



The Leader's Journey

by Joseph Jaworski

Much has been written over the years about leadership—the skills required, the dynamics involved, the characteristics displayed by outstanding leaders, and so on. But for the most part, these writings have ignored the more subtle aspects of leadership, which have more to do with leadership as a way of *being* than a way of *doing*. Robert Greenleaf, the author of *Servant Leadership*, has said that the first choice of being a leader is the choice to serve. Without that choice, our capacity to lead is profoundly limited.

But what does it mean to make a choice to serve? For me, it means embarking on a lifelong journey of personal transformation. In the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell talks about the heroic quest as an archetype of the developmental process that humans and organizations can experience. The hero's journey is the journey of every person who elects to search for his or her true destiny, and it is the path by which leadership is developed.

The nature of this journey has not yet been fully explored, nor the territory well charted. Although there is much that we are still learning about how leadership evolves, I believe we can begin to describe some of the landmarks along the way. For me, they can be described as several shifts of mind that open the way for us to be able to create our future.

A Change of Worldview

The first shift of mind is from seeing

the world as a machinelike universe that is fixed and determined to seeing a world that is open and primarily composed of relationships. From quantum physics, we have learned that matter is sometimes particles, sometimes waves, sometimes mass, and sometimes energy, yet it is always interconnected and constantly in motion.

Once we accept this open quality of the universe, we are immediately more open to the possibility of change. We can see that the future is not fixed, and that we live in a world of possibilities. Therefore, at every moment, we are creating the future.

Relationships—Separation without Separateness

When this fundamental shift of mind occurs, our sense of identity shifts, too, as do our relationships with other people. When we give up our need to see the world and people as “fixed,” we can let go of our preconceptions and accept others as legitimate human beings.

Bell's Theorem says that when you take two paired particles and separate them, if you change the direction of the spin of one, the other changes direction *instantaneously*. No matter how far apart they are, they remain connected in some way. This speaks to the fact that relationship is the organizing principle of the universe. Once we accept that everything exists in relationship, we can begin to look at ourselves and others as separate yet connected beings who are all part of the unfolding nature of the universe.

The Nature of Commitment

Most of us think of commitment as “doing whatever is necessary to make something happen.” But if we view ourselves as part of the unfolding wholeness of the universe, commitment becomes more a state of being than a series of actions. It involves continually searching to find the ultimate purpose in our life, and trusting that once we do, whatever needs to happen to allow us to meet our destiny will be provided for us. This shift is best summed up by Martin Buber: “The free man is he who wills without arbitrary self-will.... He must sacrifice his puny, un-free will, that is controlled by things and instincts, to his grand will.... Then he intervenes no more, but at the same time he does not let things merely happen. He listens to what is emerging from himself, to the course of being in the world; not in order to be supported by it, but in order to bring it to reality as it desires.” With this surrender also comes responsibility—to maintain an acute sense of awareness, so that when opportunity presents itself, you can immediately respond to it. Sometimes the greatest acts of commitment involve waiting until you know just what to do next.

Synchronicity

When we begin to operate from this new view of the world and make the commitment to live out our fundamental purpose, something begins to operate around us—we exhibit the outward signs of what we call “leadership.” People begin to gather around, drawn by the authentic presence that they sense. This capacity to gather people together is an aspect of what we typically think of as “leadership,” but it is based on a quality that is deeper and more genuine than personality or charisma. As the neurobiologist Francisco Varela explained to me, when we are in touch with the open nature of the universe, we exert an enormous attraction

to other beings. Like a magnet, this sense of authentic presence draws people to it.

Once the right people have gathered, things begin to happen in an extraordinary way. Carl Jung called this phenomenon *synchronicity*, "a collaboration between persons and events that seems to enlist the cooperation of fate." In the beautiful flow of these moments, it seems as if we are being helped by hidden hands. The essence of leadership is to exist in a field that allows these experiences to occur among a group of people.

Author Carlos Casteneda once wrote, "All of us, whether or not we are warriors, have a cubic centimeter of chance that pops out in front of our eyes from time to time. The difference between an average man and a warrior is that the warrior is aware of this, and one of his tasks is to be alert, deliberately waiting, so that when his cubic centimeter pops out, he has the necessary speed, the prowess, to pick it up." When we stand in this fundamentally open and interconnected state of being, we are like the Samurai warrior who waits expectantly with acute awareness for that split second of opportunity to present itself. When it does, we act with lightning speed and almost without conscious reasoning. It is at this point that our freedom and destiny merge, and we create the future into which we are moving. ■

Joseph Jaworski is the author of an upcoming book on leadership that is due out later this year.

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