

**Reflective Silence: Developing the Capacity for
Meaningful Global Leadership**

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Crossing Cultures

Insights from Master Teachers

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Chapter 17

Reflective silence

Developing the capacity for meaningful global leadership

Nancy J. Adler

We are a busy people in a busy corporate culture. But even the busiest person wants wisdom and sense in busyness. . . . All of us want to work smarter rather than harder. Yet all of us are familiar with frantic busyness as a state that continually precludes us from opening to the quiet and contemplation it takes to be smart.

(Whyte 1994: 98)

Introduction

Following the experience of most profound wisdom traditions, Harvard professor Howard Gardner identifies reflection as one of the three competencies (along with leveraging and framing) that distinguish extraordinary leaders from ordinary leaders and managers. According to Professor Gardner,

Reflection means spending a lot of time thinking about what it is that you are trying to achieve, seeing how you are doing, continuing if things are going well, correcting course if not; that is, being in a constant dialectic with your work, your project or your set of projects and not just going on blind faith [for extended periods] without stepping back and reflecting.

(Gardner, 1998: 20)

Management and leadership, both as they are taught and as they are practiced, focus primarily (and in some cases, exclusively) on action, rather than reflection. This module is designed to bring back the possibility of extraordinary global leadership through reintroducing daily rituals of quiet, reflection, and contemplation.

The period of reflective silence

Introduce the concept of guarding time daily for reflection. Use the introductory paragraph (above) to explain the relationship between reflection and extraordinary leadership. Ask participants to brainstorm ways in which they currently guard time for reflection (such as by writing in a journal, meditating, closing the door and being quiet, taking a walk alone, practicing tai chi). Recognize that many of us, including many professors, guard little or no time for reflective silence. With participants, brainstorm forces in our organizational culture that support or undermine reflective silence. If participants come from multiple cultures, ask them how their particular culture supports people's choice to participate in a daily practice of reflective silence and how the culture undermines it.

Start with very short periods of reflective silence at the beginning of each session (two to three minutes). I use one of a number of ways to introduce sessions, including:

- Reading a brief inspirational or reflective quote. Some of poet David Whyte's quotes are particularly helpful for initially framing the necessity and challenge of contemplation in leaders' overly active lives. For example, "A soulful approach to work is probably the only way an individual can respond creatively to the high-temperature stress of modern work life without burning to a crisp in the heat" (1994: 98–9).
- Asking a deep, personal question about the implications of the material participants are discussing in the seminar.
- Inviting silence. Simply suggest that each person become quiet.
- Ringing a chime to signal the beginning and end of the period of reflective silence.

As the seminar progresses and participants begin to look forward to the period of reflective silence, it can be lengthened to approximately ten minutes and less structure can be used to initiate each session. Periods of reflective silence can be held at both beginning and end of each session.

Supporting structure for reflective silence

Introduce recommended, but optional, readings

Periods of reflective silence can be designed into seminar sessions with no pre- or post-session readings and with no accompanying assignments. The readings and assignments listed here are suggested strictly to deepen participants' understanding of the role of the reflective experience and more explicitly to tie reflection into global leadership.

Optional pre-readings to introduce the importance of reflection for managers and leaders

Peter Drucker's (1999) "Managing oneself" and Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz's (2001) "The making of a corporate athlete" clearly and succinctly explain why reflection is crucial to effective leadership. Use the Drucker article to reflect upon the question: *To what extent do you think the ability to "manage oneself," as described by Drucker, is related to global leadership? How is it similar to and different from your personal conception of global leadership?*

Optional readings to introduce global leadership that makes a difference

Academic as well as popular management literature often confuses management with leadership, and rarely distinguishes ordinary from extraordinary leadership. Adler's *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior* (2002b: Chapter 6) and her *From Boston to Beijing: Managing with a Worldview* (2002a) introduce the notion of global leadership as distinguished from both domestic leadership and management. Adler's brief article, "Leading: giving yourself for things far greater than yourself" (2001) challenges managers and leaders to address issues of significance, issues that make a difference.

Optional readings to introduce the relationship between extraordinary global leadership and reflection

Howard Gardner's book, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (1995) supports, with research, the fact that extraordinary leaders – leaders who make a significant difference in the world – reflect on a daily basis. Recommended readings include the Preface and Summary chapter, or, for a more in-depth understanding of extraordinary leadership, the entire first section. Gardner's hour-long videotape program, *Creativity and Leadership* (Gardner 1998) is also excellent for introducing what we know about extraordinary leaders.

Optional readings to explore the relationship between action and reflection

Parker Palmer's books (including *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring* (1990); "Leading from within," Chapter 5 in *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (2000); and *The Courage to Teach: A Guide for Reflection and Renewal* (1999)) offer philosophical – rather than managerial – reasons why meaningful action in the world requires a

balance between action and contemplation. *The Active Life* is particularly good for looking at the necessary relationship between authentic action and contemplation. *Let Your Life Speak* is excellent for looking at the issue of calling, of doing the work each of us is meant to do in the world. *The Courage to Teach* is recommended primarily for professors, rather than participants. While participants often find these readings quite meaningful, most also find them difficult and slow to read. Palmer at times uses Christian imagery to make his points, which creates a barrier for many participants. When I recommend the Palmer readings, I always warn participants that they are “slow reading” and to ignore the Christian imagery if it is not helpful to them.

Highly recommended, optional, readings to introduce leadership that address profoundly meaningful and significant global leadership issues

What Does it Mean to Be Human? (Franck *et al.* 2000) is a collection of very short, personal leadership stories. It unequivocally raises the issue of why leaders must address profoundly meaningful “big-picture” issues, and what the personal costs are both in addressing and in failing to address issues of meaning and substance. The stories address such issues as calling, authenticity, the ability to see reality (what Parker Palmer refers to as “collusion against illusion”), hope, despair, and optimism.

David Whyte is often referred to as the poet of corporate America. His book, *The Heart Aroused* (1994), addresses what it means to bring soul back into the workplace – what it means to hold courageous conversations on an ongoing basis with ourselves, our work, our colleagues, and the global society within which we live. In his most recent book, *Crossing the Unknown Sea*, Whyte defines work as “an opportunity for discovering and shaping the place where the self meets the world” (2001: jacket cover).

Sources of additional quotes for reflection sessions

Two of my favorite sources, in addition to *What Does it Mean to Be Human?* (Franck *et al.* 2000) and *The Heart Aroused* (Whyte 1994), are *Earth Prayers* (Roberts and Amidon 1991) and *Coming Home to Myself* (Woodman and Mellick 1998). *Earth Prayers* is a collection of 365 prayers, poems, and invocations from around the world for honoring the earth and our relationship to the earth. *Coming Home to Myself* is a collection of quotes, directed primarily at women, but highly meaningful for men also, taken from a number of the books by Jungian analyst Marion Woodman. Many echo the theme of reflection and knowing oneself as a precursor to acting effectively in the world. *The Circle and the Square* (Adler and Lew forthcoming) combines a number of quotes, stories, and paintings, many based on

ancient Chinese wisdom stories, which echo today's challenges of global leadership.

Introduction to assignments

No assignments are necessary to include with the periods of reflective silence. The following optional assignments can be used, however, to further seminar goals and to support participants' understanding of the important relationship between reflective silence and profound leadership.

What Does it Mean to Be Human?

Introduce the book, *What Does it Mean to Be Human?* (Franck *et al.* 2000), by using the following assignment. The assignment can be included at the beginning of the seminar, or used in parts throughout the seminar.

1 LEADERSHIP: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

To lead is to see reality for what it is. Yet to see the current state of our planet and civilization is to risk falling into despair. Returning to the question "What does it mean to be human?" – as opposed to the questions "Why is there such barbarity in the world?" and "Why do we treat each other with such inhumanity?" – is one way to transcend our despair and return to a clearer vision of what we, as human beings, are collectively capable of being and doing. Without clearly seeing reality and transcending despair, true global leadership remains impossible.

2 WRITE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE HUMAN?

To choose to be a global leader is to choose to attempt to improve, in some way, the state of humanity and our planet while increasing the performance of the particular organization one leads. In 1–2 pages, describe what being human means to you.

3 READ: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

After personally responding to the question "What does it mean to be human?," read the responses of people from around the world in *What Does it Mean to Be Human?* (Franck *et al.* 2000). As you read others' responses, note any words, phrases, paragraphs, thoughts, or observations that are particularly meaningful or helpful to you as a person and as a current or future global leader. These are the thoughts

that would be helpful to the people you work with for maintaining their sense of aspiration, vision, and motivation, as well as helping them to escape the inevitable descent into despair that accompanies any leader's worthy efforts. As you read the stories in the book, you may find yourself altering your own response to the question, "What does it mean to be human?" Go ahead and write new versions of your response, but keep a journal with each response so you can track the development of your thinking.

4 WRITING YOUR STORY: CALLING AND COMMITMENT

Many stories in the book describe people's calling – those life experiences and decisions that led them to make a life commitment to the type of work they are doing in the world and their particular approach to leadership. As you read the stories, think about the events and decisions in your own life that have led you, and are leading you, to make your own personal commitment to the work you are doing, or wish to do, in the world. How would you tell your story?

5 IN CLASS: TELLING YOUR STORY

Bring *What Does it Mean to Be Human?* (Franck *et al.* 2000) to class along with your thoughts on what it means to you to be human and your thoughts on your personal experiences and decisions that have led to your commitments. You will only be asked to share those aspects of your thinking that you wish to make public – so please be as honest as possible with yourself in your journal, even if you choose to share none of your current thinking with a wider audience.

Selected quotes for introducing periods of reflective silence

The following section lists a number of quotes that I use regularly from *What Does it Mean to Be Human?* (Franck *et al.* 2000) and *Earth Prayers* (Roberts and Amidon 1991) to introduce periods of reflective silence. In certain cases, I have altered or added material to the original quote to tie it more directly into global leadership. In all such cases, changes are bracketed and marked NJA, for Nancy J. Adler, to differentiate my wording from the author's original wording.

Professors and participants should select readings, quotes, and poems that best fit their particular seminar. After presenting the stories and quotes I have selected myself for the first few periods of reflective silence, I invite participants to select their own readings. Whether or not participants actually choose to select their own poems and quotes to read, it is important to invite them to do so.

Selected quotes from What Does it Mean to Be Human? (Franck et al. 2000) that I have used to introduce periods of reflective silence in various leadership seminars

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE OF REFLECTIVE SILENCE

To live is to write one's credo, every day in every act. I pray for a world that offers us each the gift of reflective space, the Sabbath quiet, to recollect the fragments of our days and acts. In those recollections we may see a little of how our lives affect others, and then imagine in the days ahead, how we might do small and specific acts that create a world we believe every person has a right to deserve.

(Arthur Frank: 236)

VISION: WHY LEAD? WHY SOCIETY NEEDS EXTRAORDINARY GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

To be human is not always to succeed, but it is always to learn. It is to move forward despite the obstacles. [NJA: To lead is not always to succeed, but it is always to learn. It is to move forward despite the obstacles.]

(David Krieger: 264)

[It is for us] to return to our original task of *Tikun Olam*, the restoration of the world.

(Rabbi Avraham Soetendorf: 26)

To be human is to find ourselves behind our names. [NJA: To lead is to find ourselves behind our names.]

(David Krieger: 264)

What you do in response to the ocean of suffering may seem insignificant but it is very important you do it.

(M. K. Gandhi: 66)

We have abandoned the concerns of the civilizations before us. We have forsaken the good, the true and the beautiful for the effective, the powerful and the opulent. We have abandoned enoughness for the sake of consumption. We are modern. We are progressive. And we are lost.

(Joan Chittister: 152)

At every opening talk [to refugee children of war], I would put a big picture of the planet up and we would start to relate to that planet as home, as a living entity. We would start to talk about what we were like as children. What were our hopes? What did you believe in? What did we believe was possible? How big was our vision? People would say, "My vision was big – anything was possible." Then I would ask, "What

do you believe now?” and the reply would be, “Well, not as much is possible.” [Leadership] . . . is helping people to reconnect with the vision that anything is possible.

(Judith Thompson: 211–12)

What good is ascending the mountain if all we do is make ourselves holy? The point is to serve, to offer, to be the offering.

B. T. Glassman (from Franck *et al.*, 1988: 83)

We are all born with the potential to become human. How we choose to live [and to lead] will be the measure of our humanness. Civilization does not assure our civility. Nor does being born into the human species assure our humanity. We must each find our own path to becoming human. [NJA: We must each find our own approach to leading that reflects our humanity.]

(David Krieger: 264)

To be human is to give yourself for things far greater than yourself. [NJA: To lead is to give yourself for things far greater than yourself.]

(Joan Chittister: 151)

LEADING: GAINING AND OFFERING NEW PERSPECTIVES

If the signals we are sending into space hoping to contact extra-terrestrial intelligent life hit their targets, and such intelligent life has in turn detected and observed us, we don't have to fear invasion – even if minimally intelligent, they would prudently avoid all contact with our dangerous planet.

(Richard Chapman: 44)

LEADING TOWARD WIN-WIN SOLUTIONS

That victory never leads to peace is not a theoretical affirmation, but an empirical statement.

(Raimon Panikkar: 63)

LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE

“Whatever we do today [NJA: How we lead today],” Dewasenta, clan-mother of the Onodaga Nation, said to me, “we should never endanger the seventh generation to come. As we walk through life, the seventh generation is looking at us from the ground. Therefore we should walk gently.”

(Claus Biegert from Franck *et al.* 1998: 180–1)

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE

We are all culturally hypnotized from birth! It explains so much!
(Willis Harman: 80)

[A]waken in us a perspectival vision – the ability to see situations from many different perspectives and thus from a more compassionate vantage point. Perhaps ... technology, along with eco-crises and multinational commerce both of which transcend national borders, though they have the potential for gross misuse, can, if dealt with wisely, catalyze the expanded consciousness out of which generosity and compassion would arise spontaneously in our collective heart as a response to the barbarism of the day.

(Ram Das: 66)

To be human is to break the ties of cultural conformity and group-think, and to use one's own mind. [NJA: To lead is to break the ties of cultural conformity and group-think, and to use one's own mind.]

(David Krieger: 263)

All nations tell stories of wisdom and hope. In India, there is a story of a highly respected elder who was confronted by youngsters plotting to embarrass him. One youngster held a beautiful bird behind his back. The group said to the elder, "There's a bird, is it alive or dead?" If he replied, "It is alive," the youngster would kill the bird by squeezing its neck to prove the elder was wrong. If he replied, "It is dead," the youngster would release the bird to fly away and again prove the elder wrong. When the youngsters repeated three times, "There's a bird, is it alive or dead?" the elder thought deeply and replied, "It is in your hands." [NJA: Leadership; it is all in our hands.]

(Leonard Marks: 115–16)

I experience my culture and myself shaping each other in a dance. . . .

(Donella Meadows: 68)

I had the most extraordinary experience of love of neighbor with a Hindu family. A man came to our house and said: "Mother Theresa, there is a family who have not eaten for so long. Do something." So I took some rice and went there immediately. And I saw the children – their eyes shining with hunger. I don't know if you have ever seen hunger. But I have seen it very often. And the mother of the family took the rice I gave her and went out. When she came back, I asked her: "Where did you go? What did you do?" and she gave me a very simple answer: "They are hungry also." What struck me was that she knew – and who are they? A Muslim family – and she knew. I didn't

bring any more rice that evening because I wanted them, Hindus and Muslims, to enjoy the joy of sharing.

(Mother Theresa: 86–7)

HOPE, DESPAIR, MEANING, AND THE SHADOW SIDE OF LEADERSHIP

The soul would have no rainbows if the eyes had no tears.

(Annelie Keil, Native American saying: 228)

Welcoming the dark as no more than the light's shadow, realizing all I am without, and all that I am within.

(Gillian Kean: 137)

At school we are programmed to give science and technology the last word, but in the maelstrom of our civilization we long to hear the first word.

(Ramon Munoz Soler: 251)

To be human is to take joy in meaning.

(Robert Aitken: 129)

Life is not a program. It seems to be an invitation. . . . [NJA: Leadership is not a program. It is an invitation.]

(Annelie Keil: 229)

Becoming more and more imprisoned behind the walls of separation and competition, our society is losing the human language of sharing and of communality. The gap between rich and poor, between nations, between races is increasing. Dizzied by our capacity to destroy, we have moved away from reality and have come to believe in a "virtual reality" produced for the purpose of making money. We are living in a century of arrogant stupidity. An ancient wisdom has been replaced by intellectual narcissism and extreme ignorance. Our true source of wisdom is life itself, and in the imperishable ever-present and specifically human there is hope. [NJA: Our true source of leadership is life itself, and in the imperishable ever-present and specifically human there is hope.]

(Annelie Keil: 230)

LEADERSHIP: ENOUGH IS MORE THAN ENOUGH

A Chinese proverb says that when a human being or a society or a community or a nation does not know when enough is enough, however much they have they will never have enough; but when a

human being or a community or a nation or a society knows when enough is enough, they will realize that they already have enough.

(Satish Kumar: 184)

Carved in stone at a Zen Temple in Kyoto, "All I need to know is how much is enough . . . *nothing in excess*. It is time we balanced our long pursuit of knowing the self with a deliberate pursuit of knowing how much is enough – enough to enjoy to the full, enough to go around, enough to sustain the earth. The vocation is to a higher culture, had we only the ears to hear it."

(James Heisig: 216)

LEADERSHIP: WALK THE TALK

Years ago, when I became committed to the art of pottery, I had a vision of the "perfect pot" . . . [Now] I realize that if I ever were to make that sublimely beautiful pot I must first become that sublimely beautiful person.

(Thomas Bezanson: 237)

Throughout the centuries we have tried to ensure that we have peace by preparing for war. And throughout the centuries we had war. . . . It is of the utmost importance to recognize the folly of this policy and adopt a new policy: . . . If you want peace, prepare for peace.

(Joseph Rotblat: 50)

LEADERSHIP: THE CONTEXT

I cannot divorce myself from the nexus of history. I am shaped by the thoughts and actions of others, and my own thoughts and actions co-determine their lives and thus our collective existence.

(George Feuerstein: 91)

We do, with astonishing frequency, produce moments of nobility. Our culture just doesn't choose to feature them on the nightly news. [NJA: With astonishing frequency, our leaders produce moments of nobility. Our culture just doesn't choose to feature them on the evening news.]

(Donella Meadows: 69)

This is the issue before us at the end of one millennium and the beginning of another. Will we humans accept the universe as the controlling context of existence or will we insist that the human be accepted as the controlling context of existence? Controlling implies

the setting of limits and determining patterns of relationship. Will we accept our status as functioning within the greater community of existence or will we humans insist that the greater community of existence accept its status within the determinations imposed by the human? There is one lesson we should learn from our experience of the twentieth century. Our efforts to outsmart Earth will only bring about disastrous consequences.

(Thomas Berry: 35, 38)

Selected quotes and poems for reflection from the book
Earth Prayers

I particularly like *Earth Prayers* (Roberts and Amidon 1991) for introducing periods of reflective silence at global leadership seminars, because the collection of 365 poems and prayers represent all of the world's cultural and spiritual traditions. My personal preference is to draw primarily, but not exclusively, from those portions of the collection representative of aboriginal traditions, as these are often among the most inclusive writings (and therefore don't risk offending participants from other spiritual communities, including secular humanists who often define themselves as being outside of all spiritual traditions). I often choose to read only a couple of lines from a selected poem, thereby emphasizing the particular words that echo most directly the issues being discussed in the seminar. I also frequently add a sentence or phrase to more explicitly link the prayer or poem with global leadership. Below are several selections, among the many I have used, from *Earth Prayers*.

LEADERS SPEAK OUT

[W]hile the stars and waves have something to say, it is through my mouth they'll say it.

(Vicente Huidobro: 9)

As a leader, you have what it takes to make a difference: "Sometimes even a single feather is enough to fly."

(Robert Maclean: 27)

**STATUS, MONEY, PROMOTIONS, AND RAISES ARE NEITHER THE ONLY,
NOR THE PRIMARY, SOURCES OF MEANING AND JOY**

The great sea has set me in motion
Set me adrift,
And I move as a weed in the river.
The arch of sky

And mightiness of storms
Encompasses me,
And I am left
Trembling with joy.
(Eskimo Song: 21)

And I thought over again
My small adventures
As with a shore-wind I drifted out
In my kayak
And thought I was in danger,
My fears,
Those small ones
That I thought so big
For all the vital things
I had to get and to reach
And yet, there is only
One great thing,
The only thing:
To live to see in huts and on journeys
The great day that dawns,
And the light that fills the world.
(Inuit Song: 41)

They've lost it, lost it,
and their children
will never even wish for it –
and I am afraid
that the whole tribe is in trouble,
the whole tribe is lost –
because the sun keeps rising
and these days
nobody sings.
(Aaron Kramer: 68)

REFLECTIVE SILENCE

We declare a Sabbath, a space of quiet: for simply being and letting be, for recovering the great, forgotten truths; for learning how to live again.

(United Nations Environmental Sabbath Program: 92)

PROFOUND LEADERSHIP

Grandfather,
Look at our brokenness.
We know that in all creation
Only the human family
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.
We know that we are the ones
Who are divided
And we are the ones
Who must come back together
To walk in the Sacred Way.
Grandfather,
Sacred One,
Teach us love, compassion, and honor
That we may heal the earth
And heal each other.

(Ojibway Prayer: 95)

CLOSING QUOTE

Half an hour's meditation is essential except when you are very busy.
Then a full hour is needed.

(Francis de Sales, from Andrews, *The Circle of Simplicity* 1997: 163)

Coaching and caveats

Specific versus diffuse cultures

For those participants who see reflection as a part of their religious or spiritual practice, but not as a part of leadership or their work within organizations, it is often helpful to introduce the concept of specific versus diffuse cultures. In contemporary North American culture, which is highly specific, we tend to compartmentalize aspects of our lives (such as separating professional life and private life, or seeing reflection as a part of a religious service but not as a part of organizational leadership). In other, more diffuse, cultures, this separation appears ludicrous. The fundamental human question is: Who are we? Not, who are we at work? Or at home? By giving a theoretical context explaining why reflection is a crucial part of global leadership, most participants will be able to let go of their reservations and engage in the reflective experience.

Universalism and particularism

In attempting to find the best way to introduce the relationship between reflective silence and profound global leadership, we often search for universals – quotes and stories that are meaningful to all humanity – that are expressed through our unique individual and cultural particularism. Especially in seminars on global or cross-cultural leadership, it is important to underscore the relationship, or dance, between universalism and particularism. Universals, which are true for people in all cultures at all times (such as reflective silence), do not deny individual identity or local definition. One of the unique challenges of global, as opposed to domestic, leadership is that it must address the concerns of all humanity while speaking in a language that is understood and meaningful to multiple particular subgroups (such as clients and employees from various cultural backgrounds). Discussing why certain quotes are particularly meaningful to some participants, while remaining less meaningful to others, helps all participants evolve beyond their cultural specificity toward an approach to leadership that could truly be labeled as global.

Moving from explicit to implicit

In selecting quotes, it is best to start with ones that have a more explicit connection to leadership and then progress to others that are broader and have more subtle or implicit connections. When selecting quotes that are more explicitly spiritual, I often initially choose aboriginal authors who use more inclusive imagery than authors from less inclusive, more traditional Western religious traditions.

Authenticity: walking the talk

In selecting introductory quotes, it is important that the professor personally believe in the truth and importance of each selected reading. Participants will sense immediately if you believe what you are saying. *Walk the talk!* If you don't take time to reflect, participants will receive the message that reflection is less important than loading PowerPoint or distributing handouts.

Quieting down: observing process

Developing the ability to become quiet and reflective is a learned skill. Invite participants to observe their own process. After three or four sessions, ask participants to comment on the differences they observe between the group's behavior during the fourth period of reflective silence and the first. My observation is that very little reflection takes place

in the initial sessions because, to quote David Whyte, in “our buzzing-worker-bee mode” most managers and managerial students have difficulty becoming quiet (1994: 98–9). Within a few weeks, however, there is generally marked and noticeable progress. Before the first or second session, it is often valuable to read David Whyte’s observation that:

all of us are familiar with frantic busyness as a state that continually precludes us from opening to the quiet and contemplation it takes to be smart. The fast-moving mind rebels against slowing the pace because it intuits that it will not only have to reassess its identity but also the time to recover and recreate [who we are]. And, of course, when we are in the buzzing-worker-bee mode that would be a loss of momentum difficult to justify. We do not even have time to find out if our momentum is taking us over the nearest cliff. If we are serious about [who we are] all of us must confront the question of quiet and contemplation in the workplace.

(Whyte 1994: 98–9, adapted by N. J. Adler)

Note that Whyte’s original quote refers to soul in the workplace, a concept that I usually do not introduce in the first few sessions.

Spirituality and leadership

Introducing reflective practices and notions of profound global leadership often lead to questions about spirituality. Based on extensive reading and research, Professor André Delbecq at Santa Clara University created a course for MBAs and Silicon Valley CEOs on “Spirituality and leadership.” Professor Delbecq does a superb job demonstrating the relationship between leadership and spirituality. I recommend his syllabus, readings, articles, and suggestions to anyone who is interested in this topic (see http://business.scu.edu/spirituality_leadership). He has been immensely helpful in guiding my colleagues and I in our personal explorations and in our professional design work around this topic.

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