical part, then got to the point where she was in the front right and he was in the back left. This time, we are convinced, she ran faster than either of the other two times, made her leap . . . and he caught her. At the end of the piece, everyone in the room burst into applause. That afternoon, we learned what dedication is all about.

Focus and Concentration

When we asked dancers and other artists what makes the difference between the good dancers and the great dancers there were generally two answers, one we expected and one we didn't. As we expected, many answered that the truly great dancers had a certain *presence* on the stage that others lacked. They had incredible technique; that was a given. But there are some dancers who are incredibly talented, but have nothing going on inside. The very best dancers have the ability to connect emotionally with the audience.

Robert de Warren of the Sarasota Ballet has worked with some of the greatest dancers of our time and made an interesting comparison between Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov. Both, he said, had amazing technique; however, in his view, Baryshnikov was even stronger, had higher elevation, and more of everything. "But," he said, "you couldn't compare the two personalities artistically because of the extra something." The presence that Nureyev exuded on stage was special. "The athletic side is wonderful and challenging, but if you have the other side that touches your sensibilities deeply, that's where you get the real big important artists." So one difference between good dancers and great dancers is their presence, their ability to connect emotionally.

The other difference our interviewees talked about, the one we found somewhat surprising, had to do with focus and concentration. Martha Graham stated this point well when she said, "To me, this acquirement of nervous, physical, and emotional concentration is the one element possessed to the highest degree by the truly great dancers of the world. Its acquirement is the result

of discipline, of energy in the deepest sense. That is why there are so few great dancers." The great dancers have the capacity to focus completely on what they are doing. They are right there, completely there, in the present, in the moment.

Dance educator Joann Browning of the University of Delaware was the first person we heard use the phrase, "Be present to the moment" in relation to dance, though we heard that phrase used over and over in our interviews. While you are dancing there are a thousand things that can be running through your mind. Some are completely extraneous to what's going on, like "I wonder what I'll have for dinner." Others are forced on you, as related by a dancer who told us about the time she ran into a light boom in the first piece of the evening. Later, "In 'Dying Swan,' all I could think about was, 'I hope they can't see the blood.'" There is also a temptation to think about the dance itself, to analyze what you are doing as it occurs. To some extent that is inevitable, especially if you are dancing with others and must remain constantly aware of where you are in relation to those others.

But dancers caution against overanalyzing. Alcine Wiltz of the University of Maryland put it this way: "If you're aware that you are thinking about what you're doing, then you're not dancing. You're only analyzing." At some point dancers have to allow their training and experience, their endless practice, their muscle memory to just take over. Champion figure skater Scott Hamilton, during his broadcast of the 2002 Winter Olympics figure skating championship, told about the advice someone gave him just prior to his own gold medal performance. His friend said, "Skate stupid," meaning that you should empty out the running dialogue in your head and just do what you know you can do on the ice. Yogi Berra also put it simply when he said, "How can you think and hit at the same time?"

There is a time for thinking (analyzing) and a time for acting (or dancing), but you have to keep the two separate. Golfers are especially susceptible to the dangers of overanalyzing. The golf swing can be analyzed in great detail and most golf instruction focuses on just such analysis. But if the golfer allows multiple "swing thoughts" to come into his or her mind during the swing, the swing will likely break down. Jim and Ceci Taylor, writing

in *The Psychology of Dance*, discuss the same issue with respect to dance:

There is a time and place for every aspect of the dance experience. For example, class and rehearsal are the appropriate settings for you and your dancers to analyze and critique their dance. However, when it is performance time, it is no longer suitable to question, doubt, analyze, or think about technique. Unfortunately, excessive cognitive activity, called jamming, results in a decline in self-confidence, an increase in anxiety, and poor execution of the required skills. Rather at this stage, dancers must set aside these concerns and trust their ability to perform the best they can, letting the learned sequences of skills emerge automatically and without conscious control.

There are several reasons why dancers are urged to “be present to the moment.” One is that if you are not focused on the moment you will lose your place. “If you’re in a dance class, you can’t let your mind wander. There are three of these and four of those. If your mind wanders, you’ll fall down.” You can’t maintain your competence without being attentive to the moment. A second reason to “be present to the moment” is that if you are mentally somewhere else, the audience will sense that and you will lose your connection with them. Only when the artist is fully focused on the role and the performance will the audience’s attention remain there as well. Few things turn someone off emotionally as easily as their being ignored—and if the dancer is somewhere else mentally and psychologically, he or she is ignoring the audience. A third reason to “be present to the moment” is that when a dancer’s technique is so engrained that they are able to let go, it often permits something really spectacular to happen. The subconscious comes into play and the emotional energy that we talked about earlier moves to the fore.

Here, the two ways in which great dancers are distinguished from good dancers come together. The dancer’s “presence” is enhanced by “being present.” Joann Browning talked about these two elements of artistry as if they were one. While she cautioned against discounting skill or technique, she argued that for her students, at a certain level, their technical skill just can’t take them any further. You have to create openings in which students can

discover a sense of artistry so that they can convey feelings through movement: “They need a new paradigm. Just having a taller ladder gets you to the roof, but it can’t get you to the moon.” Technique is the ladder, but it takes the combination of “presence” and “being present” to get you to the moon.

The leaders we interviewed easily recognized the importance of focus and concentration in their work, and some even used a variation of the dancers’ phrase, “being in the moment.” All put the issue of focus and concentration in the context of the many issues pressing for the attention of the leader, especially one at the top of a large organization. George Fisher of Kodak put it this way: “As a leader, you have to juggle a ton of things—twenty, thirty, maybe even a hundred a day. But at any given moment you have to be totally focused on what it is you’re dealing with. If you have thirty things to do in a particular day and you are working on number three, you can’t be thinking about any one of the twenty-nine other things. You’ve just got to be zeroed in. On any one of those tasks you have to give it 100 percent of your attention. I can’t remember an important discussion when I was thinking about anything else. I’ve been in boring presentations where I thought about something else. But on an issue that I’m dealing with, Rome could be burning over here, and I’d be right there.”

Astronaut and space shuttle commander Charles Bolden used the term “compartmentalization” to describe the way he thinks of things in separate boxes, so that he can concentrate fully on what’s important: “You’ve got to focus on the mission or whatever we’re trying to do here. You have to ‘compartmentalize,’ jump into this box that is the moment, what’s going on right now, what’s the mission. When you get on your motorcycle, you’ve got to stay focused. You want to enjoy the scenery and everything else, but you’ve got to remember you’re on a motorcycle.” Bolden pointed out, however, that sometimes you at least need to be cognizant of what’s going on around you, just outside the box. There’s a lot that you have to be sensitive to, but you have to sort out what is relevant to the mission and what is not, what to bring in and what to leave alone: “The leader has to have the peripheral vision to see all this stuff that’s going on but not be distracted by it.”

Former governor and U.S. senator Daniel J. Evans made a similar point with respect to the political arena: “You have to focus on

what you are doing but also on what everybody around you is doing. A political leader keeps the focus on the end result, but in trying to get there keeps making sure that all the other people involved in the effort are doing their job. Focusing on the end result may mean calling a couple of legislators into your office to change their mind or asking them what it would take to change their votes." In making the point that leaders need to keep their eye on their objective and not get lost in the details, Evans's analogy was a chess game: "There are a lot of chess pieces on the board but if you get lost in the maneuvering you probably will lose the end result. The focus has got to be on your goal."

In part, the need for focus and concentration derives from the rapidity of social and economic change that so affects major organizations in all sectors today. Under these conditions, the leader cannot be just a bystander, but must be very much engaged and in the moment. Bob Johnson of Honeywell Aerospace used a clever analogy in talking about how the CEO has to be sensitive to the rapidity of change in business. He said, "I had a Ferrari for a while. When you're going 160 miles an hour, you gotta be there. You don't want any music on, and you're not smoking, and you're not talking. You gotta be there." The leader has to be paying full attention to everything that is happening. If there are lapses, the Ferrari can wind up in a ditch.

In some ways our technological age has made it more difficult to maintain focus and concentration. How many times recently have you been talking on the phone with someone and, while the conversation was continuing, you started to check your e-mail? The person on the other end doesn't need to be a genius to figure out what's happening—they hear the clicking and they realize that you've lost the "rhythm" of the conversation. And they are likely to be frustrated by being ignored in this way. If you are not going to stay fully with that person during a phone conversation, it's very unlikely they will see you as a leader. They may respect your managerial capacity to "multitask" but the emotional connection needed for leadership will have been broken. (Incidentally, one workshop participant told us that in order to avoid being distracted by e-mail or even notes or documents on his desk, when he talks on the phone he stands up and looks out the window.)

The technological issue has also crept into the boardroom, but

at least some executives are sensitive to its possible effects. Alan Yordy of PeaceHealth suggested that leaders need to be able to shift topics quickly, but also stay on topic: “In order to be fully effective you have to be in the moment. We are a heavy user of e-mail in this organization. In meetings, everybody has a laptop and they are all plugged in. What we find happening in these meetings is, as we deal with different topics, different people will be doing e-mail. We’ve developed a ground rule that for certain subjects the computer lid goes down, because you have to be in the moment. You have to be focusing on what’s being said and what the issue is if you’re going to be fully effective.” Leaders would be well advised to work on their own capacities for focus and concentration, but also to make sure others are being “present to the moment” as well.

For the leader, there are important reasons to maintain a high degree of focus and concentration. One is to maintain a sense of competence. If you are drifting away you won’t be able to perform at your best and your mistakes will likely show. A second is to maintain an emotional connection with those around you. If you are fully present in every conversation—and indeed if that becomes a habit—people will respond in a positive sense emotionally, something that we think is essential to the act of leading. Incidentally, in each of the many interviews with leaders we did, we were probably the least important item on the leader’s agenda that day. Yet consistently these leaders were absolutely present in our conversations, showing no evidence of wondering what was next on their calendar or who might be waiting outside. A third reason to maintain a high degree of focus and concentration is that sometimes doing so can lead to real breakthroughs in your performance. Just after Olympic figure-skating champion Sarah Hughes finished the incredible performance that resulted in her gold medal in Salt Lake City, she remarked, “I did things out there I can’t do!” It is very likely that it was her complete focus and concentration that allowed this.

Ronnie Scott, the British jazz musician, commented on the special feeling that accompanies such a performance. “It’s a certain feeling you’re aiming for—or unconsciously aiming for—and when this happens—inspiration—duende—whatever you like to call it—a happy conjunction of conditions and events and middle

attitudes—it will feel good. It will feel that ‘I should be what I am’ kind of thing.” A city manager in a small Kansas town once told the story of a group of business people who came to town to explore the possibility of locating a plant there. After their conversations at City Hall, they adjourned to an old railroad car turned into a restaurant. After dinner, the manager got up and, as he put it, “did his thing.” He later reflected, “Bob, I was so good that night. *I was better than I know how to be.*” Sometimes focus and concentration, being present to the moment, can make us better than we know how to be—and that feels really good.

Hard Work, Passion, and Discipline

Being a dancer is hard, hard work. Agnes de Mille, choreographer for both ballet and Broadway, said, “A dancer . . . who fears or dislikes work and failure should get out immediately. It’s extremely hard work and if you don’t take joy in it too, if you’re not excited and inspired by it, it’s not for you.” Dancing, especially at the highest levels, is a physically and mentally demanding occupation, requiring hours and hours of exhausting athletic moves, the ability to withstand and work through pain, and constant attention to what you eat and drink so that you can be in the best possible condition. At the same time, dancers must reach and maintain a creative and artistic edge that enables them to touch the audience night after night.

Dancer and experimentalist choreographer Murray Louis put it eloquently when he said, “Dancers work and live from the inside. They are almost always in pain, physically and mentally. The responsibility of keeping in shape is never ending and crushing. They can never let down. The intensity of behavior, which laymen find trying, is, for the dancer, essential. They drive themselves constantly, producing a glow that lights not only themselves, but audience after audience.” There is a physical and mental vulnerability involved in dance, as dancers not only expose their bodies but their very souls.

Moreover, people entering into a career in dance know that from a very early age that they have to make sacrifices. Young dancers must forego many of the things their peers find so interesting; indeed, they must often give up friendships in order to

maintain the discipline of their craft. As young adults, dancers in major companies find themselves touring from town to town and country to country, in the process leaving behind important personal relationships, connections with families, and a settled home life. Mikhail Baryshnikov, whose name is synonymous with dance today, put it this way: "Nobody is born to be a dancer. To be a dancer you must want it more than anything. You don't know in the beginning whether you will succeed. And then you don't know until later whether you will be injured and must stop. But you must live a disciplined life. The desire to be a dancer is the discipline of a career, and your work is the language of that discipline." Choreographer George Balanchine was even more blunt in saying, "First comes the sweat then comes the beauty."

Why do dancers endure the pain, the agony, and the hard work that is required of them? Basically, it's a matter of passion, commitment, and dedication. For the best dancers that sense of dedication is intense, an all-consuming fire blazing inside and manifest externally as a willingness to do whatever is necessary to be the best they can be. Twyla Tharp, who has worked with the great ballet companies as well as choreographed for film, stage, and television, spoke of the "will" that is required to succeed in the world of dance: "I also had a will that let me eliminate everything that stood in the way of my becoming the best dancer I could be. By a gradual process . . . I had invested every bit of my dreams, my hopes, my energies in defining myself as a dancer."

There are many artists who don't have that dedication and they are limited in what they can do. In our interview, internationally known jazz trombonist Vincent Nilsson remarked, "Very often I have students who want to be able to play, but they are not prepared to do the work. They have quite good talent but don't do the work. It's quite sad." He then added ironically, "Of course, it's a talent to be able to do the work too." Unfortunately, not all artists have that talent for practice and hard work.

But for those who are willing to make the commitment and engage in the hours, days, months, and years that are required to be the best, the joy of the performance is quite special. In working on this project, we have been struck by the contrast between the hard work of the dancer's occupation and the moments of glorious expression on stage. That irony, of course, was what in-

spired the French impressionist painter Edgar Degas as he painted the ballerina. Rarely did he capture the actual performance, preferring instead to capture the drudgery of the dancer's day-to-day life. Yet flowing from that drudgery was the ultimate magic of the performance. Past the hard work, the dance ultimately brings a special joy. In our interview, David Parsons captured the irony of the dancer's life in this way: "Some days it's just like pulling teeth. You've got a creak or an injury. You've got a cold. You've been on a plane. Then there's days where you are just on automatic and you're in a mode that is just bliss. You feel the energy going out. And the greatest thing is that you don't even know what it is. But you feel it."

Many of the dancers and choreographers we interviewed talked about the passion that they had for dance or the passion that they wished to express through their dancing or choreography. Nowhere was that sense of passion more clearly expressed than in a fascinating conversation we had with Tamara Nijinsky and Kinga Gaspers, the daughter and granddaughter of the legendary Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. Nijinsky, called the greatest dancer of the twentieth century, "The God of the Dance," was known worldwide for his technical precision, his artistic virtuosity, and his vivid dramatic portrayals. But at the height of his career, he began to experience a series of psychological problems that led him in and out of mental hospitals through the remainder of his life. At the edge of his madness, Nijinsky wrote an incredible semi-biographical/semi-philosophical tract titled "The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky," which was the subject of a recent and highly acclaimed documentary film.

Tamara Nijinsky and Kinga Gaspers described Nijinsky as someone completely driven by a love of his fellow human beings, a love of peace, and the hope that he could express that love through his dancing and choreography. "His art was his life. He didn't separate. He was a dancer, an artist twenty-four hours a day. That was the air he breathed, and when he became ill a part of his illness was that he couldn't work, he couldn't create." Nijinsky had a vision of a peaceful world where people would love and understand one another, and he wanted to help create this world through his gift, his art. He wrote in his diary, "My madness is my love for mankind." He also wrote, "You will understand me when you see me dance."

Nijinsky's effect on all those with whom he came into contact was compelling. Those who saw him dance still comment on seeing something incredible. Even many who knew him only through the diary speak of the impact Nijinsky has had on them. His granddaughter remarked, "When he came into the room, there was an aura, a peace, a serenity. He brought some kind of calm into the room." His passion was his artistry, his creativity, and his dancing. But it was his passion as much as his artistry, his creativity, or his dancing that comes through in one's learning about Nijinsky. While other artists may not so clearly reveal their passion as did Nijinsky, that passion is what causes dancers to endure the hard work, the pain, and the sacrifice, and to express themselves in ways that audiences find enchanting and energizing.

Like dancers, leaders work extremely hard and must be firmly committed to, even passionate about, what they are doing. While we think that's true for leaders at all levels, hard work especially characterizes leadership at the highest levels. The hours are long, the levels of stress often extreme, and the pressures to produce are extraordinary. Lattie Coor put it this way: "I would never presume that I have dedicated the whole of my professional life the way a dancer does. But a university presidency is a way of life; it's not a job, it's undertaking a venture. You live it day and night. You need to organize private space in your life; indeed, if you don't, you won't be a good leader. But you organize your private space within that life rather than the other way around."

The leader's role is consuming in many ways—time-consuming, life-consuming. In order to commit to the hard work of leadership, leaders need to be clear about what they are doing. William Jacobs, president of the Western Institutional Review Board, stated what might seem obvious, but many fail to grasp: "If you are going to be a leader, you have to have a reason to be a leader—an agenda, a vision, a reason for being." For some it will be the substance of the work. When we asked City Manager Jan Perkins about what motivates her to spend so many long and often difficult hours on the job, she replied that it was her deep commitment to democratic local government and the feeling that she could make a difference. For others, the passion will reside in chasing a dream. But the pursuit of a dream is itself not easy, especially because other people may not share the dream or even

believe that it's attainable. Consequently, many may discourage the dream, making it even more difficult to attain.

Larry Newman, who invented, built, and made a million dollars selling the ultra-light airplane, shared with us his experience in fighting off what he called "the dream stealers": "You have a dream and everybody wants to steal it away from you. They try to take it away from you by saying things like, 'Why are you doing that? It's silly.' But they just don't get it. If more people just said, 'I'm not going to listen to anybody. I'm just going to succeed,' we could do wonderful things." Success is sometimes a matter of tenacity, clinging to the dream when everyone around you is saying it will never work. Imagine how many people might say that to you if you told them you were going to make some money by putting a motor on a hang glider. Yet that's exactly what Larry Newman did—and it worked.

Doing something you enjoy, believing in what you are doing, and being passionate about it is as important to leaders as to dancers. It's also contagious. Just as Vaslav Nijinsky's passion for his art seemed to affect those he came in contact with, the passion, the commitment, the energy, and the enthusiasm a leader shows for his or her work will be felt by others and may cause them to enlist in the cause. An element of artistic leadership is not only to have passion for one's work as a self-motivating force, though that is clearly important. The leader's passion is also something others see and feel. It creates an emotional resonance and draws them to the leader. The energy and enthusiasm a leader shows can itself be an energizing force, and that's what leadership is all about, whether you are talking about a family, a work group, or a large organization.

Confidence and Humility

Dancers and leaders both engage in very public actions. Dancers appear on stage before audiences of thousands, where every little mistake can be seen and remembered. Leaders, while less often appearing in such formal settings as an auditorium, are "on" all the time with people listening to every syllable and observing every little body movement as a sign of something significant. For most people, situations like these are invitations to stress,

nervousness, and possible disaster. There are, of course, “tricks” to combat “stage fright,” whether on stage or in a conference room. For example, meditation or breathing exercises may help with nervousness and fatigue. But there is a deeper sense in which dancers and leaders need to establish a foundation upon which their skills can be exercised. Both need to develop a strong sense of confidence in themselves and in others with whom they work.

While leaders rarely talk about the importance of confidence, dancers have long discussed this topic and indeed a part of their training has to do with building confidence. Choreographer Doris Humphrey, for example, identified the problem this way: “The dancer with conviction has power; many a dance of poor quality has been ‘put across’ just by the superb belief of the performer in the work. . . . If you believe in yourself, everybody else probably will, too.” Similarly, Cem Catbas of the Ballet Academy of Baltimore told us, “Before you go on stage, you have to think you are the greatest, because only then will the audience believe that you are.”

Clearly, dancers who have a lot of confidence in themselves and their partners will be more relaxed during the performance, while those who don’t will likely become more anxious—and that will in turn limit their performance even further. This is not to say, however, that only dancers who have limited skills are affected by nervousness and can be affected by it in their performance. Even dancers who are technically very strong and capable but don’t believe in themselves will have problems.

How do dancers build confidence? First, and obviously, the better prepared you are the less nervous you will be, whereas if your technique or understanding is shaky, you will be more nervous. Second, just as we spoke earlier about thinking too much during the performance, overanalyzing your own psychological condition is not especially helpful either. By maintaining a strong focus on the performance, you won’t be tempted to wonder whether people can see how nervous you are, something that will only make you more nervous. Third, dance educators point out that the best dancers carry themselves differently from those who are less gifted, something they attribute to self-confidence. By carrying themselves differently dancers may be able to influence their level of self-confidence. “Dancers can influence how they

think and feel by how they carry themselves.” Fourth, as dancers mature, some argue, they think less about themselves and what the audience thinks of them and more about the performance and the artistry they can bring to it. The mime Robert Shields told us, “When you are a young performer, you’re thinking about the audience. Now when I perform it’s special, because I’m finally out of the way.”

With respect to what others can do to help build one’s confidence, we heard similar comments from both artistic directors in major dance companies and coaches in major college sports about what a rehearsal director or coach can do to help build self-confidence. Roy Kaiser of the Pennsylvania Ballet commented on the balance that’s necessary in building confidence: “I want to bring the best out of each individual dancer—and they are all different. For some it’s building confidence, for some it’s restraining confidence. Overconfidence is dangerous, overconfidence doesn’t read well. There’s just a zone—you need just enough to allow yourself to perform at your best.” Similarly, basketball coach Ernie Kent of Oregon talked about his positive approach to building confidence: “I want to give you all the confidence I can give you. I’m going to tell you what you *can* do. I’m not going to stop you by putting limits on you, saying you can’t do something. I’m going to give you the confidence, the platform to grow from.”

Obviously, the lessons described here can be helpful to leaders as well and indeed many of the leaders we talked with made similar points, both about how to build your own confidence and how to build the confidence of others. University president Dave Frohnmayer drew a parallel between the role of the leader and that of a conductor (one of his avocations): “The conductor’s job is to make the ensemble as rich as possible. You can exercise an enormous amount of leadership just through what you convey. That depends in significant part on the confidence that you project (and that can be mastered). It is important that you convey that confidence or the orchestra won’t have any reason to follow your gestures. The conductor’s role is to keep the tributaries from overflowing the banks, so that they all contribute to the ultimate grand flow of the river.”

For the leader as for the dancer, it is important that confidence not turn into overconfidence. Especially for the leader,

it's important that confidence be balanced with a sense of humility and respect for others. On the one hand, or perhaps for some people, leadership can be a very humbling experience. Jeanette Harrison, chief learning officer of Intel, described to us her response to being thrust into a position where people expected her to lead: "No matter how many books you read, no matter how many discussions you have, when you are standing in front of a group of a hundred or two hundred people and you are responsible for energizing those people, eliminating the roadblocks they may find, enabling them to do great things—that is a very humbling experience."

The pressure of such expectations can help to maintain a sense of humility, but there are pressures in the other direction as well. Tom Downs, Amtrak chief executive, who was earlier city administrator of Washington, D.C, spoke of the temptation for leaders to believe their own press and to become deluded into thinking it's all about them. In his view, we live in an age of "celebrity," so that leaders sometimes lack balance and perspective. The sense of celebrity that accompanies people in high positions is such that others around them start "kissing up," to the point that the leader starts to believe what they are saying. "It's a very seductive thing because you think you are the webmaster, the master of the universe. The word 'hubris' comes from the Greek, a combination of aspiration and tragedy. It has the seeds of its own destruction. No matter what the size of your organization, it can happen to you." The antidote, according to Downs, is to rediscover the value of humility and to maintain a healthy and unambiguous respect for others.

General Ron Fogleman made the same point, though connecting the issue of humility to that of integrity: "The essence of leadership is integrity. You need to be focused on the mission and your people and not yourself. The leader should be selfless in every dimension of the word." Over the years, Fogleman argued, it is important to develop a sense of integrity that guides your decisions, so that it's not just your personal preference at the moment. "In the course of growing up, you develop an inner moral and professional compass. Based on your professional expertise and the moral dimension to the decision that has to be made, there comes a point where the situation calls for a decision. You

look at the facts you have available, you make a decision, and you press on. It's the professional expertise and the moral compass that allows you to do that."

Finally, a part of appropriate humility is to recognize that you don't know everything. Indeed, at least one leader we talked with considered humility to be a foundation for leadership, maybe even a defining distinction between managers and leaders. Bob Johnson of Honeywell Aerospace commented, "I think to be a good leader you start with not knowing. When you are the chief scientist or the chief financial person, you got there by being the best and knowing it all. To be a leader you have to give it all up. Leadership is about not already knowing and being able to listen." In other words, being humble and listening is not only the right thing to do, it works.

The Inner Resources

If you watch candidates for high public office campaigning, whatever you think of their politics, you can't help but be impressed by their energy, their enthusiasm, and simply their stamina, their physical ability to keep going day after day. The same is true of top-level executives in business, in universities, in the military, and in the world of sports. Phil Tyson was just such a person. Phil had held a number of high-level positions before taking over a struggling high-tech firm in California, so he must have known what he was getting into. But the zest and dedication with which he undertook his new responsibilities still surprised many. Not only were there company meetings from early in the morning until sometimes late into the evening, Phil also made a commitment to the community and became engaged in activities ranging from reviewing the state's economic development policy to encouraging greater support for the arts.

People marveled at the physical demands on Phil, but in a private conversation with a friend he confessed that the mental part of the game was much more difficult. "I do make time for exercise and I practice a number of different stress management techniques, though people rarely see those parts of my day. And frankly I enjoy what I'm doing so much, I actually think it's healthy for me. So the physical part is not as hard as people think." But,

he continued, the real challenges are mental. They have to do with knowing myself, staying in touch with my own values, and simply being true to myself. “There are many things that can distract you—money, celebrity, and attention among them. But you have to maintain a balance, a connection to what’s really important in your life. For me to change our company means that I have to change myself. I have to come to fully and unequivocally accept the new direction that we’re going. If I don’t believe in what we’re doing, no one else will.” For the best leaders, maintaining their own integrity, in every sense of the word, is the hardest but most important part of leading.

Making Meaning

As we have already seen, the leader is very much engaged in “making meaning.” The leader is interested in constructing new lenses through which people can see the future and see one another moving into that future together with a sense of energy and flow. Leadership is the capacity to interpret reality in ways that really help others understand better what might be possible. It’s about establishing a context. In this sense, leadership is not just about coming up with good ideas or solving problems, either with respect to the substance of the group’s work or the process by which things get done. Certainly those contributions by the leader are valued and people resonate with the leader’s confident capacity to develop ingenious ways around disputes or obstacles that seem ready to slow the group’s progress.

But in making meaning, leaders are performing a far more difficult task. People need meaning perhaps more than anything else. They need to know that what they are doing makes sense, that it has some longer-term value. Making meaning, therefore, has to do with both providing a context for human action and framing the significance of the group’s work. In our view, these dual aspects of the leader’s making meaning for or on behalf of a group can be addressed through some of the skills we discussed in connection with our consideration of empathetic listening and evocative speaking. But at an even deeper level the process of making meaning is fully rooted in the leader’s psyche, perhaps even the leader’s soul. It is something that draws on some of the leader’s

most vital and precious inner resources and should be framed in that fashion.

Again, the lessons from the world of dance are fascinating. A dance, of course, is typically not intended just for entertainment, but rather seeks to convey feelings, emotions, impressions, meanings. A dance seeks to “touch the viewer, to communicate a sense, vision, idea, style, texture, or quality. It has an attitude about it, an aura of uniqueness, a selfhood.” We would say the leader’s efforts to make meaning are similarly oriented. The leader seeks to express, in words, in approach, in style, in movement, in whatever way possible, a vision of the future, again not necessarily one that the leader alone has divined but one that the leader has constructed from the contributions of many others. The leader provides clues, impressions, symbols, metaphors, interpretations as to the emotional engagement to which others might commit themselves in order to make a better future. And, in doing so, the leader affects the values that will shape a group’s future.

As we said, some of the leader’s messages relate to the *context*—how things are situated and how they fit together. In order for any one element in a system to perform at its best, it must fit with its context. Similarly, for individuals to perform at their best, they must have a comprehension of the fundamental ideas that define the framework within which they operate—what one writer called, “an organic unity of feeling” that can bring “coherence and flow to what would otherwise be only a loosely related collection of parts.” While there may be no obvious systemic unity among members of a group or organization, the leader can provide an “organic unity of feeling” that can bring unity and flow to the group. In fact, only through providing a context for action that makes sense will the leader be able to shape the flow of energy that his or her leadership releases.

Another part of making meaning has to do with establishing the *significance* of what is being undertaken. In an age that has been described as fragmented and chaotic, people especially need a sense of meaning and significance in their lives. They want to know that what they are doing will make a difference, that it will extend beyond the immediate moment and impact the future, hopefully in some positive way. For this reason, leaders, like other artists, play an important role in identifying and orienting people

toward the most important issues in a particular time and place. They give form to what is especially meaningful and significant in the lives of the people with whom they interact. Judy Mohraz of the Piper Foundation talked with us about some of the concerns that leaders today must attend to. They include “a profoundly personal understanding of what people want to do with their lives; why we’re here on this earth; and how do you help someone find meaning, find personal and professional growth, and find connectedness with the larger.”

There is an awesome responsibility associated with the leader’s role as an artist, because the artist must not only engage the audience, but also confront the “spirit” of the age in which he or she lives. Artists must connect with the specific audience present on any given night, but they must also work from the experience of their culture and their time (and how it fits with those before and after). The leader is involved in something like a “conversation,” a dialogue with people immediately present but also with many far away in both space and time, those whose thoughts and ideas have shaped the current situation and those whose actions will shape the future.

Again, Judy Mohraz spoke eloquently about the way that leaders engage the time, the age in which they live and work. She first noted that art often takes long-standing symbols or traditions and reinterprets them for the current time and place. While there may be continuity, there may also be a major break with the past, a new way of seeing and interpreting reality. “And that’s often what a leader is doing. In some instances taking something long-established and trying to reinterpret it in a new and more dynamic and relevant way, and in other instances simply breaking with the known and striking out in a very new and innovative way. Institutions may require one kind of leader at one point and another kind of leader at another.” (That probably explains why you have artists or leaders that are ahead of their time.)

But through the engagement of leaders with their time and their surroundings, through the dialogue we mentioned before, there must emerge a complete clarity of intent; the leader must know what the game is all about. That is not to say that the leader must or ever will know the outcome of the game in advance. But the leader must know what the game is. The leader must develop a

perspective, an intent, and an articulated viewpoint that is at once creative, carefully constructed, challenging, and ultimately compelling. That's not easy work, and in the process the leader can get pulled in many different directions. Some of it can get pretty risky, both for the group or organization and for the leader personally. Dancer and choreographer Daniel Nagrin wrote, "Traversing the tightrope of art requires a balance between infinite care and reckless abandon." Certainly the same is true of leadership, and that task is made considerably easier if the leader is firmly grounded. Dance and choreographer Charles Weidman expressed it nicely when he said, "The artist must not run away from himself, his 'center of being.' He is the bearer of a message, and it is his responsibility to tell it—in whatever medium it may be—intelligibly, forcefully and with his utmost artistic ability. He may sometimes fail in the delivery of this message, but he must never fail in his purpose."

Effecting Change

We are familiar with all the dichotomies that mark modern life—theory and practice, subject and object, fantasy and reality, to mention just a few. What is interesting is that dance and leadership both transcend these distinctions. Art engages these various conflicts as tensions to be resolved. For example, using the tension between fantasy and reality as his example, dance educator John Wilson told us that art is concerned on the one hand with the things the artist would like to perpetuate and on the other with those things the artist would like to transcend: "The purpose of art is to generate and maintain conflicts between the world as we find it to be and the world of imagination." That, of course, is precisely the world of leadership as well.

Leadership involves change, indeed, leadership is crucially and uniquely situated just at the moment of change, right at the crossroads we encounter as we move from the past through the present and into the future. The special contribution of leadership is to help groups and organizations resolve questions about the future. But, of course, doing so is anything but simple. While the act of leading doesn't allow such a rational explanation as it occurs, we might say that leadership involves helping the group

work through an assessment of its history, its future, and even what we might call the history of the future, that is, what the future will look like in retrospect days or months or years from now. It involves integrating and articulating the path or direction that the group or organization chooses. And it involves stimulating or triggering the release of energy that most characterizes successful group action and helping to guide the flow of energy that results as the group moves forward. As we have said before, leadership energizes and energy brings about change.

Again, the process of change is the dynamic that moves us beyond ordinary dichotomies of life. Change involves action, and action, for example, can never involve pure theory or pure practice alone. Speaking of the world of dance, Randy Martin, professor of art and public policy at New York University, describes that condition in this way: "Dance generates a sense of being in the midst of a crisis, a break, a rupture, even a loss and a prospect at the same time; thus while dancing may appear to be a series of stops and starts, for the dancer, next steps are already in motion, already passing from one (im)balance to another." Martin's phrasing brings to mind a description of Doris Humphrey's approach to dance: "All movement can be considered to be a series of falls and recoveries; that is, a deliberate unbalance in order to progress, and a restoration of equilibrium for self-protection. The nearer the state of unbalance approaches the dangerous the more exciting it becomes to watch, and the more pleasurable the recovery. This danger zone, which life tends to avoid as much as possible, is the zone in which the dance largely has its existence."

But leaders also inhabit this zone, working in a time and space that others hesitate to enter, always flirting with the tension between gain and loss, pleasure and pain, the present and the future, and always working with the energy available to them. The forces that are at play in the act of leading are powerful indeed and require the utmost strength and character on the part of the leader to merely withstand the vicissitudes of change, much less to help the world move in a positive direction. Leaders must have an inner strength and bearing that will provide a stable foundation for their actions as well as a strong sense of morality or integrity that will provide support as they assume the responsibility that ultimately will be placed at their doorstep.

The expectations of space and time and energy that we discussed earlier bear heavily on the leader. Leadership occurs in the moment, often in a very passing moment, yet in its impact leadership far exceeds that moment, often affecting worlds far different in space and time through the energy it disposes. Change involves loss and pain, yet we expect leaders to provide the sense of context and significance that will give us faith to endure that pain and loss in the hopes of a better future. The world of the leader is in some ways quite a lonely world, a world in which the leader must work through his or her own inner demons (and perhaps call on special angels) on the way to resolving an artistic approach to change and to the future.

Though he was writing about the artist, we think that the philosopher Walter Sorell expressed the leader's predicament extremely well:

The artist creates out of the world that has made him in order to remake it according to the image of his inner world. His struggle to give this image meaning and form is basically a struggle with himself. It goes without saying that he is tortured by a compulsive feeling to express himself through his artistic medium. He is cursed with a heightened sensitivity and awareness to do so. He feels hurled into a lifelong struggle, using and discarding the heritage of yesterday, finding the true expression of today, which, at the same time, envisions the face and shape of another tomorrow. In other words, no artist can deny his past, and even in rebelling against it he pays his negating respects to it. He must realize that yesterday was a living today as much as he must be aware of the fact that there will be no artistic tomorrow if his today is not burningly alive.

We need not dwell here on the "metaphysics" of change or the way in which the leader confronts his or her angel, muse, or what some have called the "duende." But it is important to recognize that leadership, the act of leading, is not just about methods or techniques or procedures by which change can be brought about. That treatment of leadership, which is, we think, all too familiar, denies the very personal and deep-seated struggles that leaders endure as they practice their calling, whether in the most mundane settings or those involving matters of paramount economic or political importance. Leadership is far more deeply rooted in

the human psyche than we tend to acknowledge. We think that is because the world has focused excessively on the science of leadership, a topic that is amenable to the rational use of technique, and has vastly underestimated the art of leadership, which clearly is not. Recognizing the artistic dimension of leadership, however, compels us to acknowledge and give further thought to the inner resources required by the leader.

Integrity and Authenticity

It may seem odd to use the term *morality* in relation to art. After all, artists seek to evoke emotion, but sometimes those emotions are disgust, revulsion, and rage. Is this moral? While there is no simple answer to that question, the question itself is still vitally important. What is important for the purposes here is that because art and leadership seek to touch us in a way that involves our values and emotions, they necessarily involve questions of morality. Art, like leadership, is to a great extent in the eyes of the beholder. If we experience art that we consider to be wrong or immoral, and inconsistent with our values, we are likely to walk away. If the work seems phony, insincere, and inauthentic, we are likely to become closed to the message the artist may be trying to convey. Artists feel strongly that they must be true to their art and authentic in their bodies, and they accept that, ultimately, their art will be experienced and judged by others.

Leaders confront these same kinds of tensions. They certainly push the envelope; they challenge us to think, feel, and do things that may go beyond our comfort level. But they also recognize that if they cannot be true to both themselves and the larger purposes they serve, if they are perceived as lacking integrity and moral grounding, if they do not authentically connect with the people around them, others simply will not follow. This moral grounding is based on a number of things: knowledge of themselves and their own values, the values and aspirations of those they lead and serve, and a purpose larger than themselves that they and the people that they work with can believe and trust is valuable, good, and worthy of giving the best of themselves.

So we return to the idea we mentioned early on, that leadership is a moral venture, based on integrity, authenticity, and, at

the risk of sounding trite, a deep-seated desire to do the right thing. While some leadership experts would argue that anyone who achieves significant change is a leader, we firmly reject this idea. Leadership can and should and must be more than that. Ultimately, what we all yearn for, and increasingly need, are leaders who stand for something that we can believe in and feel good about. We want leaders with integrity and moral grounding whom we can trust to be what they claim and to do the right thing. We need and want leaders to tap what is best in us and energize us to work with creativity and joy.

Reprise

In our view, the leader must possess certain skills in order to lead, or, to put it differently, for others to perceive him or her as a leader. But those skills are embedded in a set of personal disciplines and inner resources. The skills of the leader are important, but they are not employed randomly. Instead, they are given shape and direction through the disciplines that leaders employ, disciplines such as focus and concentration, hard work, passion, and a blend of confidence and humility. Moreover, the leader's skills are only capable of use in ways that are authentically consistent with the leader's view of the world, the values the leader holds, and the leader's understanding of how change is brought about. These inner resources, authentically held and deeply valued, go to the very basis of the leader's ability to help shape human energy in a positive direction. We like performance artist Elizabeth Keen's statement about choreography: "If someone choreographs a dance worth its salt, the quantity of good rises in the world." We believe that if someone engages in an act of leadership worth its salt, in whatever setting, at whatever level, the quantity of good in the world also rises.