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**Introductory Reading  
And “Course Leadership Project” Part II For  
Being a Leader and The Effective Exercise of Leadership:  
An Ontological / Phenomenological Model**

**WERNER ERHARD**

Independent  
[werhard@ssrn.com](mailto:werhard@ssrn.com)

**MICHAEL C. JENSEN**

Jessie Isidor Straus Professor Emeritus, Harvard Business School  
[mjensen@hbs.edu](mailto:mjensen@hbs.edu)

**STEVE ZAFFRON**

Founder and Head of Research Development, Vanto Group  
[szaffron@vantogroup.com](mailto:szaffron@vantogroup.com)

**JERI L. ECHEVERRIA**

Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer, retired, California State University  
[jeronima@comcast.net](mailto:jeronima@comcast.net)

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This document contains the Sixth and Seventh Pre-Course Readings for our one-semester course “Being A Leader and The Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model.”

Some of the material presented in this course is based on or derived from the consulting and program material of the Vanto Group, and from material presented in the Landmark Forum and other programs offered by Landmark Worldwide LLC. The ideas and the methodology created by Werner Erhard underlie much of the material. The authors are responsible for all errors or incompleteness in this work.

**Note:** We acknowledge Kari L. Granger for her past work with us and specifically for the contribution she made to the development of this document.

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## Abstract

The intention of this one semester leadership course is to leave participants actually being leaders and exercising leadership effectively as their natural self-expression. By “natural self-expression” we mean a way of being and acting in any leadership situation that is a spontaneous and intuitive effective response to what one is dealing with. The course is based on a new science of leadership. In addition to being designed to actually create leaders, this new science of leadership enables faculty in higher education to access, study, research, and teach being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership as these are actually lived and experienced “on-the-court” (as contrasted with being observed and interpreted from “in-the-stands”).

## The History of the Course

This course was created when it was first taught (from 2004 through 2008) at the University of Rochester Simon School of Business, NY, USA by utilizing the classroom as a laboratory. Since 2008 the course has been continuously developed and taught by us every year in an academic institution, such as the United States Air Force Academy, the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, Clemson University’s College of Business in South Carolina, USA and most recently at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in California, USA. The course has been taught to undergraduates, graduate students, administrators, alumni, business executives, management consultants, and faculty from various academic institutions. The course has also been offered to the public by us in five international locations such as Whistler, B.C. Canada (2012) and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (2016), each for the benefit of the Erhard-Jensen Ontological / Phenomenological Initiative (a charitable foundation).

Since 2010 (in that year under the sponsorship of the Kauffman Foundation, the Gruter Institute, and the United States Air Force Academy) we have trained a total of 134 scholars to effectively deliver the course. These 134 scholars (all of whom had previously taken the course) are from various academic institutions from North, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, the West Indies, the Middle East, and Russia. Forty-four of these scholars are currently offering the course in their universities or colleges. We have also taught the course to a group of over 200 management consultants from more than 60 firms who now offer the course or material from the course to their clients, which clients include almost all the top Fortune 50 companies.

This course: "Being A Leader and The Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model" was developed by Erhard, Jensen, Zaffron, Echeverria (2013-present) and Granger (2008-2015). The course is normally taught over one academic semester. When we authors deliver the course, we do the full course in two three-day periods, with two days between the three-day periods for assignments outside the classroom.

From the beginning of the development of the course we have been committed to discovering what was actually required to leave our students being leaders and exercising leadership effectively as their natural self-expression, and for the course to contribute to the development of a new science of leadership.

## Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to our thoughts and ideas on this topic and to the execution of this paper, including people who have participated in this course over the last 11 years of its development. Specifically, we acknowledge the support, comments and suggestions of Warren Bennis, Sandra Carr, Josh Cohen, Richard De Mulder, Miriam Diesendruck, Anders Dillan, Pat Dillan, Joe DiMaggio, Matt Granger, Bruce Gregory, Ron Heifetz, Haley McNamara-Cohn, Natalie Jensen-Noll, Hilary Putnam, Wiley (Chip) Souba, Gonneke Spits, Gordon Starr, Rik Super, and Michael Zimmerman. We also thank our colleague Allan Scherr for his contributions to the development and teaching of early versions of the course. We thank the Harvard Business School Division of Research for financial support for Jensen.

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Additionally, we would like to thank the Kauffman Foundation, the Gruter Institute and the Air Force Academy for their support of the four-day program conducted at the US Air Force Academy to train 41 scholars in delivering the course.

## **What Is Contained in This Document**

### **The *Sixth* and *Seventh* of Nine Pre-Course Readings, “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model”**

**Reading 6: Introductory Reading For “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model”**

By Erhard, Jensen, Zaffron and Echeverria

**Reading 7: Your “Course Leadership Project” Assignment, Part II of II**

By Erhard, Jensen, and Echeverria

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**Werner Erhard**  
Independent

**Michael C. Jensen**  
Jesse Isidor Straus Professor of Business Administration, Emeritus, Harvard Business School

**Steve Zaffron**  
Founder and Head of Research Development, Vanto Group

**Jeri Echeverria**  
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer, retired, California State University

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# **Reading 6: Introductory Reading For “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model”**

By Erhard, Jensen, Zaffron and Echeverria

**Note:** We acknowledge Kari L. Granger for her past work with us and specifically for the contribution she made to the development of this document.

Some of the material presented in this course is based on or derived from the consulting and program material of the Vanto Group, and from material presented in the Landmark Forum and other programs offered by Landmark Worldwide LLC. The ideas and the methodology created by Werner Erhard underlie much of the material. The authors are responsible for all errors or incompleteness in this work.

## **I. OVERVIEW**

### **A. Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership As One’s Natural Self-Expression**

The sole objective of this course is to leave you actually *being a leader* and *exercising leadership effectively* as your *natural self-expression*. By “natural self-expression” we mean a way of being and acting in any leadership situation that is a spontaneous and intuitively effective response to what you are dealing with.

*Being a leader* is not taught in most leadership courses; instead what is almost universally taught is *knowledge about leadership*. The significant difference between the impact of *being* versus *knowing* is for the most part not recognized in academia (in fact not recognized generally).

Being something and knowing about that something are dramatically different states with significantly different impacts on one’s *actions*. Also note that knowing is never a sufficient pathway to achieve being. For example, as it relates to this course, being a leader and knowing about leadership are

dramatically different states with significantly different impacts on the effective exercise of leadership. In short: *being a leader* is dramatically different from *knowing about leadership*.

Because this course is about *creating* leaders rather than teaching *about* leadership, the approach – the *specialized terms* and *unique discourses* employed – will be unfamiliar to most participants, and in fact challenging for some. In our twelve years of experimenting with and developing a course that would actually leave participants being leaders and exercising leadership effectively *as their natural self-expression*, we found it necessary to develop terminology, models, methodologies, and techniques that are different from those generally employed in academia.<sup>1</sup>

## **B. Explanation of the terms “Ontological Model” and “Phenomenological Method”**

The word *ontology* – derived from the Greek words for “being” (*onto*) and “study” (*logos*) – means “the study of being”<sup>2</sup>. If you have ever wondered what it is like to *be* a bird, or wondered what it is like to *be* your dog, you were entering an ontological inquiry. Or for another example, one might wonder what it is like to *be*, or what *being* is like, for a person of the opposite gender, or saying the same thing in another way, wonder what *existence* is like for a person of the opposite gender (“existence” being a synonym for “being”). In other words, contemporary ontology is concerned with the *nature* and *function* of being. Saying the foregoing more rigorously, what is the *nature of being* for a person, and what is the *function of such being*?

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<sup>1</sup> For those interested in an explication of the model and methodology for teaching leadership that results in actually creating leaders, see Erhard, Werner, Jensen, Michael C. and Granger, Kari L., “Creating Leaders: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model” Chapter 16, *The Handbook For Teaching Leadership*, Scott Snook, Nitin Nohria, Rakesh Khurana, eds., Sage Publications, 2012; Harvard Business School NOM Unit Working Paper 11-037; Barbados Group Working Paper No. 10-10; Simon School Working Paper Series No. FR 10-30. Available updated (2013) at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1681682>

<sup>2</sup> Originally ontology concerned itself with *what exists* (as in *what be’s*); however, contemporary ontology concerns itself with the nature of existence (as in *what is it like to be*) – or more rigorously, *what is the nature and function of being*.

For those with a philosophical bent, we use ontological in its Heideggerian sense. See Heidegger, 1962, *Being And Time* Oxford UK: Blackwell. We do not use ontological in its ancient metaphysical sense – what some have termed ontotheology – e.g., an “a priori argument for the existence of God”, or in the Platonic sense of an a priori existence of ideal forms or archetypes.

In this course we are concerned with what it is to *be* a leader. That is, what is the nature of *being* when being a leader, and what is the impact (function) of *being* on one's actions in the exercise of leadership. Of course we all have the experience of being, but rarely do we *inquire* into the nature and function of *being* – the elements and structure of being, and its consequences on our perception, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and most importantly on our actions.

### C. The Ontological Model<sup>3</sup> of Leader and Leadership

There are various models employed in the study of human beings, with each model providing an understanding of the *nature* and *function*<sup>4</sup> of human beings as viewed from the perspective of each given model – for example the perspectives of: psychology, evolutionary science, sociology, anthropology, economics, philosophy, cognitive science, genetics, biology, neuroscience, and various combinations of these perspectives such as social psychology, behavioral economics, and evolutionary biology.

We employ the ontological model – from the Latin *ontologia* “science of being” (see Section I.J.1 on page 11) – in creating leaders because of its unique power to open up and reveal the *nature and function of being* when one is being a leader, and to open up and reveal the *source of one's actions* when exercising leadership.

While ontology as a general subject is concerned with the nature and function of *being* for anything, here we are concerned with the ontology of human beings – the nature and function of *being* for human beings. Specifically, we are concerned with the ontology of leader and leadership – that is, the nature and function of *being* when being a leader, and the source of *action* in the exercise of leadership.

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<sup>3</sup> Ontology as we use the term is meant as it is used by Martin Heidegger (1927) in *Being and Time*, his groundbreaking book on *ontology* and its methodology of *phenomenology*. As we use the term and as Heidegger makes clear, this is not ontology in its medieval *metaphysical* sense.

<sup>4</sup> *Nature*: the make-up of something, the essential character of something. *Function*: the way something works, the normal or characteristic action [or behavior] of something (definitions drawn from *Webster's New World Dictionary* 1998).

#### D. The Ontological Model's *Phenomenological Methodology* for Providing Direct Access to the *Being* of Being A Leader and the *Actions* of the Effective Exercise of Leadership

The definition of phenomenology from *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

“The discipline of phenomenology may be defined initially as the study of structures of experience, or consciousness. Literally, phenomenology is the study of ‘phenomena’: ... things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience.” (Smith 2013)

What it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively can be taught and learned through two possible methods: 1) The *phenomenological (as-lived) method*: as being and action are lived and experienced, moment-to-moment, so to speak, *on-the-court*, or 2) the *epistemological (knowing about) method*: as being and action are observed, described, and then figured out, explained and commented on, so to speak, *from-the-stands*. Obviously, being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership actually happens, so to speak, *on-the-court* and not *in-the-stands*.

We employ the *phenomenological method* because it provides *direct access* to the nature and function of *being* when being a leader, and to the source of *action* in the exercise of leadership which is opened up and revealed by the ontological model (see the previous section).

In summary: The *ontological model* of leader and leadership opens up and reveals the actual nature and function of being when one is being a leader, and opens up and reveals the actual source of one's actions in the effective exercise of leadership. And, the *phenomenological method* provides a personal as-it-is-actually-lived direct access to what has been opened up by the ontological model.<sup>5</sup>

Saying the same thing in a slightly different way, the ontological model with its methodology of phenomenology provides you as a student with the opportunity to access the personal as-lived on the court

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<sup>5</sup> We are indebted to Martin Heidegger, and to those other thinkers who drew on Heidegger's ideas in their own work in the field, for having developed ontology and phenomenology as rigorous disciplines that we were able to draw on to develop an actionable pathway to being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as one's natural self-expression. Quoting Heidegger (1927, p. 33) regarding accessing being, “Ontology is possible only as phenomenology.”

experience of being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership, which when accessed in that way begins to be your natural self-expression.

As a participant in this course there is no need for you to study ontology or phenomenology. Rather it is we authors who are obligated to draw on these two disciplines to structure the course so that the course provides you with the opportunity to access for yourself the being of being a leader and the actions of the effective exercise of leadership as you will live and experience them on-the-court.

### **E. Learning *About* Leadership Versus Access to Being a Leader**

Note that the attempt to develop leaders by teaching 1) the characteristics, styles, values, cognitive processing, and the like, of successful leaders, and 2) their patterns of analysis, planning, situational awareness, etc., and 3) their general principles for action, and rules and algorithms for action, and the like fails to provide *access* to the *being* of being a leader. Such learning and training actually leaves us with no more than mere information.

An epistemological mastery of a subject leaves you *knowing*. An ontological mastery of a subject leaves you *being*.

Leadership courses where knowledge is conveyed to and held by students as *information* leave students having to remember the information, and then trying to figure out when and how to apply that information in a given leadership situation. This is in stark contrast to being a leader and exercising leadership effectively *as your natural self-expression*.

To summarize so far, effective leadership does not come from mere knowledge about what successful leaders do, or trying to emulate the characteristics or styles of noteworthy leaders, or from trying to remember and follow the steps, tips or techniques from books on coaching on leadership – and certainly not from merely being in a leadership position, or position of authority.

By the way, when you have mastered the *being* of being a leader, then in any given leadership situation, the *knowledge* you may have learned about such things as patterns of analysis, planning,

situational awareness, and the like, is readily available to you and has power as an authentic and natural expression of your *being* a leader.

#### **F. Being a Leader and Exercising Leadership Effectively As Your Natural Self-Expression Requires *Discovering For Yourself***

While an epistemological approach may require of students a firm *understanding* of what is being taught, an ontological/phenomenological approach requires students to *discover for themselves* what is being taught. The point is not to stop at learning, but to go on to discover for yourself what you learned.

What it is to discover something is very different than what it is to know and understand that something, even if you know and understand it so well that you can speak cogently about it. *To discover* is not to learn, or to figure out, or to conclude.

Once something is discovered, you find yourself actually being knocked back by what you have discovered, saying “Oh wow!” or wondering how you could not have perceived what you now perceive. You are being knocked back, as if you opened your refrigerator door and found yourself peering into the Grand Canyon. This is sometimes referred to as *Einsicht*, or an “aha experience”.

Phenomenology requires the immense intellectual effort of an *on-the-court* personal discovering of the actual phenomenon in question – and, not stopping at finding examples of it, but getting to the thing in itself. This contrasts with an *in-the-stands* understanding of something as a concept, or as a received idea or theory (someone else’s discovery).

Phenomenology studies lived experience (life as lived) as contrasted with beliefs, theories, concepts, or ideas about life and living. A phenomenological inquiry asks questions such as “What is the experience of this?” or “In what way does this show up or occur for me?” or “What does this look like in the doing of it?” Most of us are untrained in being able to perceive or experience something as it is and *apart* from any theories or concepts of that which we are perceiving or experiencing. This methodology requires of us that we bracket any theories, beliefs, concepts, what we already know, what is obvious, and what we take for

granted, about the phenomenon in which we are interested and discover newly for ourselves the phenomenon as it is actually lived.

### **G. A *Conversational Domain*, with the Power to Leave You Being a Leader and Exercising Leadership Effectively as Your Natural Self-Expression**

Most of us assume that extraordinary leaders have something inside them that makes them extraordinary. The fact is that extraordinary leaders are ordinary people just like you and me.

While extraordinary leaders are innately ordinary, they do *see* (experience) and *comprehend* (make sense of) life (the world, others, and themselves) differently than most of us do. As a consequence, they *interact* with leadership situations differently than most of us do. And, it is the way they *interact* with leadership situations – the way they interact with the world, others, and themselves – that makes them extraordinary leaders. What allows such people to experience and comprehend life (the world, others, and themselves) differently than most of us is that they experience life through a unique *conversational domain*. For example, in the case of a physician, the set of *specialized terms* (medical terms) that are *networked together* in a specific way to form the unique *conversational domain* that is used in the practice of medicine, and through which a physician *perceives*, *comprehends*, and *interacts* with the human body.

As is the case with a physician in the practice of medicine, there is a *conversational domain for leader and leadership* that results in being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership as one's natural self-expression. This conversational domain for leader and leadership is also made up of *specialized terms* that are *networked together* in a specific way. Once mastered, these specialized terms and the way they are networked together form a *linguistic domain* through which you will perceive and comprehend the world, others and yourself and do so as a leader does, and as a result you will interact with the world, others and yourself as a leader does. In medical school, physicians master the conversational domain for the practice of medicine. This course is about you mastering for yourself the conversational domain for leader and

leadership, which mastery results in you being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as your natural self-expression.

During the course we will support you in mastering the specialized terms and the way they are networked together that form this conversational domain for leader and leadership. This is accomplished by giving you the opportunity to discover in *your own lived experience* both 1) what is meant by each of the specialized terms and 2) the world of being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership that opens up from the way the specialized terms are networked together. Done in this way (finding what is presented in your own experience) the conversational domain actually belongs to you – otherwise it is just another “theory”. When this work is complete, it will result in your perceiving, comprehending, and interacting with life as a leader does.

As is the case with a physician, or a physicist, or an economist, or anyone who masters a particular realm, you will have to grapple with and locate in your own experience the new and challenging specialized terms and the way they are networked together without attempting to substitute terms or ideas with which you are more comfortable. For example, while you may be comfortable with the term “gut”, if you are going to practice medicine, you better have the distinction “ileocecal valve” and be clear about its function in the digestive system.

It is important to remember that the conversational domain that has the power to leave you with the *being* of being a leader and the *actions* of the effective exercise of leadership as *your natural self-expression* requires you to master these specialized terms and the specific way they are networked together and not some bastardized version of either.<sup>6</sup>

Note: During the course we will sometimes use the term leader and leadership as shorthand for “being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership” or shorthand for ‘what it is to be a leader and what

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<sup>6</sup> You may even find general agreement to your complaint that the “language is too complex and unnecessary and can be made much simpler and more understandable”. Do not make this mistake because if you do you will not get what is available for you in this course.

it is to exercise leadership effectively as one's natural self-expression". When you hear us using the term leader and leadership, please hear this as the full phrase.

## **H. What to Do with this Document**

Please carefully read through this document, and make notes on any questions, comments or insights you may have. Bring your questions, comments and insights with you to the first day of class. During the six days of the course, when we go through the section in which you have a question, comment or insight, please raise your hand so we can deal with your question at that time.

In our first day of class we will already be working with material related to what is covered in this document. To realize the results that we promise you will get from your participation in this course, it is important that, before the first, you have carefully read this entire document, and made notes about your questions, comments and insights.

On the first day of the course, you will have the opportunity to choose to continue to be in the course or not. A refund of the tuition portion of the course fee you have paid will be made to those who choose not to continue at that opportunity.

## **I. Dealing with Your Study of this Document**

This leadership course is developed from a unique (and what for most will be an unfamiliar) perspective – a perspective we found necessary to actually provide access to what it is to be a leader and the effective exercise of leadership as one's natural self-expression. Consequently, much of the course and what is presented in this introduction will at first be somewhat challenging. If you are willing to stick with what you find initially challenging, you will encounter the power of the ontological model and its phenomenological methodology in providing you with access to being a leader and to exercising leadership effectively as your *natural self-expression*.

As an analogy, if you were taking a course about the application of high-level mathematics to the development of an investment strategy, or the application of Einstein's special theory of relativity to the

development of more effective control of satellites, it is likely that you would also at first find what is presented difficult. At the same time, you would also likely be aware that the unique subject matter of that high-level mathematics or physics was required for your mastery of the investment strategy or the control of satellites, and therefore you would be willing to stick with it until you had become familiar with that unique perspective.

Most of us have not encountered the power of the ontological perspective or the phenomenological method, especially as it applies to being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership. Consequently, until the light goes on for you, you will need to remind yourself of the promise of this power when you find yourself wondering if the challenge of dealing with these at first unfamiliar perspectives is worth it. By the same token, there can be a point in the learning process where what you have been trying to learn (actually the knowledge or know-how you have gained) becomes a part of you – or saying this in another way, *instead of you using it, it now uses you – you've mastered it.*

You should know that we have followed the guidance of the philosopher Jacques Derrida who is quoted as having said, “I never give in to the temptation to be difficult just for the sake of being difficult. That would be too ridiculous.” By the same token, you should keep in mind that Derrida is also quoted as having said, “If things were simple, word would have gotten around.”

What makes what is presented in the course and in this introduction at first challenging is that what is presented challenges our everyday common sense worldview (our model of reality) and our received frame of reference (our mindset) regarding being a leader and the exercise of leadership. During the course, you will have the opportunity to carefully examine your worldview and your frame of reference, and on the basis of that examination choose to transform your worldview and your frame of reference. When you do so, what we say about being a leader and the exercise of leadership from the ontological perspective and phenomenological method will be entirely understandable, and we predict, exciting for you.

By the same token, providing you with actionable access to being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership as your natural self-expression is not a simple-minded effort. To open up that actionable access for yourself, you will have to exercise your intellectual muscle and we will fully support you in doing so.

## J. Explanation of Terms

The following is an introduction to some of the specialized terms, and the way they are networked together to form some of the perspectives that constitute the conversational domain of leader and leadership that is employed in this course. What there is for you to do with this introductory reading is simply to become familiar with the terms and the perspectives presented. During the course we will work with you so that you have the opportunity to master them (make them your own by finding them in your own as-lived experience).

### 1. What Is Meant by “Ontological”

As we said earlier, the word *ontology* – derived from the Greek words for “being” (*onto*) and “study” (*logos*) – means “the study of being”<sup>7</sup>. In this course we are concerned with what it is to *be* a leader. That is, what is the nature of *being* when being a leader, and what is the impact (function) of *being* on one’s actions in the exercise of leadership.

Of course, one can inquire into being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership from a number of perspectives, with each perspective providing insights not contributed by the others. For example, a psychological perspective examines leader and leadership from the perspective of *mind*; an historical perspective examines leader and leadership from *historical examples of good, bad, incompetent, and the*

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<sup>7</sup> Originally ontology concerned itself with *what exists* (as in *what be’s*); however, contemporary ontology concerns itself with the nature of existence (as in *what is it like to be*) – or more rigorously, *what is the nature and function of being*.

For those with a philosophical bent, we use ontological in its Heideggerian sense. See Heidegger, 1962, *Being And Time* Oxford UK: Blackwell. We do not use ontological in its ancient metaphysical sense – what some have termed ontotheology – e.g., an “a priori argument for the existence of God”, or in the Platonic sense of an a priori existence of ideal forms or archetypes.

*absence of*, leader and leadership; an evolutionary perspective examines the development of leader and leadership from the perspective of *adaptation* and *natural selection*; and likewise, leader and leadership can be examined from the perspectives of sociology, neuroscience, political science, economics, business, and so on.

As we indicated, leader and leadership can also be examined from the science of ontology. Ontology examines leader and leadership from the perspective of the nature and function of *being* as it relates to being a leader and the impact of *being* on one's effectiveness in the exercise of leadership. While providing its own insights and testable propositions, the ontological perspective is complementary to the findings and insights we are aware of provided by the other perspectives. While the ontological perspective is less familiar for most of us than these other perspectives and therefore perhaps at first uncomfortable, the ontological perspective is uniquely powerful in providing access to the *being* of being a leader and the *actions* of the effective exercise of leadership *as one's natural self-expression*.

There are various divergent and even conflicting views on just what leader and leadership are: "It is almost a cliché of the leadership literature that a single definition of leadership is lacking." (Bennis 2007, p. 2) And, there are divergent and conflicting descriptions of the nature and function of leader and leadership: "The scholars do not know what it is that they are studying, and the practitioners do not know what it is that they are doing." (Rost 1993, p. 8) This is reflected by the fact that on Amazon a search for books on "leader" results in 216,904 entries, and for "leadership" 204,626 entries, and they continue to grow – for example in the last year, these entries have increased by approximately 51,600 and 28,000 respectively.<sup>8</sup>

While the ontological perspective on leader and leadership distinguishes leader and leadership in a unique way, and describes the nature and function of leader and leadership uniquely, it is not our purpose to simply add another view about what leader and leadership are, or to simply add another account of the

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8 Accessed on 5 August 2017.

nature and function of leader and leadership. We employ the ontological perspective (with its phenomenological methodology) because as we said above it is uniquely effective in providing *actionable access to being a leader and to the effective exercise of leadership as one's natural self-expression.*

Being is often mistaken as something immutable. However, we would all immediately see the difference between someone saying, “You are *being* stupid” versus someone saying “You *are* stupid”. Given the right tools one has a choice about one’s way of being, and it is a part of this course to provide you with those tools. We are not speaking about the ability to *pretend to be* this way or that way; rather we are speaking about the ability to *authentically, naturally be* that way of being required to be effective in a given situation.

This course employs the ontological/phenomenological approach in each of its three major components. In Part I (the first component) of the course we use the ontological/phenomenological approach to provide actionable access to mastering for oneself the four *Foundational Factors* on which being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership is built (integrity, authenticity, being given being and action by something bigger than oneself, and being cause-in-the-matter). Then standing on this foundation, we use the ontological/phenomenological approach in Part II (the second component) of the course to enable our students to create a *Contextual Framework* for leader and leadership that gives them the being and actions of a leader as their natural self-expression. In Part III (the third component) of the course, we employ the ontological/phenomenological approach to examine and create access to those *Ontological Perceptual and Functional Constraints* common to all human beings that get in the way of their natural self-expression. We specifically focus on the perceptual and functional constraints that when being a leader and exercising leadership function to constrain and shape one’s freedom to be, and one’s freedom of action.

As you proceed through various aspects of the course, the work you do in one aspect makes increased clarity and access possible with those aspects of the course that were dealt with earlier. Consequently, we will be dealing with most aspects of the course more than once.

Summary: In this course, the application of ontology with which we are concerned is the nature of *being* as it relates to being a leader, and the impact of *being* on one's *perceptions, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and actions* in the exercise of leadership.

## 2. What Is Meant by “Way of Being”

In speaking about another person's *way of being* you or I might say, “She's in a good place”, or “That made him sad”, or “She's always cheerful”, or “He is an extrovert”. We also sometimes similarly think about our own *way of being*.

More rigorously, our *way of being* is made up of (constituted by) some combination of our 1) mental state, 2) emotional state, 3) bodily state, and 4) our thoughts, thought processes, and memories. Or saying the same thing in more experiential terms, our *way of being* is, in any given moment or situation, some combination of 1) our attitude or state of mind, 2) our feelings or emotions, 3) our body sensations, and 4) our thoughts and memories. For short, our way of being is *what is going on with us internally*.

Note that the temporality of our *way of being* is what is going on with us in *a given moment* or in *a given situation*. Even if a certain way of being could be said to be our general or characteristic way of being, none of us is always only the way we generally or characteristically are.

Once you have checked out in your own experience what we have said so far about *way of being* (and you should certainly do that), what we have said becomes pretty obvious. But, there are two facts about our *way of being* that are at first perhaps not so obvious:

(1). Our *actions* from moment to moment are generally *consistent* with our *way of being* in those moments. This is true for any *way of being*, such as annoyed, or sad, or loving, and the like. For example, when we are *being* angry we are also likely to find ourselves *acting* angrily, and when we are *being* confident we are likely to be *acting* confidently. It is clear that when we are *being* angry, or confident, or annoyed, or sad or loving, our *actions* are likely to be *consistent* with that *way of being*. More rigorously, our actions are likely to be consistent with *some combination of or one or more aspects* of our way of being.

Note that we have said that our *actions* are virtually always *consistent* with our *way of being* (what is going on with us internally). And that is all that can be directly verified in our experience (in our consciousness). We can have theories about some additional connection or relation between our *way of being* and our *actions*. However there is no proof (evidence) of any further connection or relation between our way of being and our way of acting other than that they are *consistent* with each other.

At the same time, we must note that most people go through life and act in life as though what is going on with them internally (some combination of their mental state, emotional state, bodily state, and their thoughts and memories) *causes* their actions. But there is no scientific evidence for believing in such a causal connection. All we can say about the relation between our way of being and acting is that they are mutually arising or co-arising.

In fact, during the course we will present extensive neuroscience research (Clancey 1993; Libet 1999; Hawkins 2004; Soon 2008; Haggard 2009; Kandel 2009; Bode 2011; Wolpert 2011; Zimmer 2013 and Buckner 2013) that is contrary to the belief that what is going on with you internally causes your actions. For now, the following quotes from neuroscientist Sam Harris (2012) summarize in everyday language the research about the connection between *what is going on with you internally* (in this case, your decision or intention) and your *action*:

Some moments before you are aware of what you will do next – a time in which you subjectively appear to have complete freedom to behave however you please – your brain has already determined what you will do. You then become conscious of this “decision” and believe that you are in the process of making it. (p. 9)

The intention to do one thing and not another does not *originate* in consciousness – rather, it *appears* in consciousness ... (p. 8) [emphasis added]

In summary, our *actions* are merely *consistent* with our *way of being* – that is, our actions are consistent with *some combination of or one or more aspects of* our mental state, emotional state, bodily

state, and our thoughts and memories; but our actions are not *caused* by these aspects of what is going on with us internally.

(2). And perhaps even less obvious is that both *our way of being and our actions* (arising together consistent with each other) is *correlated* with – is naturally, necessarily, closely connected with; or more poetically, in-a-dance-with – the way in which what we are dealing with *occurs* or *shows up* for us.<sup>9</sup> In short, *our way of being and acting* is a *natural correlate* of (in-a-dance-with) the way what we are dealing with *occurs* for us. For example, if the way a situation we are dealing with *occurs* or *shows up* for us as threatening, *our way of being and acting* is likely to be a *natural correlate* of (in-a-dance-with) the situation *occurring* or *showing up* for us as threatening. On the other hand, if the way a situation we are dealing with *occurs* or *shows up* for us as an opportunity to excel, *our way of being and acting* is likely to be *correlated* with the situation *occurring* for us as an opportunity to excel.

You can confirm facts 1 and 2 for yourself by checking them out in your own experience. Regarding fact 1: Is your *way of being* at this moment – that is, some combination of your attitude or state of mind, and your feelings or emotions, and your body sensations, and your thoughts and memories regarding what you are dealing with – *consistent* with *your way of acting* in this moment? Or more pointedly, is your way of being and way of acting consistent with each other? And, has that been essentially true in situations you have dealt with in the past?

And then, fact 2: Is your way of *being and acting* (arising as though one thing) *correlated with* (closely connected with) the way what you are dealing with *occurs* or *shows up* for you? And, has that been essentially true in situations you have dealt with in the past? (For those of you who are tempted to do so, don't stop at understanding the text of what we said; rather, take the time to actually check it out in your own *as-lived* experience.)

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<sup>9</sup> By “correlated” we do not mean mere statistical correlation, nor do we mean “is caused by”.

In summary: Our *way of being and acting* is *correlated* with (naturally, necessarily, closely connected with; in-a-dance-with) the way in which what we are dealing with *occurs* or *shows up* for us.

During the course everything in this Section will be gone over and made clear for you so that you can confirm its validity in your own *lived experience*. In addition, the critical importance for being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership of what has been covered in this Section will be dealt with in depth during the in-class sessions of the course.

### ***a. A Fact About the Way In Which What We Are Dealing With Occurs for Us***

When we go through life that who we are is whatever we are referring to when we say “I” or “me” (which is the way we usually do go through life), there is a *background* for the way in which life, living, and self *occur* for us. That is, when who we are for ourselves is what we are referring to when we say “I” or “me”, this *background* (or we could say environment) for the way in which life, living, and self *occur* for us, *colors and shapes* life, living, and self. We term this background or environment for the way life, living, and self occur: *mood*.

The *occurring of life, living, and self* is in the *foreground* and the *mood* is in the *background* coloring and shaping the *occurring* in the *foreground*. During the in-class sessions of the course we will clarify and fully deal with what is introduced in this paragraph. At this point, the only thing there is to get about what is said in this paragraph is that there is this something called “mood”, and *mood* is distinct from and different than what is meant by *clearing*, a term you will encounter in the next section.

## **3. The “Fundamental and Essential Nature and Function of Being for Human Beings” in Contrast to One’s “Way of Being”**

There is a difference between

the *fundamental and essential* nature of *being* for human beings, and  
any person’s individual *moment-to-moment* particular *way of being*.

We are sometimes aware of our particular moment-to-moment *way of being*, but we human beings so take for granted that we *exist* (that we *are*), that we give no thought to the actual nature and function of

*being* for us human beings (unless it is to think about the time when we won't be at all). As a result, getting clear about the fundamental and essential nature and function of *being* for human beings (as contrasted with our individual moment-to-moment *way of being*) will be somewhat challenging.

*Being* for human beings (that is, the fundamental and essential nature of *being* for human beings) is “being the *clearing*” (the possibility, or something like, the emptiness or nothingness) in which life, living, and self *occur* or *show up* for us. What shows up in the *clearing that we are* is all of it, the entire “state of the world”. All of it, our entire “state of the world” – includes physical objects and non-physical entities of every kind (and their properties and in various relationships), other people (and their properties and in various relationships), and we ourselves (and our properties and in various relationships), along with the spatiality of here and there, and the temporality of the past, the present, and the future.

The “ourselves” that shows up in the clearing that we are, is that to which we refer when we say “I” or “me” – that is, our particular way of being in this or that moment, or our sense of ourselves (our identity or persona). You can confirm this by noticing that you (as the clearing you are) are capable of being aware of yourself as whatever it is that you are referring to when you say “I” or “me”, and the at-the-moment way of being of that “I” or “me”. In other words, what you refer to when you say “I” or “me” shows up for you in the *clearing* that you fundamentally and essentially are.

We note here that a drawback with the phrase the “*clearing that we are*” is that it seems to imply subjectivity, and it is definitely *not* meant in that way. We will clarify and fully develop this during the in-class sessions of the course.

Saying all this in other words: *Being* for human beings (the fundamental and essential nature of *being* for human beings) is always and only, as philosopher Martin Heidegger so brilliantly nailed it, “being in the world” (Heidegger 1927, trans. 1996). While we generally think of *being* as something located “in here”, if you take a careful look you will see that you are always being *with* something or being *about*

something, that is, always being in the world (even if the part of the world you are being with is that thing you refer to when you say “I” or “me” or the way of being of “I” or “me”).

You can confirm for yourself that *being* for you is being in the world, that you are so to speak a clearing for it all, in that when you are conscious, you are always conscious of something or conscious about something (even if what you are conscious of in a given moment is being conscious). In other words, for human beings what it is to *be* is for the world, all of it (our entire “state of the world”) to *show up* (to occur).

Our moment to moment *way of being* is *not* the fundamental and essential nature of *being* for us human beings. When we are being the *clearing* for life to show up, and our “I” or “me” self is simply one of the things that shows up in the clearing, that leaves us free to be and free to act in life – free to be and free to act with whatever we are dealing with in any situation. This is critical for being a leader and exercising leadership effectively *as one’s natural self-expression*; and during the in-class sessions of the course *access* to this fundamental and essential nature of *being* for us human beings will be made available to you.

As was the case with the previous Section (Section 2), during the course everything in this Section will be gone over and made clear for you so that you can confirm its validity for yourself in your own lived experience. In addition, the critical importance of what has been covered in this Section for being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership *as your natural self-expression* will be dealt with in depth during the in-class sessions of the course.

#### **4. What Is the Importance for Leader and Leadership of Being as the “Clearing You Are”, and Its Impact On Your “Way Of Being”?**

1. In any leadership situation, your *actions* in the exercise of leadership are consistent with your *way of being* in that situation.
2. And, your *way of being* in that situation is a correlate of (responsive to) the way what is in the clearing you are *occurs* for you in that situation.

3. And, the way what is in the clearing actually *occurs* for you in that situation is a product of the *kind of clearing you are* for leader and leadership.

In summary, in any leadership situation, the *kind of clearing you are* for leader and leadership shapes your way of being and acting.

The attempt to identify the right ways of being and acting – the right mental, emotional, and bodily states, and the right thoughts and thought processes, and the right actions – to be a leader in this situation or that situation, and then have students attempt to be those ways and act in those ways has failed to produce leaders. Rather, being a leader and effectively exercising leadership is a matter of *the kind of clearing you are* for leader and leadership.

The basic theorem upon which the ontological approach to leader and leadership is built.

- 1 When you take yourself on as being the “clearing in which it all shows up”, you give yourself a certain access to determine for yourself the kind of clearing you are for leader and leadership.
- 2 And, *the kind of clearing you are* for leader and leadership determines the way in which what shows up in the clearing *occurs* for you.
- 3 And, the way what shows up in the clearing *occurs* for you determines your *way of being* and *acting* when being a leader and exercising leadership.

This course promises you *actionable access* to being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership *as your natural self-expression*. This is accomplished by creating leader and leadership as a *context* that when mastered leaves you dwelling solidly in the *world of* being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as these are lived in the moment *on-the-court*.<sup>10</sup> Having mastered this world (dwelling in the conversational domain that constitutes this world), being a leader and exercising leadership effectively become your natural self-expression.

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<sup>10</sup> One who dwells in the world of leader and leadership is akin to the doctor who dwells in the world of medicine, or the experimental physicist who dwells in the world of physics, or the ceramicist who dwells in the world of ceramics, or the academic who dwells in the world of academia.

In summary, dwelling in the world of leader and leadership becomes the context that leaves you in any situation being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as your natural self-expression. During the course we will work with you to *create* for yourself the context for leader and leadership that leaves you being in the world of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively so that in any situation you are dealing with, that situation occurs or shows up for you such that being a leader and exercising leadership effectively is your natural way of being and acting in that situation.

## **5. What is Meant by “Context”**

Every situation we deal with shows up for us in some context or other. While these contexts exert enormous influence on our perception and behavior, for the most part we function without being aware of or noticing what that context is. A context functions as a cognitive lens (a powerful filter) through which we see life (the world, others, and ourselves). In any situation, one’s context for that situation 1) determines the meaning of certain aspects of what we are dealing with, 2) highlights some aspects, and 3) dims or even blanks out yet other aspects. As such, a context has the power to shape and color the way what we are dealing with actually occurs for us. As a result, because our way of being and acting is always consistent with the way what we are dealing with occurs for us, a context has a powerful impact on both our way of being and our actions.

For example, when sitting down with another party to negotiate terms for a new business deal, if I have a context for my negotiations with the other party of “us versus them”, the other party is likely to occur for me as looking out for their best interest or even as out to get me. As such, my way of being might be defensive or even offensive, and my actions might be consistent with playing a game and trying to get the upper hand. On the other hand, if I have a context for my negotiations with the other party of “a new partnership”, the other party is likely to occur for me as an opportunity to create a new relationship. As such, my way of being might be collaborative and my actions might be consistent with searching for mutually satisfying solutions.

In the example above, you can start to get a sense of the power that a context has to impact one's way of being and one's actions.

## **6. What is Meant by “Ontological Constraint”**

In this course we examine and create access to those ontological factors that for human beings constrain and shape a person's opportunity set for being and action – what we term Ontological Constraints, composed of two separate sub-classifications, namely, Perceptual Constraints and Functional Constraints. (Perceptual and Functional Constraints are dealt with below in Section I.J.9., p. 28 and in Section I.J.10, p. 33 respectively.)

We focus on these Ontological Constraints because they limit and shape one's freedom to be when being a leader, and as a consequence limit and shape one's perceptions, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and acting. In this course, we provide access to substantially reducing this limiting and shaping where it impacts your being a leader and your effective exercise of leadership.

Some of these ontological perceptual constraints and ontological functional constraints that are obstacles to being a leader and to the effective exercise of leadership are inherent in and shared by all people – a consequence (without an intervention) of the way our brains work. Others of these obstacles are the result of a person's history and experience.

Summary: Ontological constraints are those obstacles to one's natural self-expression (inherent in all people) that must be removed (or at least substantially relaxed) in order to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively.

## **7. What Is Meant by “Worldview” (Model of Reality)**

The *Encarta Dictionary* (2004) defines *worldview* as: “a comprehensive interpretation or image of the universe and humanity.”

*Worldview* (or model of reality) refers to the network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions through which an

individual interprets and interacts with the world, other people, and himself or herself. In fact, everything in one's world is seen through the lens of one's *worldview*. This lens constitutes an important aspect of one's being, that is, the way the world, others and oneself occurs for one is constrained and shaped by one's *worldview*.

As examples of the constraining and shaping by one's *worldview* on one's view of the world, others, and one's self, consider the following: The transformation from a Ptolemaic cosmology to a Copernican one; from humans being other-determined (by tribal chiefs, warlords, kings, emperors, and high-priests) to being self-determined members of a civil community; from the phlogiston explanation of combustion to Lavoisier's theory of chemical reactions; from a creationist paradigm to an evolutionary one; from a notion of what it meant to be human that allowed seeing some humans as sub-human, which justified slavery, to what it means to be human in which no human is seen as sub-human; from the humors explanation to the germ theory of disease; from classical mechanics to quantum mechanics (which allowed for but redefined classical mechanics); and finally the cognitive revolution which for the most part replaced behaviorist approaches to psychological study, and resulted in the acceptance of cognition as central to the study of human behavior.

A present day (and therefore more difficult to see) example of a constraining worldview is most people's worldview of "cause/effect". Most of us believe that whatever we encounter has been *caused* by something. This aspect of our *worldview* makes unintelligible for many of us any non-cause/effect phenomenon.

A scientifically verified example of a non-cause/effect phenomenon is "entanglement". This is the name given by quantum physicists to the instantaneous invariant non-cause/effect correlation of the states of a certain two particles (quanta) that come into contact and are later at a distance from one another. "No

matter how far they move apart, if one is tweaked, measured, observed, the other seems to instantly respond, even if the whole world now lies between them.”<sup>11</sup>

Given our non-physicist’s *worldview* (model of reality) that everything we encounter is caused by something, we would like to say that the state of the one particle *causes* the *effect* of the state of the other particle. However, this cannot be true because when measured the two particles are at a distance from one another and the responsive result is instantaneous. Because this responsive result is instantaneous at a distance, the connection cannot be a cause/effect connection. Instantaneous action at a distance as a cause/effect phenomenon would violate the experimentally established limit of the speed of light as the absolute maximum rate of transfer of information from one location to another (that is, something being the effect of some cause must happen within the speed of light).<sup>12</sup>

It is the only time I can think of when a theory led to an outlandish prediction, the prediction was confirmed by a series of brilliant experiments, and everyone was unhappy with the result. We really don't like it when Nature tells us that our comfortable view of the universe [*worldview* – model of reality] doesn't hold. Trefil (2008)

Staying in the realm of quantum mechanics for a further example of how one’s worldview (model of reality) acts as a lens through which everything in one’s world is viewed: Even the great Einstein when confronted by the *Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle* was constrained by his worldview (model of reality), claiming, “God does not play dice with the universe”.<sup>13</sup> He also criticized the reality of entanglement as “*spukhafte Fernwirkung*” or “spooky action at a distance.” Einstein believed that entanglement would prove to be merely some error in the theory. He once wrote: “I find the idea quite intolerable that an electron exposed to radiation should choose of its own free will, not only its moment to jump off, but also its

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11 Gilder, Louisa. 2008. *The Age of Entanglement*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 3

12 Physicist James Trefil’s everyday analogy for entanglement: “If you hold two baseballs in the palm of your hand, then throw one to the left and the other to the right, you expect that clocking the speed of one ball will not affect the other. ... Not so with electrons. Once two electrons have come into contact, they never seem to forget that this has happened. It would be as if, by making a measurement on the left-hand baseball, you could determine what the right-hand baseball was doing.” Trefil, James. “Very Small, Very Weird.” *Washington Post*. A book review of *The Age of Entanglement*. 7 Dec 2008. Also see Salant, et al (2008), “Testing the speed of ‘spooky action at a distance’”.

13 Isaacson, Walter. 2007, paperback edition. *Einstein: His Life And Universe*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 4.

direction. In that case, I would rather be a cobbler, or even an employee in a gaming house, than a physicist.”<sup>14</sup>

We are lucky that Einstein did not need to give up physics for cobbling. He was saved by the fact that it was only after he died that experiments confirmed the non-cause/effect phenomenon of entanglement – demonstrating that even for the greatest of us, one’s *worldview* (model of reality) constrains and shapes the way we view the world. And note, especially for us non-Einsteins, just how challenging, and even threatening, altering our *worldview* is for any of us (more about effectively dealing with this later in this paper).<sup>15</sup>

That non-cause/effect phenomena (entanglement in this case) are counter-intuitive for us (mind-boggling) points to the constraint our *worldview* imposes on us.

Unfortunately, being able to “see” our own *worldview* is extremely difficult. One’s *worldview* is like air to the bird or water to the fish; it is generally invisible to us. Nevertheless, for each of us, our *worldview* (or model of reality) – that is, our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world, other people, and ourselves – is an important aspect of our *being*, which constrains and shapes our way of being with the world, other people, and ourselves.

## 8. What Is Meant by “Frame of Reference” (Mindset)

*The Fontana Dictionary Of Modern Thought* (1988) says that your *frame of reference* selectively constrains the course and outcome of your perceptions and thinking. The *Encarta Dictionary* (2004) defines *mindset* as: “set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determine somebody's behavior and outlook”. *Frame*

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14 Born, Max. 2005, first published 1971. *The Born-Einstein Letters 1916 – 1955*: Macmillan, p. 80, letter of 29 April 1924.

15 The difficulties and reluctance that human beings confront in shifting their worldview is illustrated by Stapp’s observation that “More than three quarters of a century have passed since the overturning of the classical laws, yet the notion of mechanical determinism still dominates the general intellectual milieu.” Preface to Stapp, Henry P. 2007. *Mindful Universe: Quantum Mechanics and the Participating Observer*. Springer-Verlag.

*of reference* refers to the network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions through which an individual interprets and interacts with a given *specific something* in his or her world.

While one's *worldview* is relative to everything in one's world, each of one's *frames of reference* is relative to some specific something in one's world. It is as though our *worldview* is a primary lens through which we view everything in our world. And, our various *frames of reference* are secondary lenses through which we view specific things in our world.

A prejudice about a specific something is an example of a *frame of reference* relative to that specific something. A prejudice (either positive or negative) is the unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions one has about that specific something. Prejudice is a clear example of how one's *frame of reference* constitutes an aspect of one's being, i.e., being either positive or negative about that specific something. Our prejudices, like any frame of reference, constrain and shape our perceptions of, and our imagination, thoughts and thought processes about that which we have the prejudice.

For another example, people have different *frames of reference* (network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions) for what constitutes art. While some people's *frame of reference* for what constitutes art makes Andy Warhol's painting of a Campbell soup can worth millions of dollars, other people's *frame of reference* for what constitutes art makes that same painting unintelligible as art.

For an example of how one's *frame of reference* (mindset) relative to leader and leadership can constrain and shape one's view of being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership, consider the following: Many people's frame of reference for leader and leadership includes the belief that one must have a *leadership position* or a *position of authority* or *decision rights* in order to be a leader and exercise leadership effectively. This is simply not true. And, acting out of this mistaken belief dramatically reduces

one's ability to be a leader in any situation, and no matter what the circumstances. As will become apparent during the course, one can be a leader and effectively exercise leadership when not in a leadership position or position of authority, and even with no decision rights. In fact, there are situations in which the only person who can provide effective leadership is someone *not* in a leadership position or position of authority and with no decision rights.

Furthermore, being in a leadership position or position of authority and having decision rights does not leave you being a leader or effectively exercising leadership. In fact, position, authority, and having decision rights often makes the effective exercise of leadership more challenging. In fact, in such cases to be effective as a leader you must treat this as a special case of leadership. It requires special consideration to avoid the deadly mistake of attempting to *depend* on one's position or authority to exercise leadership. And, it also requires special consideration to deal with the force and thrall that those being led often attribute to the presence of position or authority, or the possession of decision rights.<sup>16</sup>

As we will deal with more fully during the course, one's *frames of reference* (network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions) relative to leader and leadership constrain one's freedom to be *when being a leader*. This is because one's *frames of reference* constrain and shape one's perceptions, and one's imagination and creativity in thinking and planning, and consequently one's actions *in the exercise of leadership*.

A critical obstacle to being a leader and exercising leadership effectively is the constraining and shaping imposed by one's frame of reference relative to *oneself*. That is, one's ideas and beliefs about oneself constrain and shape one's freedom to be when being a leader, and consequently constrain and shape one's perceptions, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and therefore one's actions in the exercise of leadership.

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16 See: Cohen, Adam. 2008. "Four Decades After Milgram, We're Still Willing to Inflict Pain." *New York Times*, Dec. 29 [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/29/opinion/29mon3.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/29/opinion/29mon3.html?_r=1).

As with one's *worldview*, it is difficult to "see" one's own *frames of reference*.

This course is designed to support you in unconcealing for yourself your *worldview* and *frames of reference* relative to who you are for yourself, and relative to what being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership is for you. Surprisingly, you will find that this awareness by itself (without further effort) relaxes the substantial constraints and shaping on your way of being and acting imposed by your prevailing *worldview* and your *frames of reference*. As a consequence, when you are being a leader and exercising leadership, the constraints and shaping imposed on your freedom to be and act are relaxed. Saying the same thing from another perspective, such awareness expands your available opportunity set for being, perceiving, imagining, creating, thinking, planning and acting – with the result that your capacity for being a leader and your ability to effectively exercise leadership are dramatically enhanced.

## 9. What Is Meant by "Perceptual Constraint"

*Worldview* (model of reality) [Section I.J.7, p. 22] and *frames of reference* (mindsets) [Section I.J.8, p. 25] act as Perceptual Constraints that *limit* and *shape* the way in which the world, others, and we ourselves occur (show up) for us. These Perceptual Constraints limit and shape (distort) what we perceive of what is actually there in the situations with which we are dealing.

The *limiting factors* of these Perceptual Constraints result in two distinct kinds of limits on what we perceive of the structure and operation of what is actually there. Namely, some of the structure and/or operation of what is there does not occur (show up) for us at all (we are blind to it), and some other of what is there occurs for us (is registered) only below our level of awareness. What is there in the situations we are dealing with includes who we are for ourselves in dealing with that situation, and therefore, this blindness extends to our perception of aspects of ourselves – what we cannot see about ourselves – when dealing with this or that kind of situation.

With what we *do* perceive, the *shaping factors* of these Perceptual Constraints shape *the way in which* the structure and operation of what is actually there occurs for us. While these *shaping factors* always

alter (distort) in some way our perception of what is actually there, in some cases they so distort our perception that we are left with an essentially false perception of the structure and/or operation of what we are dealing with. Again, this *shaping factor* includes a shaping (distortion) of our perception of our own nature and capacities when dealing with this or that kind of situation.

As you will remember, our *worldview* and *frames of reference* that constitute our Perceptual Constraints are like air to the bird, and water to the fish – that is, our Perceptual Constraints are in most cases invisible to us.

This ontological perspective on what occurs for us is consistent with neuroscience research which has demonstrated that 80% or more of what occurs for us is generated by pre-existing patterns in the brain rather than what our eyes record of what is actually there in the world. As neuroscientists often put it, we do not see what our eyes see, we see what our brain sees. As summarized by Gawande (2008):

If visual sensations were primarily received rather than constructed by the brain, you'd expect that most of the fibres going to the brain's primary visual cortex would come from the retina. Instead, scientists have found that only twenty per cent do; eighty per cent come downward from regions of the brain governing functions like memory. Richard Gregory, a prominent British neuropsychologist, estimates that visual perception is more than ninety per cent memory and less than ten per cent sensory nerve signals.<sup>17</sup>

An important aspect of what the brain supplies to our perception of the world and any specific aspect of the world with which we are dealing comes from what neuroscientists term “invariant representations”<sup>18</sup> – the models the brain uses to create our perceptions. As neuroscientist Jeff Hawkins (2004) puts it:

To make predictions of novel events, the cortex must form invariant representations. Your brain needs to create and store a model of the world as it is, independent from how you see it under changing circumstances. (p.107)

The brain uses vast amounts of memory to create a model of the world. Everything you know and have learned is stored in this model. The brain uses this memory-based model to make continuous predictions of future events. (p.6)

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17 Gregory (1998, p. 5): “. . . a major contribution of stored knowledge to perception is consistent with the recently discovered richness of downgoing pathways in brain anatomy. Some 80% of fibres to the lateral geniculate nucleus relay station come downwards from the cortex, and only about 20% from the retinas. [See Sillito, A. 1995. “Chemical Soup: Where and How Drugs May Influence Visual Perception”, in *The Artful Eye*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 291-306.]”

18 See Hawkins, Jeff and Sandra Blakeslee. 2004. *On Intelligence*. Henry Holt and Company, LLC. pp. 109 – 116; and Li, Nuo and James J. DiCarlo. 2008. “Unsupervised Natural Experience Rapidly Alters Invariant Object Representation in Visual Cortex.” *Science*, V. 321: Sept. 12, pp. 1502-1507. 10.1126/science.1160028.

Our “model of the world” made up of our cortex’s invariant representations (as Hawkins has put it) is constrained and shaped by our *worldview* (model of reality), and, with regard to specific aspects of the world, is further constrained and shaped by our *frame of reference* (mindset) relative to each of those specific aspects.

Commenting on what happens when a ball player is catching a ball Hawkins explains:

When a ball is thrown, three things happen. First, the appropriate memory [invariant representation] is automatically recalled by the sight of the ball. Second, the memory [invariant representation] actually recalls a temporal sequence of muscle commands. And third, the retrieved memory [invariant representations of perception and action] is adjusted as it is recalled to accommodate the particulars of the moment, such as the ball’s actual path and the position of your body. (p.69)

If what we quoted of Hawkins’ explanation about catching a ball was the whole story, everyone who was not physically impaired who was willing to practice catching would catch perfectly virtually every time. Of course some have an edge in being endowed with a superior physical genetic predisposition for athletic skill. Nevertheless, even a superior genetic predisposition, coupled with years of practice of ball catching, does not guarantee perfect ball catching every time.

Our *frame of reference* (our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions) regarding ourselves catching a ball is stored as neuronal patterns in our brain that are included in our invariant representation (model) of ball catching. As Hawkins said, “Everything you know and have learned is stored in this model.” Said simply, my brain’s invariant representation of a moving ball and its associated temporal sequence of muscle commands for my catching a ball include the contents of my frame of reference regarding my ball catching.

For example, even if I were physically genetically gifted and well-practiced, if my *frame of reference* for ball catching includes an idea (belief) about myself that “I choke under pressure”, that aspect of my *frame of reference* (stored in my brain’s invariant representation of catching a ball) shapes my perception of myself when attempting to catch a ball. In the process my emotions, thinking, and planning, but most importantly my actions in my attempt to catch the ball that are contained in my brain’s invariant representation of my catching a ball are consistent with (shaped by) that perception of myself when

attempting to catch a ball. In the case of ball catching, my Perceptual Constraint (my belief that “I choke under pressure”) leaves me with the perception that I am less than fully able when it comes to my ball catching ability.

Even if my genetic predisposition for athletic skill is average, if my *frame of reference* for ball catching includes an idea (belief) that “I am a klutz”, no matter how much I practice, that “klutz” aspect of my *frame of reference* (stored in my brain’s invariant representation of my catching a ball) constrains and shapes my perceptions, and my emotions, thinking, planning, and my actions in my attempt to catch the ball. And as a result, I will perform below my actual capacity. Again, this Perceptual Constraint (the belief that “I am a klutz”) leaves me with the perception about myself that when it comes to my ball-catching ability, I am likely to be unable to catch the ball.<sup>19</sup>

During the course we will demonstrate taking away a constraining and shaping element of one’s *frame of reference*, and let you see for yourself the resulting impact on performance.

Summarizing in solely neuroscience terms, whenever we deal with something, our brain’s invariant representation of what we are dealing with shapes our *perception* of what is actually there, including our perception of ourselves in dealing with what is there. Based on that invariant-representation-shaped *perception*, the brain generates a *prediction* of the structure and operation of what we are dealing with (a prediction of the way it works, and the way we will act in dealing with it). (As Hawkins said, “The brain uses this memory-based model to make continuous predictions of future events.”) Appropriate to that *prediction*, the brain triggers a *pattern of action* (temporal sequence of muscle commands) consistent with realizing the outcome intended. However, that *pattern of action* is constrained solely to one that is consistent with the brain’s *prediction* of the structure and operation of what we are dealing with and the way we will act in dealing with it.

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<sup>19</sup> The remarkable effects on performance produced by Tim Gallwey’s Inner Game coaching in various athletic endeavors is evidence of the effectiveness of relaxing (taking away the effect of) the constraints and shaping on performance imposed by an athlete’s frame of reference for herself and her event. See for example: Gallwey, W. Timothy. 1977. *The Inner Game of Tennis*. New York: Random House.

As we illustrated in our examples – “I am a klutz” and “I choke under pressure” – the brain’s invariant-representation-shaped *perception* of what we are dealing with includes any limits or shaping imposed by our *frames of reference* relative to what we are dealing with. As a consequence, the brain’s prediction of the structure and operation of what we are dealing with is likely to be inconsistent with what is actually there. As a result, in such cases the associated *pattern of action* triggered by the brain will also be inconsistent with the way what we are dealing with actually is.

Our purpose in discussing the various findings we have referenced from the neuroscience perspective is simply to make the point that what is revealed from an ontological perspective is allowed by and even consistent with the neuroscience perspective.

To summarize now in ontological terms what is said in this section: Worldview (model of reality) and frames of reference (mindsets) act as Perceptual Constraints that limit and shape the way in which the world, others, and we ourselves occur (show up) for us. These Perceptual Constraints limit and shape what we perceive of what is actually there in the situations we are dealing with – including its structure and operation, and our perception of ourselves when dealing with that situation. As we said, our worldview and frames of reference that create our Perceptual Constraints are like air to the bird and water to the fish, that is, in most cases are invisible to us. As a consequence, when being with and acting on what one is dealing with, one cannot take into account what is hidden or distorted by these Perceptual Constraints.

Finally, the way of being and the actions that would be required to realize our intentions are limited and shaped by our Perceptual Constraints – that is, by our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world and whatever specific aspect of the world with which we are dealing, including we ourselves in dealing with that aspect of the world. Saying the same thing in another way, our Perceptual Constraints limit our opportunity set for being and action.

In this course we will bring to light these Perceptual Constraints faced by all human beings when being a leader and in the exercise of leadership, with the purpose of gaining perceptual clarity of what is in fact in front of us in the world, and clarity about our actual capacity for dealing with it. The consequent relaxing of these Perceptual Constraints increases the likelihood that our way of being, creative imagination, emotions, thinking, planning and actions will be appropriate to what is actually there in what we are dealing with (as opposed to some distortion of what is there), resulting naturally in one's personal best for that with which one is dealing.

### **10. What Is Meant by “Functional Constraint”**

As we indicated, one's Perceptual Constraints distort one's perception of what one is dealing with, and as a result is likely to interfere with one's effectiveness in dealing with it. By the way, many of us have perceptual constraints that distort our perception of ourselves.

By contrast, even if one's perceptions were not distorted (limited and shaped by a Perceptual Constraint), one's Functional Constraints when triggered fixate one's way of being and acting.

One's way of being and action are *fixated* by a Functional Constraint in the following sense: When anger, for example, is the triggered fixated way of being and acting, while the way one expresses and acts on the anger may depend on the circumstances that triggered it, one's way of being is *fixed* as (restricted to) anger. We may even try to hide our anger by suppressing our expression of it; but our being angry is still the fixed way of being.

In everyday language the behavior generated by a Functional Constraint is sometimes referred to as “knee jerk reaction”. Psychologists sometimes refer to this behavior as “automatic stimulus/response behavior” – where, in the presence of a particular stimulus (trigger), the inevitable response is an automatic set way of being and acting.

In the late 1990s, neuroscientists attributed the “automatic stimulus/response behavior” to what was termed an *amygdala hijack* (see LeDoux (1998) and Goleman (1995, Ch. 2). The amygdala is a part of the

reptilian brain that evolution has preserved for us, and up until recently has been thought to be involved when something in the situation one is dealing with occurs in some way as a threat to one's survival. Contemporary neuroscientists are calling for more research on the function of the amygdala as there may be more than just the amygdala involved in one's response to a perceived threat to one's survival.

However, further evolution has made perceived threats to survival include not only threats to our physical body and the opportunity for sex, but for human beings also includes threats to our identity. These threats to identity include evidence to the contrary or challenges to what we believe to be true about ourselves, others, and the world, that is, what we "*know*" to be right. The threat is often simply something said by someone that is contrary to what we believe.<sup>20</sup> Threats to our identity also include the possibility of something we are consciously or non-consciously avoiding about ourselves or our lives even being touched on, or the possibility of something we are consciously or non-consciously hiding about ourselves or our lives being exposed.

Rather than being physically painful, such threats are emotionally or psychically painful. Although these threats are in no way a threat to one's physical being, the human brain reacts as though they are a physical threat, that is, reacts with fight (including defensiveness) or flight (avoidance).

Such threats cause the brain to be "hijacked", suppressing the rational functioning carried on in the brain's prefrontal cortex. When our brain interprets something as a threat, the triggered response is limited to only fight or flight. (Flight includes freeze as a form of flight.) Saying the same thing in another way, when we are hijacked, our opportunity set for being and action is reduced to some expression of fight or flight.

For human beings, threats to a person's identity that generate a hijack that suppresses rational functioning include threats to anything with which that person identifies. For example, when a person

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<sup>20</sup> See the following for evidence that threatening language activates the fight or flight response triggered by the amygdala: Isenberg, N. et al. 1999. "Linguistic Threat Activates the Human Amygdala." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*. USA, vol. 96: August, pp. 10456–10459.

identifies with an idea, belief or theory (like a religious or political belief, or a scientific theory), a challenge to that idea, belief or theory often triggers a hijack. Other examples include such things as something someone says that seems to make us wrong, or even something so simple as having someone offer to correct an error we made, or a challenge to what we “*know*” to be the right way of doing something, or a challenge to our worldview or one or more of our frames of reference, or the threat of losing, or a threat to our authority or position (dominance), or the threat of being dominated, or a challenge to our way of being, or a threat of the loss of admiration (losing face). In short, threats to a person’s identity, or to anything with which that person identifies, can and often do generate a hijack that suppresses rational functioning.

When being a leader or exercising leadership, such hijack behavior is counter-productive in the extreme. Those you are leading almost invariably interpret such behavior as evidence of a dysfunctional leader. When triggered, one’s Functional Constraints leave one with little or no freedom to be or to act – one is so to speak “on rails” and therefore unable to respond appropriately (optimally) to the given situation.

If you have ever regretted the way you were being, or what you said or did with another when what you said or did was a knee-jerk reaction triggered by something in the situation that was almost certainly a personal example of a Functional Constraint in action.

Our Functional Constraints (triggerable set-ways-of-being-and-acting) often seem justified and even rational at the time, and are therefore difficult for us to recognize as a limitation on our being and action. (And, while such limitations on our behavior are difficult for us to recognize in ourselves, that we are stuck and “on rails” is often apparent to others.) In this course you will have the opportunity to identify for yourself your personal triggerable fixed ways of being and acting (your personal Functional Constraints), at least those related to being a leader and the exercise of leadership. And, you will have the opportunity to master those Functional Constraints in the sense that you will dramatically reduce the frequency with which you are triggered into these dysfunctional ways of being and acting.

## 11. What Is Meant by “Action Is a Correlate of the Occurring”<sup>21</sup>

We argue that experience and the history of human behavior demonstrate that one’s being and actions (within the limits of one’s physical and mental capacities) are always correlated with the way in which what one is dealing with occurs (shows up) for one<sup>22</sup>, rather than being correlated with the way what one is dealing with actually is. Of course, if by coincidence the way what one is dealing with happens to occur for one as it actually is, one’s actions will be correlated with (consistent with) the way it actually is.

Saying the same thing in light of what has been presented in the sections above; our actions are a correlate of the limited and shaped way in which what we are dealing with occurs for us. However, to be truly effective, one’s actions must be correlated with the way what one is dealing with actually is. This is likely to be the case when one is entirely free to be – that is, when one’s being and actions are not limited or shaped by either of the two Ontological Constraints. In such a case, (within the limits of one’s physical and mental capacities), one’s actions will be correlated with the way what one is dealing with actually is, and will therefore be effective. In this case what one perceives is consistent with what is actually there and one’s ability to act on what is there is unconstrained. And therefore, one’s actions will be one’s personal best for the given situation. As one gains more knowledge and experience, one’s personal best naturally increases.

By contrast, when what is actually there shows up for one limited and shaped by one’s Perceptual Constraints, one’s actions will be correlated with that limited and shaped occurring, rather than with the way what one is dealing with actually is.

In addition, even if what shows up is undistorted by any Perceptual Constraints, if it contains a trigger for a Functional Constraint (e.g., a triggered reaction or hijack), one’s actions are no longer

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21 See Erhard, W., Jensen, M. C., and Barbados Group. 2010. "A New Paradigm of Individual, Group, and Organizational Performance" (in process) <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1437027> See also Powers, William T. 2008. *Seeing Is Behaving' Living Control Systems III: The Fact of Control*. Benchmark Publications.

22 "... we enact our perceptual experience; we act it out." Noe, Alva. 2004. *Action in Perception*. The MIT Press, p.1.

correlated with what one is dealing with, rather one's actions are now fixed by that Functional Constraint. This leaves no room for the realization of correlated actions that are appropriate to what is actually there.

In summary, from an ontological perspective it becomes unavoidably clear that action is a correlate of the occurring. In the course, we will provide a vivid demonstration that action is a correlate of the occurring. That is, that a person's way of being and acting is correlated with the way in which what they are dealing with occurs for them, rather than the way it actually is.

The good news is that most of what limits and shapes our perceptions – that is, our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions – is in fact accessible through language. Since language is a faculty over which we can exercise real choice and through which we can employ our emotional and rational intelligence, an effective use of language provides access to a high degree of mastery in the exercise of leadership.

In the course we will distinguish and provide access to the kind of language that allows you to deal with what limits and shapes those perceptions and the knee-jerk reactions that get in the way of your being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership.

## II. THE FUNDAMENTAL THEORY UNDERLYING THIS COURSE: BEING A LEADER AND THE EFFECTIVE EXERCISE OF LEADERSHIP

### A. The Underlying Theory of this Course: Part I

#### The Four Foundational Factors on which Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership is Built

##### 1. Integrity:

- Without being a person of integrity you can forget about being a leader. And, being a person of integrity is a never-ending endeavor. Being a person of integrity is a mountain with no top – you have to learn to love the climb.
- Integrity leaves you whole and complete as a person. It is achieved by “honoring your word”. Integrity creates workability and develops trust.

(Dealt with in detail in your Pre-Course readings #4 and #5.)

##### 2. Authenticity:

- Without authenticity you can forget about being a leader.
- Authenticity is *being* and *acting* consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others, and who you hold yourself to be for yourself. When leading, being authentic leaves you grounded, and able to be straight with yourself, and straight with others without using force.
- The only actionable access to authenticity is being authentic about your inauthenticities. To achieve this you must find in yourself, that “self” that leaves you free to be publicly authentic about your inauthenticities. That self, the one required to be authentic about your inauthenticities, is who you authentically are.
- As with integrity, being authentic is a never-ending endeavor.

##### 3. Being Given Being and Action by Something Bigger than Oneself:

- Being given being and action by something bigger than yourself is the source of power in leading and in exercising leadership effectively. Being given being and action by something bigger than yourself creates for a leader the kind of power that replaces the need for force.
- Being given being and action by something bigger than yourself is the source of the serene passion (charisma) required to lead and to develop others as leaders, and the source of persistence (joy in the labor of) when the path gets tough.

- In a certain sense, all leaders are heroes. Heroes are ordinary people who are given being and action by something bigger than themselves.
- What we mean by “being given being and action by something bigger than oneself” is being committed in a way that shapes one’s being and actions so that they are in the service of realizing something beyond one’s personal concerns for oneself – beyond a direct personal payoff. As they are acted on, such actions create something to which others can also be committed and have the sense that *their* lives are being given being and action by something bigger than themselves. This is leadership!
- Each of us must make the personal choice to be a hero or not, to being given being and action by something bigger than ourselves or not, to go beyond the way we “wound up being” and have the purpose of our lives and our careers or schooling be about something that makes a difference or not, in other words, to be a leader or not.
- Not everyone will choose this path, and that is certainly OK.
- The following is a quotation from George Bernard Shaw from his play, *Man and Superman* (the epistle dedicatory to the play), that captures this idea of being given being and action by something bigger than oneself:

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

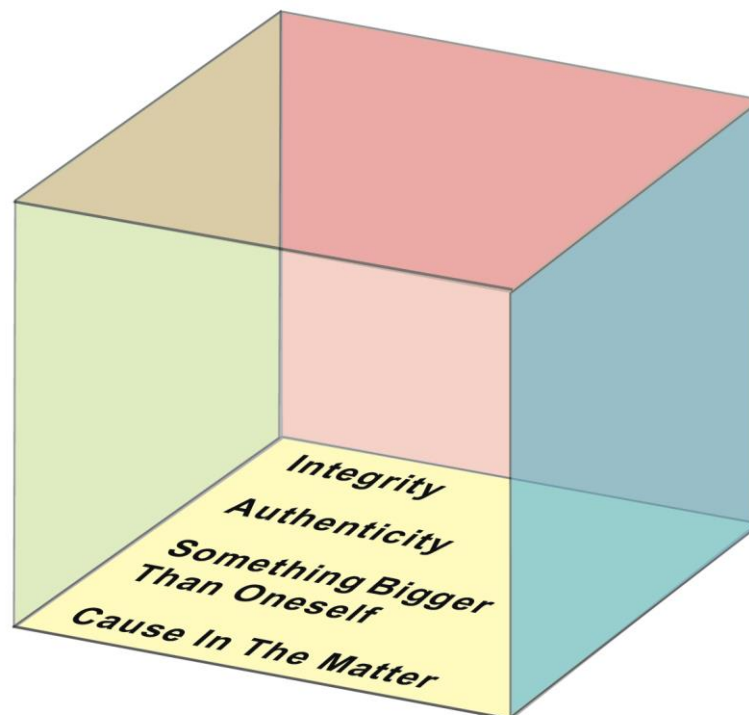
“I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no “brief candle” to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

#### **4. Being Cause in the Matter:**

- By “Being Cause in the Matter” we mean being cause in the matter of everything in your life as a stand you take for yourself and life – and acting from that stand.
- To take the stand that you are cause in the matter contrasts with it being your fault, or that you failed, or that you are to blame, or even that you did it.
- It is not even true that you are the cause of everything in your life. Rather, that you are the cause of everything in your life is a place to stand from which to view and deal with life – a place that exists solely as a matter of your choice.

- The stand that one is cause in the matter is a *declaration*, not an *assertion* of fact. It simply says, “you can count on me (and, I can count on me) to look at and deal with life from the perspective of my being cause in the matter.”
- When you have taken the stand (declared) that you are cause in the matter of your life, it means that you give up the right to assign cause to the circumstances, or to others, or to the waxing and waning of your state of mind – all of which, while undoubtedly soothing, leave you helpless (at the effect of). At the same time, when you see how this works it will be clear that taking this stand does not prevent you from holding others responsible.
- Being cause in the matter does not mean that you are taking on the burden of, or that you will be praised for or blamed for anything in the matter. And, it does not mean that you won't fail.
- However, when you have mastered this aspect of the foundation required for being a leader and exercising leadership effectively, you will experience a state change in effectiveness and power in dealing with the challenges of leadership (not to mention the challenges of life).

To illustrate that the other aspects of being a leader and the exercise of leadership are built on this foundation, see the following illustration, where being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership is represented by the space created by the sides of the cube:



## B. The Underlying Theory of this Course: Part II

### The Four Aspects of the Contextual Framework for Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership

- In developing this course, we began with the commitment to craft a **context** for Leader and Leadership that has the power in any leadership situation to leave a person who has mastered that context being a leader and exercising leadership effectively *as their natural self-expression*. Out of our research we found that being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as one's natural self-expression requires a *context that uses you*.
- When Leader and Leadership exist as a *context that uses you*, you are not left in a leadership situation with something to remember and apply – that is, you are not left with some way of being to emulate or rules of action to follow. Rather when what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively is constituted as *a context that uses you*, such a context simply gives you the *being* and *actions* of effective leadership as your natural self-expression. During the course we will provide you with the opportunity to do exactly that for yourself.
- Specifically, during the course we will provide you with the opportunity to create for yourself what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively as a *context that uses you*, a context that leaves you being a leader and exercising leadership effectively *as your natural self-expression*.
- You will create for yourself this unique context for Leader and Leadership by distinguishing what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively from each of the four distinct perspectives that make up the Contextual Framework for Leader and Leadership employed in this course. These four perspectives on – actually, four different ways to access – what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively, when taken together as a whole create a context that leaves you being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as your natural self-expression. In this course we will provide you with the opportunity to master this context.
- What follows are simple definitions of the terms used in naming each of the four perspectives on Leader and Leadership. These four perspectives constitute the Contextual Framework that when mastered, leaves one being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as their natural self-expression. Of course these simple definitions by themselves are unlikely to mean much to you. Later, we will fully explicate each of these perspectives so that you are provided with actual access to Leader and Leadership as these show up from each perspective.

- **Leader and Leadership as Linguistic Abstractions:**

As defined in *Webster's Dictionary*, *linguistic* simply means “of language”, and *abstraction* means “formation of an idea ... by mental separation from particular instances or material objects”. By *linguistic abstraction* we mean:

*Constituted in language,  
a realm of possibility  
that exists as such separate and apart from  
instances or examples of itself,  
but is that which allows for instances or examples  
to show up as instances or examples of that realm of possibility.*

- **Leader and Leadership as Phenomena:**

As defined in the *Encarta Dictionary*, *phenomenon* is “something experienced: a fact or occurrence that can be observed”. Drawing on the definition of phenomenon in *Webster's Dictionary* (1995): an event, circumstance, or experience encountered through the senses.

When something is dealt with as a phenomenon, one is examining or dealing with that something as an actual instance or live example of it. Put simply, when looking through the perspective of a phenomenon, the question is, “If I see, or am impacted by this something, what is it that I will see or what is it that will impact me? What is it as-lived?”

- **Leader and Leadership as Domain:**

Drawing on *Merriam-Webster's Unabridged* and *Collegiate* Dictionaries (accessed December 2014), we define *domain* as: a field of human interest or concern; a realm or sphere of activity.

The domain of something states the centrality or importance of the specified area (what is dominant) and where the action is directed. When dealing in the domain of something, one is accessing the field, or sphere the specified realm, in which that something exists or occurs.

- **Leader and Leadership Terms**

Drawing on the definition of term in *Webster's Dictionary* (1995): a word or phrase having a limiting and definite meaning.

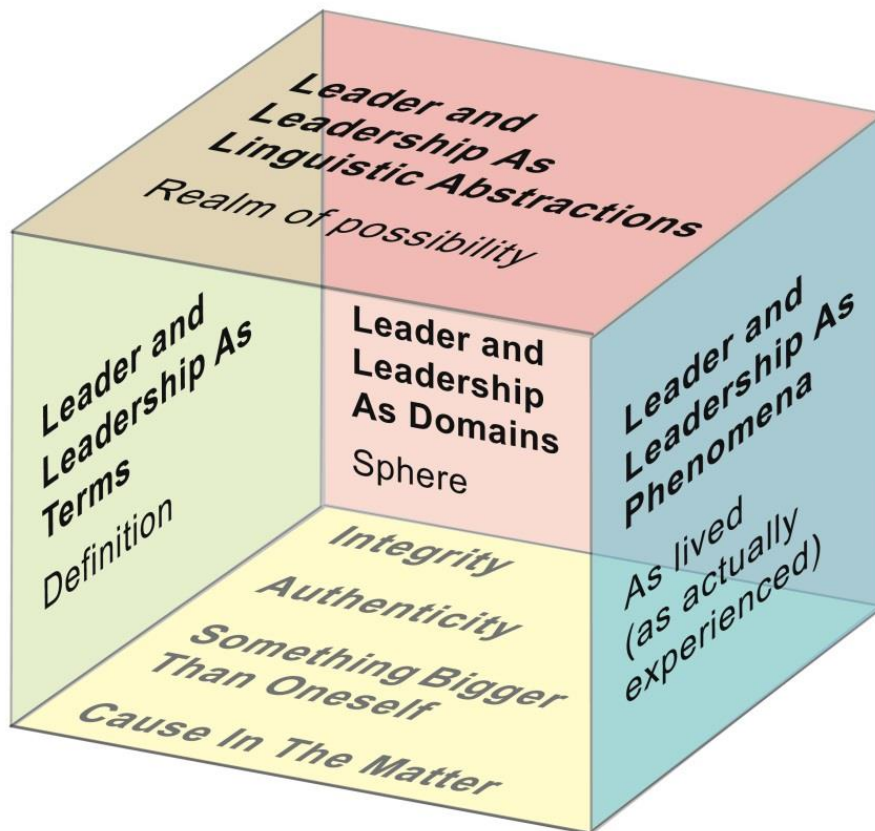
When defining something, one is examining or dealing with a definition that limits and makes definite the meaning of that something. A “definition” is defined as a brief precise statement of what a word or expression means.

# 1. The Four Aspects Of The Contextual Framework For Leader And Leadership

In short, Leader and Leadership, each as:

- **Linguistic Abstractions** (leader and leadership as “realms of possibility”)
- **Phenomena** (leader and leadership as experienced; that is, as what one observes or is impacted by, or as exercised)
- **Domain** (the field or sphere in which leader and leadership function)
- **Terms** (leader and leadership as definitions)

As an illustration, the space contained by the four surfaces of the cube that are above its foundational base represents the context for Leader and Leadership.



The following explicates the four aspects of the *contextual framework* for leader and leadership more fully, but still in brief:

- As *linguistic abstractions*,  
leader and leadership create leader and leadership as realms of possibility.
- As *phenomena*,  
leader and leadership exist in the sphere of language.
- As *domain*,  
leader and leadership exist in the temporal sphere of a created future.
- As a *term*,  
leadership is defined as the realization of a future that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties.

Next we will go into a bit more detail to clarify each of these four aspects of the contextual framework.

- As *linguistic abstractions*,  
leader and leadership create leader and leadership as *realms of possibility* in which when you are being a leader all possible ways of *being* are available to you, and when you are exercising leadership all possible *actions* are available to you.

The point is: Mastering leader and leadership as realms of possibility leaves you free to be and free to act, rather than being constrained by common notions about what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively. When one's focus is on fulfilling a commitment rather than acting in a particular style, all ways of being and acting are available, and are often required to "get something done".

- As *phenomena*,  
leader and leadership exist in the *sphere of language*, whether that be literally speaking, or speaking in the form of writing, or speaking and listening to yourself, or the speaking of your actions, as in "actions speak louder than words", or in providing what we distinguish as authentic listening.

The point is: If you look for yourself you will see that: When you see someone being a leader or exercising leadership, or when you have experienced being led, you see someone functioning in the sphere of language. And, more pointedly when you are being a leader and exercising leadership you

will be functioning in the sphere of language. (Remember that sometimes actions speak louder than words.)

- As *domain*,  
leader and leadership exist in the **temporal** domain of *a created future*,  
a future that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties,  
that the leader and those being led come to live into,  
which future gives them being and action in the present consistent  
with realizing that future.

The point is: Being a leader and the exercise of leadership is all about realizing a future that wasn't going to happen anyway.

- As a *term*,  
being a leader is defined as,  
committed to realizing a future that wasn't going to happen  
that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties,  
and with the availability of an unlimited opportunity set for being and  
action,  
*being the kind of clearing* for leader and leadership that shapes the  
way the circumstances you are dealing with occur for you  
such that your naturally correlated way of being and acting is  
one of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively.

- As a *term*,  
leadership is defined as  
an exercise in language that results in the realization of a future  
that wasn't going to happen,  
which future fulfills (or contributes to fulfilling) the concerns of the  
relevant parties,  
including critically those who granted the leadership (those who lead  
you, and those you lead).

The point is: Leader and leadership as terms are based on the previous three aspects of leader and leadership. Of course, each of these four aspects that constitute the context for leader and leadership will need further clarification during the course. And after that clarification, if this contextual framework is valid, what you will see when you see someone actually being a leader and exercising leadership effectively will be as defined.

The foregoing is the fundamental theory on which this ontological perspective on being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership is founded. With complete freedom to be and act, and with a transformed context for Leader and Leadership that leaves one being a leader and effectively exercising leadership as a natural self-expression, then specific knowledge regarding the situation in which one is leading has an

empowering and enabling impact. But without this freedom to be and act, and without a transformed frame of reference for Leader and Leadership that creates being a leader and effectively exercising leadership as one's natural self-expression, specific knowledge regarding the situation in which one is leading is little more than a "good idea".

During the course we will work with you to master the context created by a combination of the four aspects of the contextual framework so that in any leadership situation it gives you being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership as your natural self-expression.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Please come to the first day of the course able to say the following cascaded sentence:

This course is designed  
to give me access to creating for myself  
a *context* for leader and leadership  
that has the power to leave me in any leadership situation  
being a leader and exercising leadership effectively  
as my natural self-expression.

## C. The Underlying Theory of this Course: Part III

### 1. Ontological Perceptual and Functional Constraints:

- Having mastered the context for leader and leadership that leaves you being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as your natural self-expression, during the course we will also provide you with exercises that allow you to become aware of and remove the ontological perceptual and functional constraints that get in the way of your natural self-expression.
- Ontological Perceptual Constraints: The source of our ontological perceptual constraints is our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embeddedness, and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world, others, and ourselves. These ontological perceptual constraints limit and shape what we perceive of what is actually there in the situations with which we are dealing. As a consequence, if we do not remove these perceptual constraints, then in any leadership situation we

are left dealing with some distortion of the situation we are actually dealing with.

- **Ontological Functional Constraints:** In everyday language the behavior generated by an ontological functional constraint is sometimes referred to as a “knee-jerk reaction”. Psychologists sometimes refer to this behavior as “automatic stimulus/response behavior” – where, in the presence of a particular stimulus (trigger), the inevitable response is an automatic set way of being and acting. When triggered in a leadership situation, one’s ontological functional constraints fixate one’s way of being and acting. Saying the same thing in another way, these ontological functional constraints limit and shape our opportunity set for being and action. As a consequence, the appropriate way of being and appropriate actions may be, and in fact often are, unavailable to us.
- Thus, gaining access to being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership requires that we loosen the grip of these debilitating Ontological Constraints. Or to put it more simply, we must take away what is in the way of our being a leader and exercising leadership effectively.

**ASSIGNMENT:** We request that you come to the first day of the course with the following memorized:

- 1 There are Four Foundational Factors for Leader and Leadership
  - a. Integrity
  - b. Authenticity
  - c. Being Given Being and Action by Something Bigger than Yourself
  - d. Being Cause-in-the-Matter
- 2 There are Four Aspects to the Contextual Framework: Leader and Leadership each as
  - a. Linguistic Abstractions
  - b. Phenomena
  - c. Domain
  - d. Terms
- 3 There are Two Kinds of Ontological Constraints
  - a. Perceptual Constraints
  - b. Functional Constraints

### III. YOUR INTRODUCTION TO THIS COURSE

#### A. What Is This Course About?

Being A Leader. The Effective Exercise Of Leadership.

And, that's all.

#### B. What Kind of Course Is this?

In most courses in an academic institution, you are expected to leave the course knowing and demonstrating that you know the content of the course, and that you are able to speak knowledgably about the subject covered in the course and its applications. This course goes beyond that. It is a laboratory for developing yourself as a leader. This course has been specifically designed to provide you with access to being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership.

There are no tips, no how-to's, no formulas, and a mere understanding of the material in the course won't get you there. In this course you will be "on the court" developing yourself as a leader, and mastering what it takes to be effective in the exercise of leadership. You will not be "in the stands" observing and commenting on leader and leadership.

#### C. What Is the Learning/Teaching Method Utilized in Realizing What Is Promised from My Participation in this Course?

The pedagogical method utilized in this course is known as *transformational learning*.

Drawing on the ideas in, and using certain words and phrases from, "Learning As Transformation" by Jack Mezirow and Associates (2000, chs. 1-3):

*Informative learning* and *transformational learning* are both valuable and appropriate. However, transformational learning occurs in a different dimension than informative learning.

- *Informative learning* endeavors to increase the sum of what we know, to add to our available skills, to extend our already established cognitive capacities. *Informative learning* seeks to bring valuable new content to add to or fill in what our prevailing *worldview* and our pre-existing *frames of reference* already allow. In summary, *informative learning* adds ideas and capacities that are compatible with our prevailing *worldview* and our pre-existing *frames of reference*.
- *Transformational learning* on the other hand provides us with the opportunity to become aware of the interpretations and beliefs we hold as “the way it is”. That is, to critically reflect on the underlying ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions that constitute our *worldview* (model of reality) about the world, others, and ourselves, and our *frame of reference* (mindset) relative to this subject or that subject.

We rarely ever even consider the fact that we have a *worldview* and *frames of reference*. This leaves us ignorant of the impact of the constraining and shaping imposed by our *worldview* and *frames of reference* on our perceptions and consequently on our actions. We never know what we don’t see at all, and with what we do see, what of it is actually distorted.

Rather than simply adding to what is currently allowed (compatible with) our prevailing *worldview* and pre-existing *frames of reference*, we will explore our *worldview* and *frames of reference* themselves – their genealogy, internal logic, uses – as well as assess the costs and benefits, and advantages and disadvantages, associated with our particular *worldview* and *frames of reference*.

*Transformational learning* does not merely add to or correct your store of information about being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership. Using transformational learning this course offers the opportunity to discover and eliminate the constraints and shaping imposed by your *worldview* and your *frames of reference* relative to who you are for yourself, and relative to your being a leader and exercising leadership effectively.

As a consequence, when you are leading you have more powerful ways of being and acting available to you.

## D. What Is Being in this Course Going to Be Like for Me?

Most people have not engaged in *transformational learning*, and when in this course we do, you may at first wonder what is going on, and even why we are doing it. Here is why:

Quoting Mezirow & Associates again (2000, Preface VII):

... maturity in childhood is understood as a formative process that includes assimilation of beliefs concerning oneself and the world, including socialization and learning adult roles. Adulthood is perceived as a transformative process – involving alienation from those roles, reframing new perspectives, and reengaging life with a greater degree of self-determination.

By a year or two after graduating from high school, who you are as a person is pretty much set. That is, you are who you “wound up being”. For the most part from then on, who you “wound up being” is simply polished and perfected.

Your particular way you “wound up being” leaves you confined to what Mezirow & Associates called certain “roles”, that is, a limited set of possible ways of being, and a certain set of formulas or strategies for success, or at least for getting by. In other words, the way you “wound up being” constrains you to a certain range of expression. In this course we call this: your “default opportunity set” of possible ways of being, and your “default opportunity set” of possible strategies for succeeding (or at least for getting by). We say “default opportunity set”, because one’s natural opportunity set of being and action is one of complete freedom to be and act in any way that is effective in any situation. When constrained by the forces we discussed above, one’s natural opportunity set of being and action is reduced to one’s default opportunity set.

The effective exercise of leadership is always situational. Who you are being and what you do to exercise leadership successfully in one situation is no guarantee that being that way, or doing anything like what you did, will be effective in any other situation. In fact, no set of roles and no set of strategies will leave you being an effective leader in all environments and no matter with what conditions you are confronted. Leadership is not about roles and strategies; in fact, during the course you will see that roles and strategies actually get in the way of being an effective leader.

You may be completely happy with the way you “wound up being”, or as Mezirow & Associates termed it, who you are as a product of the beliefs you assimilated concerning yourself and the world, and the socialization and roles you learned. After all it has gotten you to where you currently are in life. But without a breakthrough in your freedom to be and act – that is, a substantial expansion of your “opportunity set” of possible ways of being and acting – no amount of polishing and fine tuning who you “wound up being” will be sufficient for who you need to be to be an effective leader.

We are not talking about changing who you are, or being different than you are, or being better able to explain or understand why you are the way you are. This is not a psychological exercise. Rather this is an ontological exercise. It is about a transformation in who you “wound up being”. That is, expanding your “opportunity set” of possible ways of being and acting. Or, said in another way, giving yourself a greater range, or repertoire of being and acting.

Speaking about the range of being that is required to be an extraordinary leader, we draw on Bill George, Harvard Business School Professor of Management and former CEO of Medtronic:

To be effective in today’s fast moving, highly competitive environment, leaders also have to adapt their style to fit the immediate situation. There are times to be inspiring and motivating, and times to be tough about people decisions or financial decisions. There are times to delegate, and times to be deeply immersed in the details. There are times to communicate public messages, and times to have private conversations. The use of adaptive styles is not inauthentic, and is very different from playing a succession of roles rather than being yourself. Good leaders are able to nuance their styles to the demands of the situation, and to know when and how to deploy different styles. (Bill George 2003, p.14)

When Bill George speaks about “style” he is referring to what an observer sees, not what is generating what the observer sees. Style is the outward expression of a leader’s “way of being” in a given situation. That is, a leader’s style at any moment in time or in any given situation is simply a manifestation of the way the leader is being.

Speaking about the styles and traits approach to training leaders, Bill George says (in our earlier quote from his book): “They describe the styles of leaders and suggest that you adopt them. This is the

opposite of authenticity.” We agree because if one takes the style approach to developing leadership, in trying to play the “right” role for a given situation one is likely to be left being inauthentic. In fact, trying to play the “right” role depending on the situation (trying to act like a leader) could be said to be the definition of inauthentic leadership.

Being an effective leader is never a product of role playing, that is trying to act like a leader. Being an effective leader is a product of the freedom to be, that is, the freedom to be appropriate to what is called for to be effective in the situation. For a leader this is true authenticity. And, that requires an unconstrained freedom to be – an expanded, indeed unlimited, “opportunity set” of possible ways of being when being a leader.

In this course, we will not be dealing with the psychological or sociological phenomena of styles of leadership; rather we will be dealing with the ontological phenomenon of being a leader. (Shortly we will provide more on the difference between the ontological model and the psychological model.)

## **E. The Bad News – Crucible Events**

As you read in your first pre-course reading, many extraordinary leaders point to what has been termed a “crucible event” in their lives which produced a transformation in the person they “wound up being”. This transformation left them with the freedom to be who they needed to be, to be an extraordinary leader.<sup>23</sup>

As reported, many of these crucible events were often some tragedy or life altering event that occurred as a profound threat to the way they wound up being.

My most agonizing time in the career crucible also came when I least expected it. ... As painful as it was, the experience provided the basis for growth and change that transformed my career. It caused me to look inside myself, acknowledge my shortcomings, and realize I was on the wrong path. (Bill George 2003, p. 32)

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<sup>23</sup> “Crucible” is a term of art used by leadership guru, Warren Bennis and leadership consultant, Robert Thomas (2002, p. 4).

In the context of this course, as a result of these crucible events these leaders experienced a transformation of their *worldview* (model of reality) and many of their *frames of reference* (mindsets).

As a result of these transformations, while the world had not changed, for them the world now occurred in an entirely new way. They were left knowing themselves and the world with which they were dealing a great deal better, with greater mastery over their Functional Constraints, with significantly altered priorities, and a greater freedom to express themselves authentically. These profound shifts in their *worldview* and *frames of reference* resulted in a more acute insight into the world as it actually is, including themselves, others, and life itself, and consequently left them with a greater freedom to be and a greater power to create and make things happen.

During the course we will deal with mastering Ontological Constraints – the personal Perceptual and Functional Constraints that every leader must master – those that limit the opportunity set of *being* required to be a leader, and limit the opportunity set of *actions* required to exercise leadership effectively.

## **F. The Good News – An Effective Replacement for Crucible Events**

In this course we do not use a “crucible event” to provide you with an opportunity to transform your *worldview*, and *frames of reference*. Nevertheless, by personally engaging in *transformational learning*, this course will leave you with the freedom to be that took a tragedy or some life-altering event in the lives of those leaders.

In summary:

- You cannot predict what, in any given situation, will be called for from you to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively.
- In this course you will have an opportunity to identify certain elements of your *worldview*, *frames of reference*, and Functional Constraints that currently restrict your ways of being and acting, especially those that do so in leadership situations.
- The fewer constraints you have in the ways you can express yourself in any leadership situation, the more effective you will be as a leader.

- To be an effective leader you must have a real freedom to be, an “opportunity set” of possible ways of being and acting that includes who you need to be to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively in any situation. Transformational learning makes a broader range of being and action available to you.
- That is why in this course we engage in *transformational learning*.

Sometimes people find that in a given environment their prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference leave them being successful leaders; but they fail as leaders when the environment changes and their prior success sticks them with their prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference. The business and political press is full of specific examples. Robert Mugabe and Yasser Arafat were successful insurgency leaders, but because they remained stuck in the *worldview* and *frames of reference* that had allowed them success as insurgency leaders, they both failed when the situation changed to one of governance. Also consider the relatively quick fall from grace of a significant number of the corporations held up as paragons in the book *In Search Of Excellence*.<sup>24</sup>

## G. Distinguishing the Ontological Model from the Psychological Model

As we said earlier, in this course, we will not be dealing with the psychological or sociological phenomena of styles of leadership; rather we will be dealing with the ontological phenomenon of being a leader.

Mastering what there is to master in order to realize the promise of this course in just six days (about the number of hours in one semester) is available through the unique model and methodology we use. Note that *model* is distinct from *methodology*. A **model** reveals, from a given perspective, the nature and function of what it models. A **methodology** is the process, technique, or approach employed in developing the model, and for dealing with what is revealed about the nature and function of what it models.

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<sup>24</sup> Peters, Tom, Waterman, Robert. 1988. *In Search Of Excellence, Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*. Melbourne: Warner Books, Inc.

Some people confuse the ontological model with the psychological model. Because both models deal with human beings, and because most people are unfamiliar with the ontological model, many people fail to distinguish between these two models – one dealing with being and the other dealing with mind. This leaves some people conflating or confusing the methodology of ontology (phenomenology) with the methodology of psychology (psychotherapy).

The *ontological* model deals with the nature and function of *being* as it impacts human nature and human behavior. The ontological model contrasts with the *psychological* model which deals with the nature and function of *mind* and its impact on human nature and human behavior.

Another important difference between the two models is that the psychological model deals with the nature and function of human beings from a third-person (in the stands) perspective; while the ontological model deals with the nature and function of human beings from a first-person (on the court) perspective.

Just as there is a difference between the ontological model and the psychological model, there's also a difference between the methodology appropriate for developing each model and for dealing with what is revealed by each model, and for any practices or applications within the model.

As we have established, the psychological model examines the nature and function of human beings from the perspective of the mind. Consequently, the methodology for dealing with what is revealed about the nature and function of human beings from the perspective of the mind is (leaving psychopharmacology aside) the practice of various forms of psychological interventions, such as psychotherapy.

It is helpful in appreciating the perspective of the psychological model to know that although more recently it has been concerned with mental states such as happiness, the intellectual history of the model has been based on a concern with the difficulties and abnormalities of the mind.

In contrast with the psychological model, the ontological model examines the nature and function of human beings not from the perspective of mind, but from the perspective of being. Consequently, the

methodology for dealing with what is revealed about the nature and function of human beings from the perspective of being is language. That is, the methodology of ontology is the use of language to impact the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the way the world, others, and oneself show up for one, and the resulting impact on one's actions and way of being. "Phenomenology" is the formal name of the methodology of ontology.

It is helpful in appreciating the perspective of the phenomenological methodology to know that the intellectual history of the method has been concerned with *being* as *being-in-the-world*.

In a sense, both of these methods – to put it in the most rigorous technical terms – deal with "stuff", that is, "stuff" that interferes with a person's effectiveness in life and/or gets in the way of their quality of life. Because both methods deal with "stuff" that gets in a person's way, one might confuse one method with the other. However, the psychological/psychotherapy method generally deals with the "stuff" as problems in the mind (mental and emotional disorders) to be fixed, while the ontological/ phenomenological method deals with the "stuff" as ontological constraints, that is, distortions in the meaningfulness or intelligibility of the way the world, others, and/or oneself occur for one.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the fact that both methods deal with "stuff" that gets in a person's way, because each method also uses language to deal with the "stuff", again one might confuse one method with the other. The difference is that the psychological/ psychotherapy method uses language to have an impact on the mind, while the ontological/phenomenological method uses language to have an impact on the way the world, others, and oneself show up for one.

Don't confuse phenomenological interactions with psychotherapeutic interactions. In the course we use the phenomenological methodology to deal with the ontological constraints that get in the way of (interfere with) being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as one's natural self-expression.

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<sup>25</sup> You might like to know that in the opinion of the various experts who have studied the methodology for removing and relaxing personal ontological constraints used in this course, regarding the question "Is this therapy?", their answer was no. And regarding the question "Is harm done?" their answer was also no.

Because, as we said earlier, most people are unfamiliar with the phenomenological methodology, you may find yourself falling into the trap of attempting to understand what you are observing from a psychological perspective, and therefore as an attempt to do psychotherapy. In fact, in the process of using a phenomenological intervention to deal with a person's ontological constraint, the person's description of the constraint might include their mental or emotional state, and this stating of their mental or emotional state might lead you to confuse what is going on with psychotherapy. However, in a phenomenological interaction the person's mental or emotional state, although it may bubble up and even bubble up dramatically and with a high degree of intimacy, is not what is dealt with, rather what is dealt with is the way in which that kind of situation occurs for the person.

Having made clear the difference between the ontological model and the psychological model, and having warned you about the trap of confusing one model with the other, what we want to leave you with is the ontological model and its phenomenological methodology. Phenomenology as a methodological discipline deals with being and action as these are *actually lived* "on the court" (first-person experience of), as contrasted with being and action as *observed by someone, and then described and commented on, figured out, and explained* "from the stands" (third-person theory of).

As you will see "in bright lights" during the course, a good deal of what you are certain about regarding the world, others, and yourself will show up for you from a phenomenological examination as merely conceptual (theoretical) and actually inconsistent with your as-lived experience of the world, others, and yourself. Developing for yourself the being of a leader and the actions of the effective exercise of leadership is less likely to be successful when you are dealing with a theoretical "you" than if you deal with the "you" of your actual as-lived experience.

In summary, the ontological model of leader and leadership opens up and reveals the actual nature of being when one is being a leader, and opens up and reveals the source of one's actions in the effective exercise of leadership. And, the phenomenological methodology provides actionable access to what has

been opened up. In short, the way in which leader and leadership are distinguished by this perspective creates an access that is unique in its power to call forth the being required to be a leader and the action required for the effective exercise of leadership.

#### **H. What I Have to Be Willing to Deal with to Realize the Promise of this Course**

Your generally unexamined network of ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken for granted assumptions that constitute your *worldview* (model of reality) and your various *frames of reference* (mindsets), and your Functional Constraints are all very personal matters. As with most things personal, it will take courage to be forthright and really straight about them.

For most people, having their Perceptual and Functional Constraints examined and challenged is threatening. And, we want you to be aware of and ready for this.

You should also be aware that the threat is usually first registered below the level of consciousness. Consciously, it is often first experienced as a general sense of “something is wrong here”, rather than as a threat to one’s prevailing *worldview* (model of reality) or one’s *frame of reference* (mindset), or the exposure of one’s Functional Constraints.

In the presence of such non-consciousness threats, the fight or flight response will ordinarily be experienced as evaluations or assessments that you are making. The response to such evaluations or assessments will often be one of withdrawing or hiding (for example, often being experienced as needing to leave the room to go to the bathroom, or deal with something important that you just remembered, or the like), or feeling resistant or defensive, or even attacking (“that instructor or student is a jerk”). Such behavior is generated automatically without one’s control.

This is a normal human reaction; there is nothing wrong with it. In fact, if you do not have such experiences a number of times in this course, you are probably not “getting it”. When you do have the experience of resistance, withdrawing yourself, or being defensive or attacking, if you recognize it as a triggered response or a hijack, and sit with it and stay engaged, it will pass. Alternatively, if you find

yourself resisting, withdrawing, or being defensive or attacking, if you raise your hand, the instructors will listen to you and take what you have to say seriously, and treat it as a contribution to the other participants in the course. Our caution to you: Just do not let it get the best of you and therefore prevent your learning – that is, don't let it get in the way of a breakthrough for yourself that will make a difference to your being a leader.

If you summon up the courage to stick with the anger, upset, boredom, tiredness, confusion, or “that jerk” or “nothing new here” response, you will shortly get past it and provide yourself with the breakthroughs experienced by leaders who got there through a crucible event in their lives. And, in this course we will support you in doing so.

Again, we want to ensure you are clear that this is not a psychological investigation. It is not an attempt at psychoanalyzing so that you understand the way you wound up being and why you wound up that way, or whether that way of being is desirable or undesirable. Rather, transformational learning is an ontological exercise that leaves you with a freedom to be beyond the way you wound up being (what your current *worldview* and *frames of reference* limit you to). In fact, this kind of transformational learning leaves you with everything you had in who you “wound up being” still available to you. But now, you are able to employ who you “wound up being” with more power, while at the same time not being limited to just that way of being.

By the way, as a leader, one of the most important expressions of your leadership is to ensure that you are surrounded by other leaders. And, in the development of those leaders, you will encounter people responding with anger, upset, boredom, tiredness, confusion, “that jerk”, or “nothing new here”. In this course you will see this dealt with, and you will learn to deal with this phenomenon as an ontological exercise, not as a psychological exercise, or contest of wills.

In order to walk out of this course being a leader, you must master what is dealt with over the six days of the course. While this will be intellectually and emotionally challenging and will require

considerable intellectual effort and emotional intelligence on your part, the course is about being a leader, and that is not a mere intellectual exercise.

## **I. Leaders Are Those Who Make Leaders of Themselves**

Don't be so pleased or arrogant about the way you wound up as a person that there is no possibility for you beyond that.

Surprisingly, this includes those of us who are self-deprecating, who arrogantly think that there is no possibility for us beyond the way we wound up.

All true leaders are made, not born. Even those born to leadership fail to be leaders if they do not develop themselves as leaders, that is, if they do not master the being of being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership.

And we say again, this course is about mastering the *being* of a leader and the effective exercise of leadership.

## **J. More About the Importance and Consequences of *Worldview* (Model of Reality), and *Frame of Reference* (Mindset):**

For you to realize the promise of this course you must be open to having your *worldview* (model of reality), and your *frames of reference* (mindsets), examined and questioned, and be open to transforming both your *worldview* and your *frames of reference* relative to leader and leadership, and relative to who you are for yourself.

As we said earlier, in true transformational learning one's worldview and one's frames of reference are transformed, and as a consequence, new more powerful ways of being and acting become available.

### **1. Worldview**

To review what we said earlier: *The Encarta Dictionary* (2004) defines *worldview* as: “a comprehensive interpretation or image of the universe and humanity.” *Worldview* (or model of reality) refers to the network of ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-

granted assumptions through which an individual interprets and interacts with the world, other people, and himself or herself. In fact, everything in one's world is seen through the lens of one's worldview.

Specifically, one's worldview (model of reality) *constrains* **what** one can see of what is in the world, and the way in which the world is organized and operates.

And further, one's worldview also *shapes* the **way in which** one sees what of the world one does see, and the way the world is organized and operates.

This includes **what** one can see of, and the **way in which** one sees others and oneself, and the way others and oneself are and function.

In other words, access to everything in one's world (including others and oneself) is constrained and shaped by one's *worldview*. Or, to say the same thing in another way, one's *worldview* constrains and shapes the way the world, others, and oneself *occur* (show up) for one.

You will remember that we established that one's *way of being* and one's *actions* are a *correlate* of the way in which the world, others, and oneself *occur* (show up) for one.

Summarizing the foregoing, your prevailing *worldview*, the one you will walk into this course with, *constrains* and *shapes* what you *perceive* – that is, the way in which the world, others, and you yourself *occur* (show up) for you. And, because your way of being and your actions are correlated with this *occurring*, your *worldview* winds up constraining and shaping your *emotions*, creative imagination, *thinking*, and *planning*, and as a result limits the ways in which you are able to act.

If you think about it, this also means that each of your *frames of reference* (mindsets) relative to Leader and Leadership (actually, to any specific something) has first been constrained and shaped by your *worldview*. And then, that constrained and shaped *frame of reference* further constrains and shapes the

specific something in your world that it is a frame for. In other words, this constraining and shaping is a double whammy<sup>26</sup>.

## 2. Frame of Reference

You will remember that, while one's *worldview* is relative to everything in one's world, one's *frames of reference* (mindsets) are relative to some specific something in one's world. As we said earlier, *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (1988) says that your *frame of reference* selectively constrains the course and outcome of your perceptions and thinking. *The Encarta Dictionary* (2004) defines *mindset* as: "set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determine somebody's behavior and outlook".

Similar to one's *worldview*, one's *frames of reference* are one's network of ideas, beliefs, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions through which one interprets and interacts (but, in the case of a *frame of reference*) with some specific something in one's world.

In this course we are concerned with the constraining and shaping your *frame of reference* relative to Leader and Leadership imposes:

- on the way in which what it is to be a leader and the effective exercise of leadership occur or show up for you, and
- on the way you occur or show up for yourself when you are being a leader and when you are exercising leadership.

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<sup>26</sup> To illustrate this double whammy in a simple metaphor of nesting Russian dolls: The maker of a set of three nesting Russian dolls, after making the largest doll (by analogy, one's worldview), attempts to fit inside it the next smaller doll (by analogy, one's frame of reference relative to some specific something). To do so, the doll-maker will carve and sand away the parts of the smaller doll so that it fits within the largest doll. In that way the largest doll constrains and shapes the next smaller doll, and in fact, all subsequent dolls. The doll-maker's carving and sanding of the dolls is a metaphor for the constraining and shaping by one's worldview on one's frame of reference.

### ***a. When You Are Being a Leader and Exercising Leadership***

Your existing *frame of reference*, the one you will walk into this course with, relative to being a leader and to the exercise of leadership, and your *frame of reference* relative to who you are for yourself, *constrain* and *shape* the way in which the situations and the people you are dealing with occur (show up) for you.

And, because your way of being and your actions are correlated with this *occurring*, your *frame of reference* relative to being a leader and the exercise of leadership winds up constraining and shaping your *emotions*, *creative imagination*, *thinking*, and *planning*, and as a result limits the ways in which you are able to be and to act.

### **3. Worldview and Frame of Reference Taken Together**

The combination of your prevailing *worldview* and your existing *frames of reference* is an important aspect of who you “wound up being”. They limit your “opportunity set” of possible ways of being, and your perceptions, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and your actions in being a leader and in the exercise of leadership.

For something to show up for you at all, or at least show up for you coherently, you must have a *worldview* and a *frame of reference* that allows for that something.

Specifically, what all this means is that, as a leader:

- **What** of the aspects of the situations and the people you are dealing with actually **show up** for you, and what of the possibilities for successfully dealing with those situations and people actually show up for you, are **limited** by your prevailing *worldview*, and further **limited** by your *frames of reference* relative to leader and leadership, and your *frame of reference* for who you are for yourself.

This leaves you blind to certain aspects of the situations and the people you are dealing with, and blind to certain possibilities for successfully dealing with those situations and people.

- Of those aspects of the situations and the people you are dealing with, and of the possibilities for successfully dealing with them, that actually **show up** for you, the ways in which those aspects show up for you, and the ways in which those possibilities for successfully dealing with them show up for you, are shaped by your prevailing worldview, and further shaped by your frames of reference relative to leader and leadership, and your frame of reference for who you are for yourself.

This leaves you blind to whatever distortions occur for you in the situations and the people you are dealing with, and blind to whatever distortions occur for you in the possibilities for successfully dealing with them.

- Finally, it also means that as a leader, your being, and your perceiving, thinking and planning regarding the situations and the people you are dealing with, and consequently the way you act, are also all limited and shaped by your prevailing worldview, and further limited and shaped by your frames of reference relative to leader and leadership, and your frame of reference for who you are for yourself.

When you are leading, this leaves you blind to what might be missing or distorted in your perceiving, thinking, planning, and action.

In summary, certain possibilities for successfully dealing with a situation, and for the possibilities that do show up, certain actions that might be effective in realizing those possibilities, do not occur for you at all.

Breaking through the selective constraints that significantly limit your opportunity set of possible ways of being, and limit your opportunity set of possible ways of thinking, planning, and acting, is a critical factor in developing yourself to be a leader, and in exercising leadership effectively.

#### **4. Breaking Through the Constraints and Shaping Imposed by Your Prevailing *Worldview* and *Frames of Reference***

##### ***a. Your “Wall of Bricks”***

As an analogy, one’s worldview can be compared to a wall of bricks on which one sits like Humpty Dumpty to view and interact with life – the world, others, and oneself.

Each brick in your wall of bricks is something you have come to believe or assume about some aspect of life, or about the world, others, or yourself. Such beliefs and assumptions include unexamined ideas, biases, prejudices, social and cultural embeddedness, and taken-for-granted assumptions. These beliefs and assumptions are the product of conclusions, interpretations, or decisions (remembered or not) that you have made about your life experiences, and what you’ve learned from or have been told by others that you believed. The life experiences during which you made these conclusions, interpretations, or decisions includes the experiences you’ve had in various environments and cultures, for example, in the environments and cultures of your family, friends, colleagues, religion, communities, nationality, training, education, affiliations, career, and the like.

In any person’s wall of bricks, the bricks that surround any given brick are consistent with and often reinforce the brick they surround, or at the very least are not in conflict with the brick they surround. In other words, each brick fits and makes sense with the bricks that surround it.

##### **(1). Your Frames of Reference Are Subsumed in Your Wall of Bricks**

In this analogy, your worldview is represented by your entire wall of bricks, and your frame of reference relative to some specific something in your world (for example, your frame of reference relative to leader and leadership) can be seen as a group of bricks within your wall of bricks.

Like with each individual brick, each group of bricks fits and makes sense with the groups of bricks that surround it. That is, for any group of bricks (frame of reference), the groups that surround it are consistent with and often reinforce the group of bricks they surround, or at the very least are not in conflict with the group they surround.

If you've gotten the picture so far, you will see that there can be no brick in your wall of bricks that is disallowed by, or is fundamentally inconsistent with, any other brick in your wall of bricks. Everything in your wall of bricks makes sense with everything else in your wall of bricks. It all holds neatly together to constitute your worldview (model of reality).

It is important to note that you also have a group of bricks in your wall of bricks (a frame of reference) regarding who you are for yourself, and that that frame of reference (those assumptions and beliefs about yourself) limits and shapes you as a person.

For example, some people have a frame of reference for who they are for themselves as "not good enough", or more narrowly, "not good at athletics" or "not good with women". Such frames of reference become self-fulfilling. Others have a frame of reference for who they are for themselves as "better than others", or more narrowly, "smarter than others" or "more attractive than others". Such frames of reference often limit or distort one's perception of others, and even of oneself. While one can actually be smarter than most others, or extraordinarily attractive, as frames of reference they leave one blind to the value and beauty of others. The latter is often termed "narcissism".

## **(2). How We Encounter Something New**

When you encounter something new, you make sense of it (make it understandable for yourself) by finding a fit for it with some already existing brick or group of bricks in your wall of bricks. Most learning is actually fitting what's new with what we already know so that it becomes an extension of what we already know, that is, somehow connected to what we already know, and certainly not in conflict with what we already know. When we say, "I understand that" or "that makes sense", what we mean is, "I have found a way to make that fit with what I already know".

If I encounter something that I cannot fit into my already existing wall of bricks, that is to say, if I encounter something that doesn't fit within, or is inconsistent with, my already existing worldview (model of reality), or frames of reference (mindsets):

1. I literally do not see it or do not hear it; or I do not see it as it actually is or I do not hear it as it was actually said; or
2. I experience it as nonsense (“that makes no sense to me”), or at best as unintelligible (“I can’t follow that”, or “I don’t get it”), and as a consequence I reject it out-of-hand; or
3. I modify it until it is somehow consistent with my existing wall of bricks, thinking that I now understand it. But what I understand is not it, rather I understand some distortion of it; or
4. If it comes from enough authority I defer, I say something like “while I don’t really understand it, I accept it”.

Quoting from Jack Mezirow and Associates (2000. *Learning as Transformation*, p.3):

If we are unable to understand, we often turn to tradition, thoughtlessly seize explanations by authority figures, or resort to various psychological mechanisms, such as projection and rationalization, to create imaginary meanings.

### **(3). Examples from Our List Above from 4) up to 1)**

An example of number 4) in our list above: – “If it comes from enough authority, I say something like ‘while I don’t really understand it, I accept it’” – for most of us, while we accept quantum physics as true, much of it seems counter to what we call “common sense”, that is, what scientists often call “counter-intuitive”. We may accept it, but are clear that we don’t understand it, and what we mean by we don’t understand it is, we can’t make it fit into or onto our already existing wall of bricks.

An example of number 3) – “modifying something new to make it fit with what I already know” – is the voiced or unvoiced statement, “Oh, what he means is ...”, or “Oh, that’s like ...”, when confronted by something new that doesn’t exactly fit into your wall of bricks as it was stated. Something new that reminds you of something with which you are already familiar may in fact not be anything like what you already know that it reminded you of. In which case, trying to deal with it through the pathway of what you already know will prevent you from mastering something that is actually new for you.

Something which doesn’t fit with your existing wall of bricks is only like itself, and to make it your own, it has to be grappled with as itself. Modifying something new in any way, especially trying to make

it like something you already know, deprives you of the opportunity to actually master something new, that is, to make what is new for you, your own.

About typical response number 2) – “when something new at first occurs to you as nonsense (‘that makes no sense to me’), or at best as unintelligible (‘I can’t follow that’, or ‘I don’t understand it’)” – don’t reject it out-of-hand. While it occurs for you as nonsense, or unintelligible, it may actually be important, and only occur for you as unintelligible or nonsense because it is inconsistent with (not allowed by) your existing wall of bricks, especially those insights necessary for the personal transformation required for anyone to be a leader, or a true breakthrough in performance in some critical area of your life, like being able to exercise leadership effectively.

Keep grappling with what is at first unintelligible or seems like nonsense to you. You will often find that, as you get later pieces of the puzzle, what at first occurs for you as unintelligible or mindboggling becomes a personal breakthrough. If you commonly reject out-of-hand that which is unintelligible or seems like nonsense to you, you are guaranteed to miss important opportunities.

Develop the muscle of standing in the puzzlement. This is a muscle most people don’t have; they can’t stand the discomfort of being mind-boggled. Developing the muscle of standing in the puzzlement opens up the opportunity for breakthroughs in your perceiving, thinking, planning and in your way of being and acting.

For an example of number 1) – “not seeing or hearing something that does not fit with your prevailing worldview or frames of reference, or not seeing it as it actually is or not hearing it as it was actually said”:

For an example of not seeing something that does not fit with a person’s worldview, a person must have a worldview that allows a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object before a photograph of an object occurs as something recognizable rather than just blotches of color. (Try showing your dog a photograph of her worst dog enemy. See if she evidences any sense of recognition.) By the

way, it is thought that being able to represent three-dimensional animals in two-dimensional cave drawings was part of the origin of human culture.

Not hearing something as it was actually said is evidenced in the “Telephone Game”. In this game the first person calls the second person and makes a simple statement. The second person calls a third person and is supposed to repeat what was said to them by the first person. And so on, on each subsequent call. However, by the time you get to the fifth person, the statement made by the fifth person no longer sounds anything like what was said by the first person. People do not repeat what was said to them, rather they repeat what they heard – what was said to them filtered through their worldview and frames of reference.

We never know what we missed because it wasn’t allowed by our prevailing worldview or our frames of reference. Or, if we don’t miss it entirely, we never know how we misperceived what was actually physically present or actually said if it doesn’t fit with our prevailing worldview or our frames of reference.

#### **(4). The Wall of Bricks Keeps Growing**

As a result of all of this, the wall keeps growing, but without a “transformation” of your worldview and/or one or more of your frames of reference it only grows in a self-consistent way. In terms of one’s worldview and frames of reference it is generally “business as usual”; that is, while it may be more highly polished, it is pretty much more of the same. This explains why the old French proverb “the more things change the more they stay the same”, and the sayings “a leopard never changes its spots”, and as we grow older “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks”, are for the most part accurate for most of us most of the time.

Drawing on Mezirow and Associates again (2000, chs.1-3), in transformational learning we seek to become aware of our network of interpretations and beliefs, to be critically reflective of our underlying assumptions. In transformational learning, our wall of bricks is reconstructed.

To experience the transformation required to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively you must free yourself from the selective constraints imposed by your prevailing worldview. You must also

free yourself from the selective constraints imposed by your frames of reference regarding leader and leadership, and your frame of reference regarding who you are for yourself.

For the transformation required to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively, it is not enough to simply add to the knowledge that your prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference already allow – that is, to learn something new that merely fits and makes sense with what you already know.

For access to being a leader and exercising leadership effectively, you will need to deconstruct and alter or expand your worldview, and deconstruct your frame of reference relative to leader and leadership and reconstruct it to what is allowed by that altered or expanded worldview.

#### **(5). The Way We Typically Respond to Something New that Is Counter to Our Common Sense (Doesn't Fit with Our Existing Wall of Bricks)**

When confronted with having your worldview or your frames of reference examined and questioned, below your level of consciousness this is often registered as a threat, but consciously is usually experienced as a general sense of “something is wrong here”. That is, it will appear to you as if something other than something about yourself is making you angry or upset, or alternatively, bored or confused, or is causing you to conclude that there is “nothing new here”. In fact, what is upsetting you is that below your level of consciousness your prevailing worldview, or one of your existing frames of reference, is being questioned or challenged (that is, threatened).

#### **(6). Our Addiction to Examples**

You cannot master something new that *does not fit* with your prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference by using strategies that have been effective for you in dealing with something new that *does fit* your prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference.

When presented with something new for us that *is* allowed by our existing worldview and frames of reference, examples work well to help us master what is new. When presented with something new that *is not* allowed by our existing worldview and frames of reference – that is to say, is counter-common-sense – in our effort to make sense of it, we attempt to use the same strategy and almost invariably ask for an

example. What we are really asking for is something we can visualize that somehow fits our prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference, or is at least allowed by our prevailing worldview and existing frames of reference.

In the case of something new that is not allowed by your existing worldview and frames of reference, if you are provided with examples, for the examples to make any sense for you, they are going to have to be consistent with your existing worldview and frames of reference. As such, while you may begin to feel less discomfort because you think you are beginning to understand, you will not master something that is counter-intuitive for you by using examples that are consistent with your existing worldview and frames of reference.

Imagine that your dog could suddenly talk and you were trying to tell your dog about beauty. Your dog would want an example of this new thing called “beauty”. Your dog would want it to be something like food that tastes good, or something like the fun of chasing a Frisbee.

Such examples might get your dog interested enough in beauty to exercise the intellectual effort required to transform her worldview. However, if left with just the examples of what fit with the dog’s already existing bricks that make up her worldview and frames of reference, the dog would be left with nothing really new, except a new word for pleasure or fun. The dog would never have access to beauty as beauty, that is, much of the world of beauty would never be available to the dog.

The challenge is that your dog has to get beauty as itself, as a new *realm of possibility* in which various different instances or examples of beauty can show up as beauty, rather than as an extension of food or Frisbees.

Like the talking dog dealing with beauty, you will not master something that is counter-intuitive for you by using examples. Examples can help to get an intuitive sense that there is potentially something important in what at first violates one’s common sense, or that one at first does not understand.

However, for a transformation in one's *worldview* to occur, one has to stick with what is at first counter-intuitive until one masters it, that is, until the new counter-intuitive brick reshapes one's wall of bricks and one is left with an expanded and therefore a more empowering and enabling worldview.

### **(7). The Humpty-Dumpty Experience**

Consider being presented with something counter-intuitive for you. You will at first try to make it fit with your current wall of bricks, and find that it does not fit, or even worse that it is incompatible with your current wall of bricks. If you take on the challenge of mastering it, at first you will likely experience something like what a cat experiences when thrown into the air – that is, find yourself mentally thrashing around for something to cling to.

As we indicated earlier, this may leave you going through one or more emotions or mental states. For example, puzzled, bewildered, confused, anxious, embarrassed, frightened, panicked, paralyzed, irritated, angry, hostile, needing to belittle or reject, or aggressive. You may even experience some bodily sensations.

The experience of deconstructing your wall of bricks (your worldview), or even a section of your wall of bricks (one of your frames of reference) will leave you feeling like you've fallen off your wall of bricks – the Humpty-Dumpty experience.

### **(8). The Power of Transforming Your Wall of Bricks**

When your wall of bricks is reconstructed incorporating the new bricks, there will be a transformation of your worldview and/or one or more of your frames of reference. Happily, most of the bricks that were in your wall of bricks will still be there. But now, many of those same bricks will occur for you in a different way, a way that leaves you with a more powerful access to life, and to the world, others, and yourself.

Perhaps most importantly, because you have taken on your wall of bricks and had the courage to engage with it, it will never again have the grip on you that it has had. While you will always have a

worldview and frames of reference, you will never again be stuck in them in quite the same way. You will, so to speak, experience a sense of detachment from the grip of your worldview and frames of reference. You will have the power to see and learn and be aware of things from perspectives that are inconsistent with your existing worldview and prevailing frames of reference.

As a leader, when your way of being, and your thinking, planning and action is insufficient to exercise leadership effectively, you will be able to address and transform what in your *worldview* and *frames of reference* is limiting or shaping your way of being, and your perceiving, thinking, planning and action.

### **(9). Standing On Nothing**

In order to deal with something new that is for you at first counter-intuitive, that is, doesn't fit with what you already know or believe, you have to so to speak get off your already existing wall of bricks (as we said, be like the cat thrown into the air), and take on what is new just as itself, that is, without trying to deal with it by making it like anything with which you are already familiar.

To be successful in dealing with what is new and at first counter-intuitive for you and produce a transformation for yourself, you must be willing to tolerate the conflict and resulting tension between what is new and your existing wall of bricks. You must stick with it even though sticking with it feels like having been thrown up in the air topsy-turvy.

What makes something counter-intuitive is nothing more than its being inconsistent with your existing wall of bricks. A new brick that is counter-intuitive has to be held in suspension, held apart from and out beyond your already existing wall of bricks.

In fact, you have to be willing to *stand on nothing*, as it were, and grapple with *creating* what is new for you as a new *realm of possibility* for yourself.

### **(10). What Is Meant by “Stand On Nothing”**

When you are dealing with something counter-intuitive, to “stand on nothing” is probably best understood by imagining that you are starting out not knowing anything, that you know nothing. That is,

that you have no existing wall of bricks. When you do this, it eliminates the conflict and tension between what is new and your existing wall of bricks. This leaves you free to focus on exactly what is said that is new for you.

Without an existing wall of bricks, whatever you encountered would not violate your common sense. For example, without an existing wall of bricks, if someone told you that as an object moves faster it becomes more massive, you would have no problem accepting that as a reality, and expect to experience it on your first automobile ride. Remember, you know nothing – you haven't moved or ridden in anything fast and therefore have no inconsistent *experience* that things don't gain mass as they go faster. (In fact, things actually do gain mass (get heavier) as they go faster; but they do so, so minutely until approaching the speed of light that you don't experience it.)

It is only what you already know or what you unthinkingly take for granted – your existing wall of bricks – that makes anything counter-intuitive for you.

For another example, before the fourth century if someone said that the world was round, it was rejected as nonsense or at least unintelligible, because people's worldview was given by their inconsistent experience that when standing on the ground the world is flat (like our experiencing no increase in mass when the automobile goes faster). It is what was known to be "true", people's existing wall of bricks, that made the idea that the world is round counter to their common sense.

Even when standing on the ground when the world looks flat, you and I experience no conflict with the world being round because beginning in the fourth century our worldview (model of reality) was transformed to be consistent with the world being round. Today, every brick in our wall of bricks is consistent with the world being round.

To powerfully deal with something that is at first counter-intuitive for you, take what is new for you, and standing on nothing, that is, **without comparing or relating it to anything you already know**, get yourself clear on exactly what it says, and consider what it says as a new *realm of possibility*.

### (11). What Is a “Realm of Possibility”

A *realm of possibility* is a realm in which various new possibilities can occur. A realm of possibility is generated by a linguistic construct. That is, a realm of possibility is created (constructed) in language; it exists only in language. However, once a new realm of possibility is created, it allows one to explore various new possibilities that then exist by virtue of that new realm of possibility.

The ancient Greeks created “citizen” as a realm of possibility. Before the ancient Greeks created citizen as a realm of possibility, no one showed up as a citizen, that is, no one was seen to have the properties of a citizen. When the ancient Greeks created citizen as a realm of possibility, they had no examples of citizen to draw on, nor was there anything that was like being a citizen to draw on.

The ancient Greeks had to create citizen as a *linguistic construct (linguistic abstraction)*, that is, they had to create (construct) citizen in language, before they could explore this new *realm of possibility* called “citizen”.

It is important to be clear that, while a *realm of possibility* generated by a linguistic construct will end up being *named* by a word or phrase (like the name “citizen” or “beauty”), *naming* something is different than what is meant by *linguistically constructing* a realm of possibility (like the realm of possibility created by citizen or beauty as linguistic constructs). A linguistic construct can be thought of as a *conversational domain* that generates a realm of possibility that at some point winds up being named.

The ancient Greeks had to first “stand on nothing” and create “citizen” as a realm of possibility before they could determine what the possibilities of being a citizen would be.

That is, what possible properties of a person qualified them as being a citizen, and what the possible rights and responsibilities of a citizen might be, and finally what definition or description of citizen they would choose. The possible properties, possible rights, possible responsibilities, and possible definitions and descriptions of citizen were all possibilities allowed by “citizen” as a realm of possibility.

To be successful in dealing with what is at first counter-intuitive for you and transform your wall of bricks (produce a transformation for yourself), you must do as the ancient Greeks did when they created the realm of possibility “citizen”.

### **(12). Mastering the Counter-Intuitive**

When in this course you encounter something that is at first counter-intuitive for you, you will have to *stand on nothing* like the ancient Greeks did in creating citizen, and without comparing or relating what is new for you with anything you already know or simply take for granted, take what is new for you exactly as it is said, and think about it as the Greeks did with “citizen”, as a *realm of possibility*. This is how to be creative with what is at first counter-intuitive for you.

When you encounter something that is counter-intuitive for you, treat it as you do the first few lines of a joke, that is, you get it exactly as it is said. For example, if in telling you a joke I say, “A duck walks into a restaurant and asks, ‘Do you serve duck here?’ You don’t say, “Ducks don’t talk”. You just get what was said, exactly as it is said. You create for yourself ducks talking as a *realm of possibility*.

Richard Feynman, the Nobel laureate in physics (who by the way was a master in dealing with the counter-intuitive), in the midst of all of the physics formulas on his blackboard when he died, still had one saying that had been there for more than 10 years: “What I cannot create, I do not understand.” For Feynman, “to understand” meant “to master”, not what you and I ordinarily mean by “understand” (Paz, 1989, p. 88).

No matter where or from whom you get it, you cannot *master* that which you do not *create* for yourself. And, this is especially true of anything that is for you at first counter-intuitive. And, as we said, this course is about *mastering* being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership, not about a mere *understanding* of leader and leadership.

As stated earlier, a new brick that is counter-intuitive for you has to be held in suspension, held apart from and out beyond your already existing wall of bricks. When you’ve got a hold on the new brick, that

is to say, when you are sitting on the new brick to view and interact with the world (that is, when you've mastered the new brick), a part of the world with which you will be interacting is what was your existing wall of bricks.

Some bricks in what was your existing wall of bricks will need to be discarded. Others will need to be reformulated so that they are consistent with the view from this new brick on which you are now sitting. Finally, you reconstruct what is left of the bricks in what was your existing wall of bricks until they fill in around or under the new brick, so that all of the bricks in your reconstructed wall of bricks fit with, or at least are allowed by, the new brick.

This will leave you with a new, more powerful worldview (model of reality), or frame of reference (mindset) regarding some specific something (and as a result an expanded opportunity set of ways of being and acting). As a consequence, you will experience a real breakthrough in your ability to perform in the world, and a transformation in who you are for yourself, and as a result of that transformation, who you are for others. As a leader, transforming your worldview and your frames of reference is not something you will do once in your lifetime. Being a leader requires that you be engaged in a lifelong learning process, and this course will leave you equipped with the tools for doing that.

For example, when faced with a seemingly impossible challenge, by transforming your frame of reference you create a new *realm of possibility* which allows you to explore new ways of effectively meeting that challenge, ways that were unseen from your prior frame of reference.

In addition, to be successful as a leader, you must surround yourself with other leaders. To develop those around you as leaders, you will have to be able to support them in transforming their *worldview* and *frames of reference* – a non-trivial challenge. This means that transforming *worldview* and *frames of reference* is something you must master. This course will also leave you with the tools for doing that.

Dealing with something that is counter-intuitive, that is, is not allowed by your current worldview or frame of reference, is challenging in the extreme. If when confronted by this challenge you get unsettled

or upset, you will make meeting the challenge a great deal more difficult for yourself. Rather, when confronted by what is counter-intuitive, deal with the challenge by creating a context around the challenge of the possibility of an important breakthrough for yourself. This will leave you empowered to deal with the challenge.

For you to realize the promise of this course you must be open to having your *worldview* (model of reality) and *frames of reference* (mindsets) examined and questioned, and you must be open to transforming your worldview and frames of reference.

In the course, one way to grapple with being confronted by something new for you, and especially something that is counter-intuitive, is to review or recall this conversation about your wall of bricks.

**K. A Quick Summary of Being Effective in Dealing with What Is at First Counter-Intuitive for You, and Thus Violates Your Common Sense**

- a. In this course, if you don't get a word or phrase we use, don't pretend to have understood it; ask to go back over it.
- b. On the other hand, if in this course, you encounter an idea that is for you unintelligible or seems like nonsense, don't reject it. Rather, stick with it, grapple with it, and if after completing the course it is still unintelligible or nonsense for you, then you can reject it. During the course, if you don't get something even after having grappled with it for a while, set it aside and come back to it later after we have filled in more of the course.
- c. It is useful to keep in mind that, because there is so much of what turns out to be nonsense available, for example, the latest fad, or the latest "what everyone is into", it is tempting to see what is at first unintelligible or counter-intuitive, or even difficult, as trash just because it is at first difficult. One test for determining if what is at first difficult is actually trash or not, is getting into it far enough to see if it actually gives you access to more power in dealing with the world, others, and yourself.
- d. In this course, when you encounter something new, if you find yourself trying to make it like what you already know, don't get stuck with the distortion of having made it like whatever you already know. Rather, come back to it as it is and grapple with it as itself, until you have made it your own, rather than some distortion of it.

- e. When in this course you encounter something that doesn't fit with or isn't allowed by your existing wall of bricks (is at first counter-intuitive for you), you will find yourself looking for an example to try to understand it. While as we said, it is OK to have an example or two, remember that no number of examples will ever lead to mastering the counter-intuitive. After considering the examples, you have to come back to what doesn't fit with your existing wall of bricks, and *standing on nothing*, grapple with it exactly as it is until you have created it for yourself.
- f. Under no circumstances accept anything in this course on authority. As Feynman said, "What I cannot create, I do not understand." And, remember, what Feynman meant by "understand" is "master". Paz (1989, p. 88) And, this course is about mastering leader and leadership.
- g. To powerfully deal with something that is at first counter-intuitive for you, you take what is new for you, and  
standing on nothing, that is,  
without comparing or relating it to anything you already know,  
you get yourself clear exactly what it says, and then  
consider what it says as a realm of possibility.
- h. Saying the same thing in another way, when you encounter something that is at first counter-intuitive for you, treat it like the first line in a joke. Take it exactly as it is stated, and if it makes no sense because it is not allowed by your current wall of bricks, then like you do with the first lines in a joke, create it for yourself as a possibility. That is, treating it as true, what are the possibilities it makes available. If you do this, like you do with the first lines in a joke, you will get the punch line. If you don't do that with the first lines in a joke, you don't get the punch line. Get it?

## L. Our Promise

You will have experienced whatever personal transformation is required for you to leave the course **being who you need to be to be a leader**, and with **what it takes to exercise leadership effectively**, as **your natural self-expression**.

In other words, you will be a leader, and you will have what it takes to exercise leadership effectively, as your *natural self-expression*.

## **Reading 7: Your “Course Leadership Project” Assignment, Part II of II**

By Erhard, Jensen, and Echeverria

### **I. YOUR “COURSE LEADERSHIP PROJECT” ASSIGNMENT, PART II OF II**

Reminder: Do not answer these questions until after you have completed all preceding six Pre-Course Readings and the assignments embedded within them.

Please respond to the following items below and bring your responses with you to Day 1 of the Course:

1. What is the current *set of conditions* that you see in relation to your Leadership Project?

*By “set of conditions” we mean the objective circumstances that make up a situation, or the current facts of the matter (the way things are) with which you are or will be dealing.*

2. What is your current *frame of reference* (mindset) relative to that set of conditions (the current facts of the matter)? (What is the context or lens through which you view that set of conditions?)

In answering this question and the next, you may want to re-read Sections I.J.5 and I.J.8. and III .K.2 (on pages 21, 25, and 63) of the Pre-Course Reading Assignment #6 in this document.

3. For each of the relevant parties, what might be each of their current frames of reference relative to the set of conditions (the current facts of the matter) that you see in relation to your Course Leadership Project?
4. Please make note of anything else that you noticed regarding your Course Leadership Project after reading the preceding six Pre-Course Reading Assignments.

Continue working on your Course Leadership Project throughout the course. From time to time, you will receive specific assignments that include your Course Leadership Project.

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