

From:
James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*. Pages 29-46.

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THE STRUCTURE OF MORAL LEADERSHIP

“We have many wants,” Plato said, and society and government arose out of these needs as people began to exchange things that they made. Necessity is the mother of invention, Plato went on. “Now the first and greatest necessity is food, which is the condition of life and existence. . . . The second is a dwelling, and the third clothing and the like. . . .” Once a family had these things, then “noble cakes and loaves” would be served up on a mat of reeds or clean leaves, the parents “reclining the while upon beds strewn with yew or myrtle. And they and their children will feast, drinking of the wine which they have made, wearing garlands on their heads, and hymning the praises of the gods, in happy converse with one another. . . .”

With these words Plato posed a question that has challenged philosophers and scientists to this day: whether people the world over share common wants and needs. As some wants are satisfied are other—“higher”—wants created? Are wants and needs arranged in roughly the same hierarchies in most or all cultures? Common sense tells us that any person, whether Eskimo or Hottentot, Zuni or Kpelle, Brooklynite or East End Londoner, puts first things first—breathing before eating, human life above property, basic nourishment before the “sauces and sweets” that Plato proposed as the climax of the meal. The same would seem to be true of “higher needs”—for survival needs before social acceptance, and social needs—love and esteem—before aesthetic. Yet anthropologists have identified countless cultures with the most remarkable varieties of wants and needs. Consider the assumed top priority of sheer survival. Some societies kill their infants to protect their food reserves. In others, men kill themselves (Wall Street, 1929) when they lose their property. In India women burned themselves on funeral pyres when they lost their husbands.

For students of leadership an even more urgent question arises. Supposing we could find species-wide commonalities among hierarchies of wants and needs, could we also find common stages and levels of moral development and reasoning emerging out of those wants and needs? If so, we could assume common foundations for leadership. If we define leadership as not merely a property or activity of leaders but as *relationship* between leaders and a multitude of followers of many types, if we see leaders as interacting with followers in a great merging of motivations and purposes of both, and if in turn we find that many of those motivations and purposes are common to vast numbers of humankind in many cultures, then could we expect to identify patterns of leadership behavior permitting plausible generalizations about the ways in which leaders generally behave?

During the last decade or so, researches in the field of moral development have uncovered remarkable uniformities in hierarchies of moral reasoning across a number of cultures. The research is far from complete; certain cultural relativists hold that the findings and implications are overgeneralized; and it is alleged that the values considered to be universal have in fact a Western bias. But, as Harry Girvetz has said: "In rejecting moral dogmatism are we to be driven to moral skepticism?" Identification of leadership patterns does not depend on finding absolutely universal motives and values. Universal patterns simply assume strong probabilities that most leaders in interacting with followers will behave in similar ways most of the time. In dealing with the structure of moral leadership in this chapter, we will be summarizing more extensive findings to be presented more fully in the next chapter. Here we must note how levels of wants and needs and other motivations, combined with hierarchies of values, and sharpened by conflict, undergird the dynamics of leadership.

Erst kommt das Fressen, dann Kommt die Moral.

First comes the belly, then morality.

Bertolt Brecht, *Three-Penny Opera*

The Power and Sources of Values

Like Plato, we can see the role of power and values in every-day life.

A thousand years ago, according to Soviet Armenian legend, Moslem invaders tried to find a way to lower the water level of Lake Sevan. Their aim was to make a land attack on an island fortress and monastery in the lake, located halfway between the Black Sea and the lower Caspian. In the 1930s Soviet engineers accomplished this feat not for military but for economic purposes; by tapping the lake's waters they were able to create new farmland and to generate electric power for local industrial development. They succeeded,

but the lowered water level caused extensive ecological and aesthetic damage. Forty years later Soviet construction crews were digging a huge, thirty-mile tunnel from a nearby river to replenish the lake.

“When we were poor,” a local water power official observed, “Lake Sevan helped us to stand on our feet. But when we became richer, we began to think how we had to help Sevan, this beauty of nature.”

In New York City not long ago a construction crew, chain saws in hand, suddenly appeared on East 63rd Street and fell upon a dozen or so spreading sycamores. The tearing, growling noise of the saws brought residents to their windows. One woman hurled a plastic bag filled with water at a foreman; another woman burst into tears as she watched. She was not propitiated by the setting up of some potted trees where the sycamores had stood.

“They were beautiful old trees, so old, so fresh,” she said later, “you looked up at them and regardless of your depression, you simply thought, oh isn’t that lovely.”

“I’ll tell you, to be very honest, I was mad,” the foreman said. “We’re poor people, but we’re human beings.” Pointing to the replacement trees, he added: “You see what the poor people do for the rich people.”

“I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy,” John Adams said. “My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain.” A Thai boy scout, recruited to combat “communism,” bespoke the value he was scheduled to embrace. “Once we get trained, we are united. So it is very difficult for other types of ideas to come in. We stress love of our king, of our country, of religion.” Oh, there was no ideology, he added; they did not mention Communism, “but it works automatically.”

We must not put groups or societies into conceptual straitjackets. Sometimes the people seem to “skip” a level and advance to a higher one apparently inappropriate to present need. In the 1976 electoral revolt against Indira Gandhi and the Congress party, India voted against suppressors of liberty despite the emphasis of the Congress party on basic needs for food, shelter, and land. Ordinarily, however, economic want and social disarray are stultifying, causing people’s aspirations to turn downward and inward; only after physical survival and economic security are assured do people turn to higher needs and hopes.

The long relationship between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph P. Kennedy illustrates the complex interplay of power and values, and suggests that

ultimately the role of values may be crucial, even in the “practical” relationships of leaders. Both were Harvard men, but otherwise their backgrounds contrasted sharply: Roosevelt the product of a benign, secure and small patrician world on the banks of the Hudson, Kennedy of the striving, competitive, vulnerable world of the Irish immigrant on the urban East Coast. The two men were thrown into a personal confrontation in World War I when Roosevelt, the assistant secretary of the navy, asked Kennedy, assistant manager of the Fore River shipyard in Massachusetts, to deliver several battleships Fore River had built for the Argentine government. Kennedy refused to release the ships because the Argentinians had not yet paid the bill. After appealing in vain to Kennedy’s sense of patriotism in wartime, Roosevelt threatened to have the navy tow the ships away. Kennedy left fuming and defeated; he was so upset on leaving Roosevelt’s office, he admitted later, that “I broke down and cried.”

More than two decades later, during another great European war, Kennedy and Roosevelt confronted each other once again, under a very different set of circumstances. Having joined the Roosevelt bandwagon well before the Chicago convention of 1932, Kennedy had headed the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Maritime Commission and then eagerly accepted an appointment by Roosevelt as ambassador to Britain. But as Europe plunged into war, disquieting reports trickled into Washington about the ambassador’s “defeatist” view of Britain’s ability to withstand Nazi attack and about his veiled but pungent criticism of Roosevelt and his administration. As the 1940 presidential campaign got under way, Kennedy seemed to hold a pivotal political position. To fight off a hard drive by Wendell Willkie, Roosevelt was picking out a tortuous path between the interventionists and the America Firsters. A resignation by such a prominent Roosevelt ambassador as Kennedy and a return home to join Willkie’s “crusade”—or even a Kennedy warning against the administration’s “interventionism”—might have tipped the scales in favor of the Republicans. Kennedy’s conspicuous Catholicism gave him considerable leverage with the Irish and other ethnic voters who might be pivotal in some of the Northeastern states. He could help the President a lot—or hurt him a lot.

The problem for the President was to persuade Kennedy either to remain in London or to declare for Roosevelt with the right kind of endorsement. First Roosevelt directed that Kennedy be ordered to remain at his post, but when Kennedy threatened to release a statement critical of the administration if not allowed home, the President granted his envoy home leave, with repeated instructions not to say a word about politics or diplomacy on the way back to America. Presidential agents intercepted Kennedy at LaGuardia Field and in effect cordoned him off from Willkie emissaries who had hoped to bring the ambassador into the Republican campaign. A red carpet awaited Kennedy at the

White House, where Roosevelt greeted him effusively and invited him to talk. The ambassador proceeded to pour out his grievances against the State Department and against the White House for asking him to perform favors and then not reciprocating. Roosevelt made no defense of his subordinates or of himself. On the contrary, he nodded understandingly, adding that he knew exactly how Kennedy felt and promising that State Department bureaucrats would not be permitted to treat old and valued envoys so outrageously in the future. The President even—or so the ambassador was led to believe—made some “offer” to Kennedy of the Democratic party nomination in 1944. The carrot was dangled, but so perhaps was the stick—according to a British secret service agent, Roosevelt brought out transcripts of Kennedy’s London denunciations of the President. Now his chief asked him to support him publicly for re-election, and Kennedy gave in. A few nights later Kennedy endorsed Roosevelt in a nationwide radio address. The President defeated Willkie, and after the election, Kennedy resigned in expectation of another presidential appointment. No word came from the White House. A year later, after Pearl Harbor, Kennedy volunteered his services for an important war job, but he never received one. Roosevelt exerted the power of *inaction*.

Leadership in the shaping of private and public opinion, leadership of reform and revolutionary movements—that is, transformational leadership—seems to take on significant and collective proportions historically, but at the time and point of action leadership is intensely individual and personal. Leadership becomes a matter of all-too-human motivation and goals, of conflict and competition that seem to be dominated by the petty quest for esteem and prestige. In the battle of the battleships Kennedy and Roosevelt seemed to be engaged in a naked power fight, and the bigger battalions—in this case, battleships—won. Roosevelt finally got his way not by appealing to Kennedy’s motives of patriotism or personal advancement; he got it through direct exercise of power. In the crux Kennedy had no recourse. Conceivably he might have appealed to the head of Bethlehem Steel, who owned the Fore River yard, but Bethlehem would hardly have challenged the administration in time of war. Or he might have appealed to shipyard workers to cordon off the battleships against the navy, but the workers hardly shared Kennedy’s obsession with cash on the barrelhead. Kennedy built warships but Roosevelt disposed of them. No wonder Kennedy cried.

Roosevelt’s bringing Kennedy back into camp in 1940 is a contrasting kind of power-wielding. Once again Roosevelt seemed to exert his will, but this time Kennedy had considerable freedom of choice. The President could try to exploit the ambassador’s motives of self-esteem and patriotism, but Kennedy could achieve self-esteem through the esteem of others beside Roosevelt—of

the Willkieites, for example—and he had his own notion of patriotism. If Roosevelt blocked his hopes of becoming a wartime czar, Kennedy had other means of achieving recognition.

What ultimately dominated World War II politics and strategy, however, was the moral issue of aid to the allies who were fighting Nazism. It was because Roosevelt's fundamental values were deeply humane and democratic that he was able, despite his earlier compromises and evasions, to act when action was imperative. Within a few weeks of his re-election in 1940 he was hard at work on a program—Lend Lease—that was to have an extraordinary impact on war and post-war outcomes. Testifying on the Lend Lease bill before the House Foreign Affairs committee, Kennedy was so inconclusive and self-contradictory that he gave no clear lead to friend or foe. Kennedy never seemed to see a transcending moral issue in the war. Because Roosevelt did, he was able to act with moral impact—to act with power.

Clearly the leader who commands compelling causes has an extraordinary potential influence over followers. Followers armed by moral inspiration, mobilized and purposeful, become zealots and leaders in their own right. How do values come to hold such power over certain leaders? What theories of human development cast light on the sources of such values in both leaders and followers? Do some leaders respond to followers' values without sharing them?

The need for social esteem, we have noted, is a powerful one. Mature leaders may have such a voracious need for affection that they seek it and accept it from every source, without discrimination; Lyndon B. Johnson seemed to want every member of the Senate to love him when he was majority leader and every American to love him when he was President. No matter how strong this longing for unanimity, however, almost all leaders, at least at the national level, must settle for far less than universal affection. They must be willing *to make enemies*—to deny themselves the affection of their adversaries. They must accept conflict. They must be willing and able to be unloved. It is hard to pick one's friends, harder to pick one's enemies.

On what basis is the decision *not* to win friends made? The calculus may seem purely pragmatic; leaders may need to win only enough support to gain a party nomination, build an electoral majority, put a bill through the legislature, bring off a revolution. But even in the most practical terms leaders must decide what side they will take, which group they will lead, what party they will utilize, what kind of revolution they will command. They will, in short, be influenced by considerations of *purpose* or *value* that may lie beyond calculations of personal advancement. Can we trace the origins of the shaping and sharing of values back to various needs of childhood, or is purpose and influence built into the potential leader by social and political processes only during later

years? Is it in some measure independent of psychological need and environmental cause—objectively based in process of mind? How deep are the roots of values held strongly by leaders and the led?

The roots lie very deep, entwined with guilt feelings that arise out of the child's early confrontation with parental authority, too deep to disentangle them completely. In Freudian theory the superego develops as part of the resolution of Oedipal conflicts, as the child internalizes prohibitions expressed in the form of parental chidings and warnings. In need of urgent instant gratification, anxious also to identify with the parents and gain their affection, the child learns to evade parental displeasure and punishment by repressing the behavior that would invoke these penalties. Typically the superego manifested itself in feelings of conscience early in childhood. Jean Piaget noted that children internalized rules and standards so automatically that they grew literal and absolutist about them; rules they saw as ends—almost as objects—in themselves, to be responded to indiscriminately. In some persons these moralistic rigidities carried on into later years without adequate transformation of rule into values. In most cases they were altered by socializing forces.

Out of these elemental but powerful influences of the superego values emerge. The question is how the child makes the transition from rules dictated by Oedipal and other conflict, articulated and enforced by parents, and internalized by the child to the shaping of values. This question has divided the analysts. Freud doubted that the early configurations of conscience and standards could be substantially changed in adult life, except perhaps through psychoanalysis, for they were determined by an iron law of biological and child-parent relations. Carl Jung criticized the "Viennese idea of sexuality with all its vague omnipotence," the notion that the brain was merely an appendage of the genital glands, and the entire mechanistic approach to causation. Persons, Jung insisted, acted not only in response to causal (i.e., mechanistic) forces but to ends or aims (*finis*) as well. Julian Huxley wrote that the evolution of "the primitive super-ego" into a "more rational and less cruel mechanism" is "the central ethical problem confronting every human individual." Erik Erikson said: "The great governor of initiative is conscience. . . . But . . . the conscience of the child can be primitive, cruel, and uncompromising. . . ." Talcott Parsons contended that Freud's view while correct was too narrow, that not only moral standards but all the components of the common culture become rooted in personality structure.

Of these views on the origins of values, Freud's theory of Oedipal conflict, as applied to broader social processes, and Jung's concern with ends, or purposes, are together most useful to students of leadership, for they make possible a concept of values forged and hardened by *conflict*.

Conflict and Consciousness

Leadership is a process of morality to the degree that leaders engage with followers on the basis of shared motives and values and goals—on the basis, that is, of the followers' "true" needs as well as those of leaders: psychological, economic, safety, spiritual, sexual, aesthetic, or physical. Friends, relatives, teachers, officials, politicians, ministers, and others will supply a variety of initiatives, but only the followers themselves can ultimately define their own true needs. And they can do so only when they have been exposed to the competing diagnoses, claims, and values of would-be leaders; only when the followers can make an informed choice among competing "prescriptions," only when—in the political arena at least—followers have had full opportunity to perceive, comprehend, evaluate, and finally experience alternatives offered by those professing to be their "true" representatives. Ultimately the moral legitimacy of transformational leadership, and to a lesser degree transactional leadership, is grounded in *conscious choice among real alternatives*. Hence leadership assumes competition and conflict, and brute power denies it.

Conflict has become the stepchild of political thought. Philosophical concern with conflict reaches back to Hobbes and even Heraclitus, and men who spurred revolutions in Western thought—Machiavelli and Hegel, Marx and Freud—recognized the vital role of conflict in the relations among persons or in the ambivalences within them. The seventeenth-century foes of absolute monarchy, the eighteenth-century Scottish moralists, the nineteenth-century Social Darwinists—these and other schools of thought dealt directly with questions of power and conflict, and indirectly at least with the nature of leadership. The theories of Pareto, Durkheim, Weber, and others, while not centrally concerned with problems of social conflict, "contain many concepts, assumptions, and hypotheses which greatly influenced later writers who did attempt to deal with conflict in general." Georg Simmel and others carried theories of conflict into the twentieth century.

It was, curiously, in this same century—an epoch of the bloodiest world wars, mightiest revolutions, and most savage civil wars—that social science, at least in the West, became most entranced with doctrines of harmony, adjustment, and stability. Perhaps this was the result of relative affluence, or of the need to unify people to conduct total war or consolidate revolutions, or of the co-option of scholars to advise on mitigating hostility among interest groups such as labor and management or racial groups such as blacks and whites. Whatever the cause, the "static bias" afflicted scholarly research with a tendency to look on conflict as an aberration, if not a perversion, of the agreeable and harmonious interactions that were seen as actually making up organized so-

ciety. More recently Western scholarship has shown a quickened interest in the role of conflict in establishing boundaries, channeling hostility, counteracting social ossification, invigorating class and group interests, encouraging innovation, and defining and empowering leadership.

The static bias among scholars doubtless encouraged and reflected the pronouncements of political authority. Communist leaders apotheosized conflict as the engine of the process of overthrowing bourgeois regimes and then banned both the profession and the utilization of conflict in the new "classless" societies. Western leaders, especially in the United States, make a virtual fetish of "national unity," "party harmony," and foreign policy bipartisanship even while they indulge in—and virtually live off—contested elections and divisive policy issues. Jefferson proclaimed at his first Inaugural, "We are all Federalists, we are all Republicans." Few American presidents have aroused and inflamed popular attitudes as divisively as Franklin D. Roosevelt with his assaults on conservatives in both parties, his New Deal innovations, and his efforts to pack the Supreme Court and purge the Democratic party, yet few American presidents have devoted so many addresses to sermonlike calls for transcending differences and behaving as one nation and one people.

The potential for conflict permeates the relations of humankind, and that potential is a force for health and growth as well as for destruction and barbarism. No group can be wholly harmonious, as Simmel said, for such a group would be empty of process and structure. The smooth interaction of people is continually threatened by disparate rates of change, technological innovation, mass deprivation, competition for scarce resources, and other ineluctable social forces and by ambivalences, tensions, and conflicts within individuals' personalities. One can imagine a society—in ancient Egypt, perhaps, or in an isolated rural area today—in which the division of labor, the barriers against external influence, the structure of the family, the organization of the value system, the acceptance of authority, and the decision-making by leaders all interact smoothly and amiably with one another. But the vision of such a society would be useful only as an imaginary construct at one end of a continuum from cohesion to conflict. Indeed, the closer, the more intimate the relations within a group, the more hostility as well as harmony may be generated. The smaller the cooperative group—even if united by language and thrown closely together by living arrangements—"the easier it is for them to be mutually irritated and to flare up in anger," Bronislaw Malinowski said. Some conflict over valued goals and objects is almost inevitable. Even small, isolated societies cannot indefinitely dike off the impact of internal changes such as alteration of the birth rate or the disruption caused by various forms of innovation.

The question, then, is not the inevitability of conflict but the function of

leadership in expressing, shaping, and curbing it. Leadership as conceptualized here is grounded in the seedbed of conflict. Conflict is intrinsically compelling; it galvanizes, prods, motivates people. Every person, group, and society has latent tension and hostility, forming a variety of psychological and political patterns across social situations. Leadership acts as an inciting and triggering force in the conversion of conflicting demands, values, and goals into significant behavior. Since leaders have an interest of their own, whether opportunistic or ideological or both, in expressing and exploiting followers' wants, needs, and aspirations, they act as catalytic agents in arousing followers' consciousness. They discern signs of dissatisfaction, deprivation, and strain; they take the initiative in making connections with their followers; they plumb the character and intensity of their potential for mobilization; they articulate grievances and wants; and they act for followers in their dealings with other clusters of followers.

Conflicts vary in origin—in and between nations, races, regions, religions, economic enterprises, labor unions, communities, kinship groups, families, and individuals themselves. Conflicts show various degrees and qualities of persistence, direction, intensity, volatility, latency, scope. The last alone may be pivotal: the outcome of every conflict, E. E. Schattschneider wrote, "is determined by the *scope* of its contagion. The number of people involved in any conflict determines what happens; every change in the number of participants . . . affects the results The moral of this is: If a fight starts, watch the crowd, because the crowd plays the decisive role." But it is leadership that draws the crowd into the incident, that changes the number of participants, that closely affects the manner of the spread of the conflict, that constitutes the main "processes" of relating the wider public to the conflict.

The root causes of conflict are as varied as their origins. No one has described these causes as cogently as James Madison.

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man: and we see them every where brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power: or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have in turn divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have

been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions, and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions, has been the various and unequal distribution of property.

Not only “attachment to different leaders” but all these forces for conflict are expressed and channeled through many different types of leaders “ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power.”

Leaders, whatever their professions of harmony, do not shun conflict; they confront it, exploit it, ultimately embody it. Standing at the points of contact among latent conflict groups, they can take various roles, sometimes acting directly for their followers, sometimes bargaining with others, sometimes overriding certain motives of followers and summoning others into play. The smaller and more homogeneous the group for which they act, the more probable that they will have to deal with the leaders of other groups with opposing needs and values. The larger, more heterogeneous their collection of followers, the more probable that they will have to embrace competing interests and goals within their constituency. At the same time, their marginality supplies them with a double leverage, since in their status as leaders they are expected by their followers and by other leaders to deviate, to innovate, and to mediate between the claims of their groups and those of others.

But leaders shape as well as express and mediate conflict. They do this largely by influencing the intensity and scope of conflict. Within limits they can soften or sharpen the claims and demands of their followers, as they calculate their own political resources in dealing with competing leaders within their own constituencies and outside. They can amplify the voice and pressure of their followers, to the benefit of their bargaining power perhaps, but at the possible price of freedom to maneuver—less freedom to protect themselves against their followers—as they play in games of broader stakes. Similarly, they can narrow or broaden the scope of conflict as they seek to limit or multiply the number of entrants into a specific political arena.

Franklin Roosevelt demonstrated the fine art of controlling entry in the presidential nomination race in 1940. There was widespread uncertainty as to whether he would run for a third term. He himself was following the development of public opinion at the same time that he was influencing it. Leaders in his own party were divided; onetime stalwarts like James A. Farley and Cordell Hull opposed a third term. It was supposed that FDR would discourage Democrats from entering the nomination race. On the contrary, he welcomed them. Secondary figures like Joseph Kennedy, coming to the Oval Office to sound out Roosevelt on his intentions and on their own chances, found themselves flat-

tered and rated as serious and deserving possibilities. The effect was to broaden the field of possible adversaries and hence divide and weaken the opposition. FDR had little trouble winning the nomination.

The essential strategy of leadership in mobilizing power is to recognize the arrays of motives and goals in potential followers, to appeal to those motives by words and action, and to strengthen those motives and goals in order to increase the power of leadership, thereby changing the environment within which both followers and leaders act. Conflict—disagreement over goals within an array of followers, fear of outsiders, competition for scarce resources—immensely invigorates the mobilization of consensus and dissensus. But the fundamental process is a more elusive one; it is, in large part, *to make conscious what lies unconscious among followers*.

The purposeful awakening of persons into a state of political consciousness is a familiar problem for philosophers and psychologists and one that has stimulated thought in other disciplines. For the student of leadership the concept of political consciousness is as primitive as it is fertile. That “conflict produces consciousness” was fundamental in the doctrine of Hegel, Marx, and other nineteenth-century theorists, but they differed over the cardinal question: consciousness of *what*? They recognized the essential human needs but differed as to the nature of those needs. Feuerbach, an intellectual leader of the young Marx, conceived humanity as imbued with real, tangible, solid needs arising from Nature. Marx compared human consciousness with that of animals, which had no consciousness of the world as something objective and real apart from the animal’s own existence and needs. But *human* labor, rather than leading to direct satisfaction of need, generates human consciousness and self-consciousness. Thus the early Marx had some understanding of the variety and inexhaustibility of human needs.

It was a marvelous insight, but Marx came to be identified with the doctrine that *true* consciousness, to be achieved through unremitting conflict, was always of *class*. Felt, palpable human needs, however, did not seem to be translated into a rising class consciousness in the capitalist environment of the mid-nineteenth century. Marx and Engels railed at the “false consciousness” of religion and nationalism and the other diversions and superficialities that seemed to engage men who were caught in the iron grip of material deprivation. The progress toward class consciousness was slow, irregular, uneven. The almost automatic movement toward revolution, emerging out of the “spontaneous class-organization of the proletariat,” simply did not come about in the great bourgeois societies; ultimately revolution would need to be spurred by militant leadership and iron party discipline.

In the fiery intellectual and political conflict of the nineteenth century both Marxists and their adversaries assumed too much about the central springs of human behavior without knowing enough about motivation or the complex relations between motives and behavior. Few perceived that if people did not behave the way they were supposed to, the fault might lie in the suppositions rather than in the people. One of the suppositions was that ultimately humans would respond rationally and “realistically” to “objective” social conditions. But what was real and rational? If Marx had turned Hegel’s dialectic of ideas on its head, Freud turned Marx’s Consciousness upside down. Freud was drawn to the function of the unconscious rather than the conscious or the pre-conscious; for him the unconscious was the “true psychic reality,” betrayed by dreams, fantasies, accidents, and curious slips of the tongue. Consciousness and related concepts of alienation and identity have continued to be variously defined and heatedly debated. During the ferment of the 1960s that reached across the Western world, young people were urged to “expand consciousness” and “consciousness-raising” became something of a fad and a profession.

If the first task of leadership is to bring to consciousness the followers’ sense of their own needs, values, and purposes, the question remains: consciousness of what? Which of these motives and goals are to be tapped? Leaders, for example, can make followers more conscious of aspects of their *identity* (sexual, communal, ethnic, class, national, ideological). Georges Sorel argued that only through leadership and conflict, including “terrifying violence,” could the working class become conscious of its true identity—and hence of its power. But to what extent was Sorel imposing his own values and goals on workers who might have very different, even idiosyncratic, ones? We return to the dilemma: to what degree do leaders, through their command of personal influence, substitute their own motives and goals for those of the followers? Should they whip up chauvinism, feelings of ethnic superiority, regional prejudice, economic rivalry? What must they accept among followers as being durable and valid rather than false and transient? And we return to the surmise here: leaders with relevant motives and goals of their own respond to followers’ needs and wants and goals in such a way as to meet those motivations and to bring changes consonant with those of both leaders and followers, and with the values of both.

The Elevating Power of Leadership

Mobilized and shaped by gifted leadership, sharpened and strengthened by conflict, values can be the source of vital change. The question is: at what level

of need or stage of morality do leaders operate to elevate their followers? At levels of safety and security, followers tend to conform to group expectations and to support and justify the social order. At a certain stage Kohlberg finds a "law and order" orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and maintenance of the social order for its own sake. At a higher stage Simpson found a significant relation between tendencies toward self-esteem and positive law values (belief that the authority for judgments rests in the laws and norms humans have developed collectively). This is the level of "social contract morality."

At the highest stage of moral development persons are guided by near-universal ethical principles of justice such as equality of human rights and respect for individual dignity. This stage sets the opportunity for rare and creative leadership. Politicians who operate at the lower and middle levels of need and moral development are easily understood, but what kind of leadership reaches into the need and value structures, mobilizing and directing support for such values as justice and empathy?

First, it is the kind of leadership that *operates at need and value levels higher than those of the potential follower* (but not so much higher as to lose contact). This kind of leadership need be neither doctrinaire nor indoctrinative (in the ordinary sense of preaching). In its most effective form it appeals to the higher, more general and comprehensive values that express followers' more fundamental and enduring needs. The appeal may be more potent when a polity faces danger from outside, as from an invasion, or from inside, as in social breakdown, civil war, or natural catastrophe. "If inefficiencies and corruption of governmental and social leadership go beyond 'normal,' if demands are constantly frustrated by incapacities, which can be readily laid at some human door, if all of this is compounded by a rising consciousness of discrimination and sense of justice," according to a four-nation study, "then people can experience great and often very sudden transformation of values, or those values that were subdued can become the basis for vigorous action." No single force, such as economic conditions, predetermines change, this study concluded; other factors—notably the quality of leadership—intervene, so the role of values in social change varies from culture to culture. Among the nations studied (India, Poland, the United States, Yugoslavia) similarities were found in leaders' espousal of innovative change, economic development, and the norms of selflessness (commitment to the general welfare) and honesty.

Second, it is the kind of leadership that *can exploit conflict and tension within persons' value structures*. Contradictions can be expected among competing substantive values, such as liberty and equality, or between those values and moral values like honesty, or between terminal values and instrumental values. "All contemporary theories in social psychology would probably agree

that a necessary prerequisite to cognitive change is the presence of some state of imbalance within the system," Rokeach says.

Leaders may simply help a follower see these types of contradictions, or they might actively arouse a sense of dissatisfaction by making the followers aware of contradictions in or inconsistencies between values and behavior. The more contradictions challenge self-conceptions, according to Rokeach, the more dissatisfaction will be aroused. And such dissatisfactions are the source of changes that the leader can influence. There is an implication in Rokeach that the contradictions in themselves cause change, simply on the basis of self-cognition. Typically, however, an outside influence is required in the form of a leader, preferably "one step above." Rokeach bases much of his analysis on experimental situations in which the subjects are exposed to close direction and restraint—certainly a context of manipulation if not of leadership. Autonomous cognition usually is not enough to enable persons to break out of their imprisoning value structures. Experimenters may assume a leadership role.

Given the right conditions of value conflict, leaders hold enhanced influence at the higher levels of the need and value hierarchies. They can appeal to the more widely and deeply held values, such as justice, liberty, and brotherhood. They can expose followers to the broader values that contradict narrower ones or inconsistent behavior. They can redefine aspirations and gratifications to help followers see their stake in new, program-oriented social movements. Most important, they can gratify lower needs so that higher motivations will arise to elevate the conscience of men and women. To be sure, leadership may be frustrated and weakened at the higher levels as well as the lower. Potential support may thin out when immediate parochial needs and values threaten to weaken higher, more general ones. Substantive values, such as liberty or equality, may compete with one another, and, however logically compelling the leader's value priorities may look, they may not co-exist so harmoniously in the political arena. Perhaps the most disruptive force in competitive politics is conflict between *modal values* such as fair play and due process and *end-values* such as equality. Roosevelt's court-packing plan, with its use of dubious means to attain high ends, is a case in point. Some of those believing in equal opportunity today may also believe in certain modes of conduct—endless debate, for example, or elaborate procedures for judicial review—that make the attainment of equal opportunity far less certain.

The potential for influence through leadership is usually immense. The essence of leadership in any polity is the recognition of real need, the uncovering and exploiting of contradictions among values and between values and practice, the realigning of values, the reorganization of institutions where necessary, and the governance of change. Essentially the leader's task is consciousness-raising

on a wide plane. "Values exist only when there is consciousness," Susanne Langer has said. "Where nothing is felt, nothing matters." The leader's fundamental act is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they feel—to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can be moved to purposeful action.

A congruence between the need and value hierarchies would produce a powerful potential for the exercise of purposeful leadership. When these hierarchies are combined with stage theories—for example, Erikson's eight psychosocial stages of man, with its emphasis on trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame, role experimentation versus negative identity—leadership, with its capacity to exploit tension and conflict, finds an even more durable foundation. While both Maslow's and Kohlberg's hierarchies imply *uni-directionality* and *irreversibility*—persons move through the levels at varying rates of speed but in only one direction—we know that people can and do regress. Still, for four values in particular—the end-values of equality, freedom, and a world of beauty (Rokeach's "terminal" values) and the instrumental value of self-control—the long-term changes have been documented in several studies as leading toward heavier impact of values. These findings suggest one of the most vital aspects of leadership: it cannot influence people "downward" on the need or value hierarchy without a reinforcing environment. The functioning of some persons at the levels of principle or self-actualization would not easily regress to the conventional level (e.g., need for social esteem). *Stasis* operates to prevent slippage to an earlier stage. If leaders reflecting more widely and deeply held values compete for support among followers who are moving toward more socially responsible levels in the hierarchies, leadership itself tends to move on to still broader and "higher" values.

This phenomenon provides the theoretical foundation for Gunnar Myrdal's brilliant analysis of the likely course of the conflict between egalitarian values and practice in the United States. Just as most persons strive for some coherence and consistency within their value hierarchies, so value systems in whole societies, reflecting the cognitive-affective-behavioral factors described above, tend toward some structuring. As societies, like persons, confront challenges, crises, and conflict, there is a tendency toward consistency. A rough hierarchy of values develops as lower and higher priorities develop (or are assigned) in circumstances where people cannot equally embrace all the end-values and modal values that they might wish. In the process of the moral criticism that men make upon each other, Myrdal notes, "the valuations of the higher and more general planes—referring to *all* human beings and *not* to specific small groups—are regularly invoked by one party or the other, simply because they are held in common among all groups in society, and also because of the

supreme prestige they are traditionally awarded. . . . Specific attitudes and forms of behavior are then reconciled to the more general moral principles. . . ." There are, of course, limits to the tendency toward congruency in societies—and probably in persons as well. The four-nation study found an unexpectedly high degree of conflict *within* the countries studied, not merely conflict among the countries. At societal levels, however, such conflict is not random but assumes some kind of form and persistence. And conflict, as we understand it here, is necessary for leadership and, indeed, for higher levels of coherence, in a kind of dialectical and synthesis response.

In a famous distinction Max Weber contrasted the "ethic of responsibility" with the "ethic of ultimate ends." The latter measured persons' behavior by the extent of their adherence to good ends or high purposes; the former measured action by persons' capacity to take a calculating, prudential, rationalistic approach, making choices in terms of not one supreme value or value hierarchy alone but many values, attitudes, and interests, seeing the implication of choice for the means of attaining it—the price paid to achieve it, the relation of one goal to another, the direct and indirect effects of different goals for different persons and interests, all in a context of specificity and immediacy, and with an eye to actual *consequences* rather than lofty intent.

This dualism is of course oversimplified; most leaders and followers shift back and forth from specific, self-involved values to broader, public-involved ones. But the perception of dualism poses sharply the dilemmas facing leaders who embrace and respond to popular needs and values. The ethic of responsibility, whatever its appeal to moral rationalists like Weber, opened the floodgates to such a variety of discrete, multiple, relativistic, individualistic values as to allow a person observing this ethic to legitimate an enormous variety of actions. This ethic, by extension, permitted expedient, opportunistic, and highly self-serving action because the concept of responsibility could easily be stretched to authorize the kind of opportunism that we associate, for example, with nineteenth-century "rugged individualism." If leaders are encouraged to follow immediate, specific, calculable interests, they can end up serving their narrow, short-run interests alone, rationalizing the consequences in terms of responsibility to themselves, to their families, or to a relatively narrow group. Leaders holding this ethic, or representing persons holding this ethic, would act amid such a plethora of responsibilities as to legitimate both high-minded and self-serving behavior, action both for broad, general interests and for parochial ones, action that might be self-limiting contrasted with action that in the long run might be self-fulfilling (by the standards of the highest level of moral development). Worse, leaders might lack useful standards for distinguishing between the two sets of alternatives.

By the same token, Weber's ethic of ultimate ends emphasizes the demands of an overriding, millenarian kind of value system at the expense of the far more typical situation (at least in pluralistic societies) in which choices must be made among a number of compelling end-values, modal values, and instrumental values. And the ethic of responsibility could rather be seen as the day-to-day measured application of the "ethic of ultimate ends" to complex circumstance.

For the study of leadership, the dichotomy is not between Weber's two ethics but between the leader's commitment to a number of overriding, general welfare-oriented values on the one hand and his encouragement of, and entanglement in, a host of lesser values and "responsibilities" on the other. The four-nation study notes the "most important motivational distinction among leaders desiring change—the distinction between those who see progress primarily in terms of political opportunity and those who nurse a feeling of social injustice arising out of the gap between the economically deprived and the privileged," even though no consistent relationship seemed to explain it. The great bulk of leadership activity consists of the day-to-day interaction of leaders and followers characterized by the processes described above. But the ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of the multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior—its roles, choices, style, commitments—to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values.