



— TRI COSAIN —

9 QUESTIONS FOR
LEADERSHIP IN

LIFE & WORK



SCOTT DOWNS & GERALD DOYLE

9 Questions for Leadership in Life & Work

Scott Downs and Gerald Doyle

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by Scott Downs and Gerald Doyle

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Introduction

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This is a book of questions ... and resources. We have found the questions helpful and stimulating as we seek to call forward inspired lives and inspired work, for ourselves and with others. The resources, quotations and readings have helped us to explore the questions.

We do not offer any answers to the questions here in print. There are two reasons we don't. First, because we believe that the journeys of answering the questions, should one accept such challenges, are very personal ones, unique to each individual. Second, because we believe that holding and exploring questions is often a more productive stance than rushing to an answer.

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

—Rainer Maria Rilke

Our nine questions have emerged from our two lifetimes in working and living, with the contributions of many people along the way. We have found them useful in personal development work, but also in work with leaders and with organisations. We hold an underlying hypothesis that finding and living our own personal inspiration is often closely linked with finding and living an inspired path in groups and organisations.

Please be invited to explore both paths, or only one, as you feel called. Each question is accompanied by a few quotations that we find shed light on it, and some readings that might foster some deeper inquiry. We do not suggest that either of these listings is remotely exhaustive. They might only open the door to inquiry. We've found them to lead us onwards on the journey, and we hope they may do the same for you.

We use these questions in our own work with colleagues, clients and customers, students and professionals, as well as with friends, family and dialogue partners of all kinds. We hope they may be useful to others in similar ways, perhaps including those in coaching and mentoring relationships. Feel free to read through or to dive in to particular questions that attract you, in any order.

We use the questions often in conversation with young people, and those young at heart, who are looking for renewed inspiration in life, for a sense of direction and inspiration in work pathways, and/or for personal learning and growth.

We call these three strands of inquiry Tri Cosain, or three pathways, the words coming from Irish Gaelic.

We look forward to sharing more of our experience with Tri Cosain and with these questions in future publications and related media. We invite you to share your experiences and insights with us as well.

We wish you joy and fulfilment in your personal journey, wherever it may take you.

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How might we discover a sense of inspiration – individual and/or collective – and bring it to life?

Within inspiration, we would include such diverse sources and interpretations as vision, mission, purpose, identity, and intention.

How do we discover these things, as the foundations of personal and organizational leadership journeys?

How do we ground inspiration in history, create a vision of the future, and apply it in the contexts and containers of our current reality?





There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost.... It is... your business to keep it yours, clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

Martha Graham

If you limit your choices only to what seems possible or reasonable, you disconnect yourself from what you truly want, and all that is left is a compromise.

Robert Fritz

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.

Paolo Coelho

You are the sum total of everything you've ever seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot – it's all there. Everything influences each of us, and because of that I try to make sure that my experiences are positive.

Maya Angelou

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery



Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong.

Ella Fitzgerald

I've come to believe that there are two approaches to life. The first, followed by most, is the "paint by number" approach to life. You do what other people say. You follow a well-travelled path. You stay within the lines. And you end up with a nice, pretty – and unimaginative – picture. The second, followed by few, is to start with a blank canvas and try to paint a masterpiece. It is a riskier path, a harder path, a path filled with ambiguity and creative choice. But it's the only way to make your life itself a creative work of art. To paint a masterpiece requires a concept, a place to begin, a guiding context in the absence of the comforting numbers and lines in the pre-made kit. That guiding frame of reference is the highest goal...., and bringing it into your life with the help of Michael's discoveries is what this book is all about.

Jim Collins, in the foreword to Michael Ray's *The Highest Goal*

I don't know Who – or what – put the question. I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.

Dag Hammarskjold, quoted by Gerald May

You are the sum total of everything you've ever seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot – it's all there. Everything influences each of us, and because of that I try to make sure that my experiences are positive.

Maya Angelou

Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking, and don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it.

Steve Jobs



Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside awakens.

Carl Jung

At the center of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want.

Lao Tzu

When you work only for yourself, or for your own personal gain, your mind will seldom rise above the limitations of an undeveloped personal life. But when you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break your bonds: your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

Patanjali

In fact, we are servants of the Mystery. We were put here on earth to acts as agents of the Infinite, to bring into existence that which is not yet, but which will be, through us.

Steven Pressfield

Start anywhere and follow it everywhere.

Myron Rogers

My life is my message.

Mahatma Gandhi



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- **The Road Less Travelled**, Peck
- **Start with Why**, Sinek

Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we become better at relationship and dialogue, one-to-one and in larger groups?

Career awakening and leadership seems to require relationship and dialogue.

How might we create the spaces where personal and collective relationships flourish?

Where differences are welcomed and collective intelligence sparks creativity, innovation and individual and collective learning?





I realised that I had this compelling belief, not even a belief, just knowing, that we're all inextricably connected. No matter what. There's no exception. There just isn't. And that the person facing you has to be no one else.

Nic Askew

We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent “elementary parts” of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independent behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.

David Bohm

Some tension is necessary for the soul to grow, and we can put that tension to good use. We can look for every opportunity to give and receive love, to appreciate nature, to heal our wounds and the wounds of others, to forgive, and to serve.

Joan Z. Borysenko

The irony is that we attempt to disown our difficult stories to appear more whole and more acceptable, but our wholeness – even our wholeheartedness – actually depends on the integration of all our experiences, including the falls. To love ourselves and support each other in the process of becoming real is perhaps the greatest single act of daring greatly.

Brené Brown

People listen better if they feel that you have understood them. They tend to think that those who understand them are intelligent and sympathetic people whose own opinions may be worth listening to. So if you want the other side to appreciate your interests, begin by demonstrating that you appreciate theirs.

Roger Fisher

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

Mahatma Gandhi



A container is a field of exchange in which possibility is the answer and the question – not winning and losing and not even winning win-win. New possibilities emerge when the questions are more important than the answers.

Bill Isaacs

So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Artful Making. This term was introduced to the software world by Lee Devin and Rob Austin in the book Artful Making. Devin, a theatre director, and Austin, a business professor, proposed that for any team to be successful in a creative and improvisational space (which is exactly what software development is, at its heart) four qualities are required. They name these as: release, collaboration, ensemble, and play. This suggests the idea that a team needs to be given freedom for its members to interact, so that a collaborative environment is fostered, leading to ensemble, where both the thing being created and the team itself are larger and more interesting than any one person's input: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For this to happen, a spirit of play needs to be encouraged, risks need to be taken, failure embraced as a learning opportunity – and team members learn to take the product or business goals seriously, rather than themselves!

Tobias Mayer

In group flow, each person's idea builds on those just contributed by his or her colleagues. The improvisation appears to be guided by an invisible hand toward a peak, but small ideas build and an innovation emerges.

Keith Sawyer

How could you have a soccer team if all were goalkeepers? How would it be an orchestra if all were French horns?

Desmond Tutu



Community requires the ability to expose our wounds and weaknesses to our fellow creatures. It also requires the ability to be affected by the wounds of others.... But even more important is the love that arises among us when we share, both ways, our woundedness. The overall purpose of human communication is – or should be – reconciliation. It should ultimately serve to lower or remove the walls of misunderstanding which unduly separate us human beings, one from another. We are incapable of loving another unless we love ourselves, just as we are incapable of teaching our children self-discipline unless we ourselves are self-disciplined. It is actually impossible to forsake our own spiritual development in favor of someone else's. We cannot forsake self-discipline and at the same time be disciplined in our care for another. We cannot be a source of strength unless we nurture our own strength..

M. Scott Peck

Deep listening is the kind of listening that can help relieve the suffering of another person. You can call it compassionate listening. You listen with only one purpose: to help him or her to empty his heart. Even if he says things that are full of wrong perceptions, full of bitterness, you are still capable of continuing to listen with compassion. Because you know that listening like that, you give that person a chance to suffer less. If you want to help him to correct his perception, you wait for another time. For now, you don't interrupt. You don't argue. If you do, he loses his chance. You just listen with compassion and help him to suffer less. One hour like that can bring transformation and healing.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The entry-level skills for being a creative team have been documented by many. They include questioning, observing, networking and experimenting. [To] question the status quo and to challenge key assumptions and beliefs. Observe with a beginner's mind. Network into the new and novel intersections (the knots, nets and threads) of diverse experiences and knowledge. And, to fail faster through experimentation to succeed sooner,,, Creative teams are formed around a quest – or question. This quest-ion points them into the unknown while generating a creative fire, a passion and a tension in the team.

Nick Udall



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Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we become more skillful learners, courageously venturing into the unknown?

Individuals and teams need to learn and grow: journeys of inquiry are the means by which deep learning takes place.

How might we understand the dynamics of these journeys, and help our colleagues, teams and organizations travel them, to emerge with breakthrough insights that lead to important changes?





Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke

But the structure and something of the spiritual sense of this adventure can be seen already anticipated in the puberty or initiation rituals of early tribal societies, through which a child is compelled to give up its childhood and become an adult – to die, you might say, to its infantile personality and psyche and come back as a responsible adult. This is a fundamental psychological transformation that everyone has to undergo. We are in childhood in a condition of dependency under someone's protection and supervision for some 14 to 21 years ... you are in no way a responsible free agent, but an obedient dependent, expecting and receiving punishments and rewards. To evolve out of this position of psychological immaturity to the courage of self-responsibility and assurance requires a death and a resurrection. That's the basic motif of the universal hero's journey – leaving one's condition and finding the source of life to bring you forth into a richer or mature condition.

Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers

To be uncertain is to be uncomfortable, but to be certain is to be ridiculous.

Chinese proverb quoted by Mike Cohn.

In times of change, the learners will inherit the Earth while those attached to their old certainties will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.

Eric Hoffer, quoted by Fred Kofman

I facilitated a session called “What is Education?” Instead of telling the campers what education is, I asked them to reflect on their favorite learning moments from the camp, and together, we drew out lessons on what education meant to each one of them. Each item on the list, connected to a specific activity, day, or moment throughout the camp, was truly remarkable: education is fun, collaborative, personally transformative, equitable, aligning with personal passions, making us better people and friends, multiple ways of being smart, directly connected to our lives, looking inside and reflecting, connected to the community and environment, learning to be happy, and learning to love.

Tim Huang

There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Freedom from the desire for an answer is essential to the understanding of a problem.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

I can suggest one little change right away: stop generating action plans and start doing experiments.

Hiroshi Hiromoto Nako

The root word of education — *educare* — means to lead forth a hidden wholeness in another person. A genuine education fosters self-knowledge, self-trust, creativity and the full expression of one’s unique identity. It gives people the courage to be more.

Rachel Naomi Remen



Questions that have no right to go away are those that have to do with the person we are about to become; they are conversations that will happen with or without our conscious participation.

The marvelous thing about a good question is that it shapes our identity as much by the asking as it does by the answering.

David Whyte

I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something.

Neil Gaiman

Learning is not compulsory... neither is survival.

W. Edwards Deming

If you do not know how to ask the right question, you discover nothing

W. Edwards Deming

Most situations and decisions in organizations are complex because some major change—a bad quarter, a shift in management, a merger or acquisition—introduces unpredictability and flux. In this domain, we can understand why things happen only in retrospect. Instructive patterns, however, can emerge if the leader conducts experiments that are safe to fail. That is why, instead of attempting to impose a course of action, leaders must patiently allow the path forward to reveal itself. They need to probe first, then sense, and then respond.

Dave Snowden and Mary Boone



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Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we learn to discover and step into a range of healthy leadership stances and attitudes?

Many leadership practices focus on the leader's qualities and capabilities.

How are we to understand the range of these stances, states and qualities of mind, whether favorable or destructive, and how they relate to each other?

What is the leader's frame of reference for these qualities?



Come, my friends, 'tis not too late to seek a newer world. Push off, and sitting well in order smite the sounding furrows; for my purpose holds to sail beyond the sunset, and the baths of all the western stars, until I die. It may be that the gulfs will wash us down: it may be we shall touch the Happy Isles, and see the great Achilles, whom we knew. Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' we are not now that strength which in old days moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are; one equal temper of heroic hearts, made weak by time and fate, but strong in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Ulysses

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of the present-moment reality. It wakes us up to the fact that our lives unfold only in moments. If we are not fully present for many of those moments, we may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives but also fail to realize the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth and transformation.

Jon Kabatt-Zinn

Contrary to what we usually believe, moments like these, the best moments in our lives, are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times—although such experiences can also be enjoyable, if we have worked hard to attain them. The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen. For each person there are thousands of opportunities, challenges to expand ourselves.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Walking through the world creatively requires multiple perspectives because it's in the weave that innovation happens. This quality of consciousness recognises that we do not understand what we see; rather we see what we understand. The world can only therefore be subjective. Mastery requires us to enquire consciously into this subjectivity, to realise that we have been conditioned to look through our consciousness and not at it.

Nick Udall

We must accept our multiplicity, the fact that we can show up quite differently in our athletic, intellectual, sexual, spiritual—or many other—states. A heterogeneous collection of states is completely normal in us humans. The key to well-being is collaboration across states, not some rigidly homogeneous unity. The notion that we can have a single, totally consistent way of being is both idealistic and unhealthy.

Daniel J. Siegel

How does the Warrior know what aggressiveness is appropriate under the circumstances? He knows through clarity of thinking, through discernment. The warrior is always alert. He is always awake. He is never sleeping through life. He knows how to focus his mind and his body. He is what the samurai called “mindful.” He is a “hunter” in the Native American tradition.

Robert L. Moore & Douglas Gillette

There are not more than five musical notes, yet the combinations of these five give rise to more melodies than can ever be heard. There are not more than five primary colours, yet in combination they produce more hues than can ever been seen. There are not more than five cardinal tastes, yet combinations of them yield more flavours than can ever be tasted.

Sun Tzu

The plague of mankind is the fear and rejection of diversity: monotheism, monarchy, monogamy and, in our age, monomedicine. The belief that there is only one right way to live, only one right way to regulate religious, political, sexual, medical affairs is the root cause of the greatest threat to man: members of his own species, bent on ensuring his salvation, security, and sanity.

Thomas Szasz

If man is to survive, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures. He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight, part of life's exciting variety, not something to fear.

Gene Roddenberry

To listen fully means to pay close attention to what is being said beneath the words. You listen not only to the ‘music,’ but to the essence of the person speaking.

Peter Senge

[T]he right frame of mind for the artist is only reached when the preparing and the creating, the technical and the artistic, the material and the spiritual, the project and the object, flow together without a break.

Eugen Herrigel

It is the unknown that excites the ardor of scholars, who, in the known alone, would shrivel up with boredom.

Wallace Stevens

The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.

Alan Watts

It's actually quite a good ethos for life: go into the unknown with truth, commitment, and openness and mostly you'll be okay.

Alan Cumming

Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness.

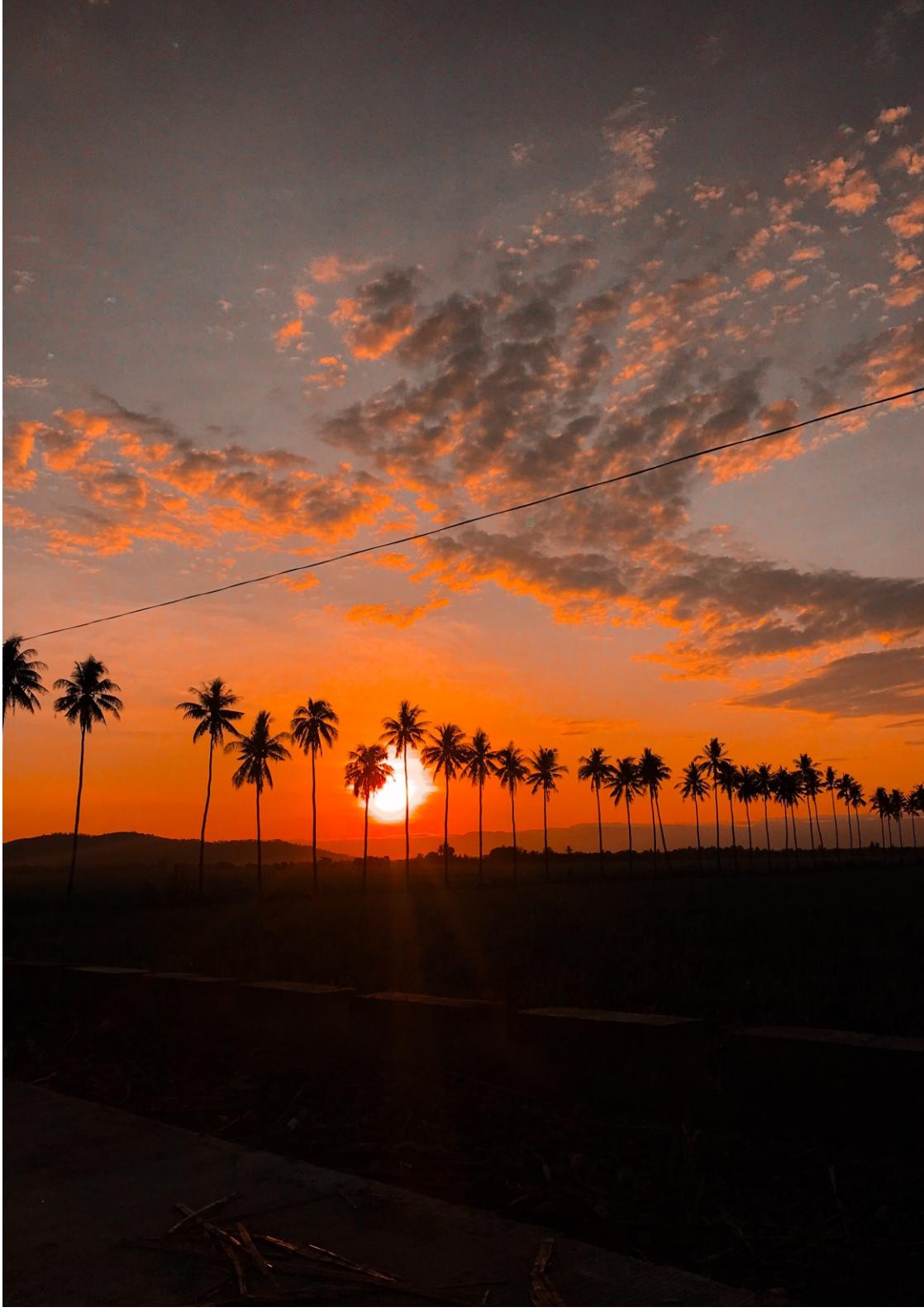
Brené Brown

It's still magic even if you know how it's done.

Terry Pratchett

Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.

Stephen R. Covey



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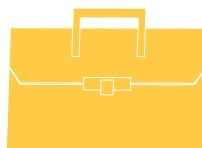
Sketches, Observations and Notes



As we develop as leaders and consider our careers going forward, how might we develop greater maturity and self-awareness?

Recent writing and thinking about leadership has often focused on different levels of leadership or cultural awareness, maturity and/or consciousness.

Although definitions of the various frameworks of maturity levels seem to provoke great debate, how are we as leaders to understand the progression of awareness: are there more and less mature ways for leaders to view their challenges, their opportunities, their mental models, their own development paths and those of their organizations?





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Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we, as emerging leaders, learn to understand and work with the complexity of human systems?

Much conventional leadership thinking implicitly treats leadership challenges as processes that can be optimized, and organizations as if they were machines that can be tuned, under the direction of a single decision maker.

More advanced leadership thinking tends to see organizations through the metaphors of living organisms and complex adaptive systems, where leadership interventions have complex, unpredictable results. What meaning do leadership perspectives make of these insights and how are they incorporated in leadership development?





The Newtonian vision describes a reliable place inhabited by well-behaved and easily identifiable matter. The world view arising from these discoveries is also bolstered by the philosophical implications of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, with its suggestion that survival is available only to the genetically rugged individual. These, in their essence, are stories that idealize separateness. From the moment we are born, we are told that for every winner there must be a loser. From that constricted vision we have fashioned our world.... The latest chapter of that story, written by a group of largely unknown frontier scientific explorers, suggests that at our essence we exist as a unity, a relationship – utterly interdependent, the parts affecting the whole.

Lynne Mc Taggart

This is the time for every artist in every genre to do what he or she does loudly and consistently. It doesn't matter to me what your position is. You've got to keep asserting the complexity and the originality of life, and the multiplicity of it, and the facets of it. This is about being a complex human being in the world, not about finding a villain. This is no time for anything else than the best that you've got.

Toni Morrison

Systems thinking is “contextual,” which is the opposite of analytical thinking. Analysis means taking something apart in order to understand it; systems thinking means putting it into the context of a larger whole.

Fritjof Capra

The Universe is circles within circles, and everything is one circle, and all the circles are connected to each other. Each family is a circle, and those family circles connect together and make a community, and the community makes its circle where it lives on the Earth. It (the community) cares for that part (of the Earth) but cares for it as a circle – which is to say in a cooperative and egalitarian way, where everybody is cared for, and everybody is respected.

Black Elk

For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.

H. L. Mencken

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing ‘patterns of change’ rather than static ‘snapshots.’

Peter Senge



A human being is a part of the whole called by us ‘universe’, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Albert Einstein

The first law of ecology is that everything is related to everything else.

Barry Commoner

True values are not taught and declared, they evolve through the acts and interaction of the living, they are understood at a near tacit level by those who live them.

Dave Snowden

Today the network of relationships linking the human race to itself and to the rest of the biosphere is so complex that all aspects affect all others to an extraordinary degree. Someone should be studying the whole system, however crudely that has to be done, because no gluing together of partial studies of a complex nonlinear system can give a good idea of the behavior of the whole.

Murray Gell-Mann

If our brains were simple enough for us to understand them, we'd be so simple that we couldn't.

Ian Stewart

All life is a complex of systems. Some creatures perform as networks (like mycelia), some as superorganisms (like ants and bees), some as individuals that cooperate (like humans, ravens, and wolves). But all living beings, as far as we know, have some kind of subjectivity that connects them to other subjectivities.

Julie J. Morley

In systems thinking, increases in understanding are believed to be obtainable by expanding the systems to be understood, not by reducing them to their elements. Understanding proceeds from the whole to its parts, not from the parts to the whole as knowledge does.

Russell L. Ackoff



See the system. When you find yourself stuck in an oversimplified polarized conflict, a useful first step is to try to become more aware of the system as a whole: to provide more context to your understanding of the terrain in which the stakeholders are embedded, whether they are disputants, mediators, negotiators, lawyers, or other third parties. This can help you to see the forest and the trees; it is a critical step toward regaining some sense of accuracy, agency, possibility, and control in the situation.

Peter T. Coleman

I sat in a world of sorrow trying to figure things out. I couldn't because the world isn't supposed to be figured out. You're not supposed to get it. You're supposed to flow with it and things come or don't. It's that simple, but we think everything's complex when it's just sitting right in front of us.

Dominic Riccitello

Note that there is not a focus on eliminating failures. Systems without failures, although robust, become brittle and fragile. When failures occur, it is more likely that the teams responding will be unprepared, and this could dramatically increase the impact of the incident.

Laine Campbell

In the deeps are the violence and terror of which psychology has warned us. But if you ride these monsters deeper down, if you drop with them farther over the world's rim, you find what our sciences cannot locate or name, the substrate, the ocean or matrix or ether which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power for evil, the unified field: our complex and inexplicable caring for each other, and for our life together here. This is given. It is not learned.

Annie Dillard

But fear of making mistakes can itself become a huge mistake, one that prevents you from living, for life is risky and anything less is already a loss.

Rebecca Solnit

Business and human endeavors are systems...we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system. And wonder why our deepest problems never get solved.

Peter Senge

Learn how to see. Realise that everything connects to everything else.

Leonardo da Vinci



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Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we learn to understand and work with the full range of human capacity?

Conventional leadership approaches usually focus on the rational and the cognitive, helping leaders think and reason their way to their leadership strategies.

A more holistic approach recognizes that human beings are integrated wholes, where the distinction of body and mind becomes illusory.

How can leaders learn to recognize and liberate the emotional, intuitive, and embodied intelligence in themselves, their colleagues and their organizations?





A few centuries of listening to the head and more or less ignoring the wisdom of the body have produced a world that makes sense to the head but bewilders the noble physical being that's hiding beneath our business suits.

David Pearl

People with high levels of personal mastery...cannot afford to choose between reason and intuition, or head and heart, any more than they would choose to walk on one leg or see with one eye

Peter Senge

Without our emotions, we can't make decisions; we can't decipher our dreams and visions; we can't set proper boundaries or behave skillfully in relationships; we can't identify our hopes or support the hopes of others; and we can't connect to, or even find, our dearest loves.

Karla McLaren

A felt sense is not a mental experience but a physical one. Physical. A bodily awareness of a situation or person or event. An internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time—encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once, rather than detail by detail.

Eugene Gendlin

How often people speak of art and science as though they were two entirely different things, with no interconnection. An artist is emotional, they think, and uses only his intuition; he sees all at once and has no need of reason. A scientist is cold, they think, and uses only his reason; he argues carefully step by step, and needs no imagination. That is all wrong. The true artist is quite rational as well as imaginative and knows what he is doing; if he does not, his art suffers. The true scientist is quite imaginative as well as rational, and sometimes leaps to solutions where reason can follow only slowly; if he does not, his science suffers.

Isaac Asimov



The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.

Albert Einstein

Our imagination enables us to leave our routine everyday existence by fantasizing about travel, food, sex, falling in love, or having the last word—all the things that make life interesting. Imagination gives us the opportunity to envision new possibilities—it is an essential launchpad for making our hopes come true. It fires our creativity, relieves our boredom, alleviates our pain, enhances our pleasure, and enriches our most intimate relationships.

Bessel van der Kolk

A story that makes sense is one that stirs the senses from their slumber, one that opens the eyes and the ears to their real surroundings, tuning the tongue to the actual tastes in the air and sending chills of recognition along the surface of the skin. To make sense is to release the body from the constraints imposed by outworn ways of speaking, and hence to renew and rejuvenate one's felt awareness of the world. It is to make the senses wake up to where they are.

David Abram

Reason is not disembodied, as the tradition has largely held, but arises from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experience. This is not just the innocuous and obvious claim that we need a body to reason; rather, it is the striking claim that the very structure of reason itself comes from the details of our embodiment. The same neural and cognitive mechanisms that allow us to perceive and move around also create our conceptual systems and modes of reason.... [R]eason ... is shaped crucially by the peculiarities of our human bodies, by the remarkable details of the neural structure of our brains, and by the specifics of our everyday functioning in the world.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson

Emotions are good advisors, but terrible masters. Compassionate acceptance and critical analysis are equally necessary for emotional mastery.

Fred Kofman

If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.

People with well-developed emotional skills are also more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity; people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought.

Daniel Goleman

[W]e should be appropriately sceptical of the left hemisphere's vision of a mechanistic world, an atomistic society, a world in which competition is more important than collaboration; a world in which nature is a heap of resource there for our exploitation, in which only humans count, and yet humans are only machines – not even very good ones, at that; a world curiously stripped of depth, colour and value. This is not the intelligent, if hard-nosed, view that its espousers comfort themselves by making it out to be; just a sterile fantasy, the product of a lack of imagination, which makes it easier for us to manipulate what we no longer understand. But it is a fantasy that displaces and renders inaccessible the vibrant, living, profoundly creative world that it was our fortune to inherit – until we squandered our inheritance.

Iain Mc Gilchrist

The time has come to broaden our notion of the spectrum of talents. The single most important contribution education can make to a child's development is to help him toward a field where his talents best suit him, where he will be satisfied and competent. We've completely lost sight of that. Instead we subject everyone to an education where, if you succeed, you will be best suited to be a college professor. And we evaluate everyone along the way according to whether they meet that narrow standard of success. We should spend less time ranking children and more time helping them to identify their natural competencies and gifts, and cultivate those. There are hundreds and hundreds of ways to succeed, and many, many different abilities that will help you get there.

Howard Gardner

It is very important to understand that emotional intelligence is not the opposite of intelligence, it is not the triumph of heart over head—it is the unique intersection of both.

David Caruso



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Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we become “makers” - people who regularly create beautiful and useful things and experiences?

How can leaders step into becoming “makers” - creators of beautiful, elegant objects, systems, products, services, communities, organisations, experiences - works of “art”.

How can we step into life and work as a form of creative expression and service, inspired by an ethos of design - and support and encourage others to do the same?





The drawing is also a reminder that there's an artist within each of us, and we must encourage that artist to do the work, to make something that matters, regardless of anything else that is going on.

Steven Pressfield

Make good art.

Neil Gaiman

Art isn't only a painting. Art is anything that's creative, passionate, and personal. And great art resonates with the viewer, not only with the creator. An artist is someone who uses bravery, insight, creativity, and boldness to challenge the status quo. And an artist takes it personally.

Seth Godin

This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge — even wisdom. Like art.

Toni Morrison, quoted by Maria Popova

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a prototype is worth a thousand meetings.

IDEO.org

Something is elegant if it is unusually simple and surprisingly powerful.

Matthew E. May

We interrogate the world by making.

Bill Burnett



If I paint a wild horse, you might not see the horse... but surely you will see the wildness!

Pablo Picasso

Poets are damned... but see with the eyes of angels.

Allen Ginsberg

Writing is.... being able to take something whole and fiercely alive that exists inside you in some unknowable combination of thought, feeling, physicality, and spirit, and to then store it like a genie in tense, tiny black symbols on a calm white page. If the wrong reader comes across the words, they will remain just words. But for the right readers, your vision blooms off the page and is absorbed into their minds like smoke, where it will re-form, whole and alive, fully adapted to its new environment.

Mary Gaitskill

Every creator painfully experiences the chasm between his inner vision and its ultimate expression. The chasm is never completely bridged. We all have the conviction, perhaps illusory, that we have much more to say than appears on the paper.

Edward Hopper

I think the mystery of art lies in this, that artists' relationship is essentially with their work — not with power, not with profit, not with themselves, not even with their audience.

Ursula K. Le Guin

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer



Design isn't just how it looks. It's how it works.

Steve Jobs

The designer has a passion for doing something that fits somebody's needs, but that is not just a simple fix. The designer has a dream that goes beyond what exists, rather than fixing what exists. The designer wants to create a solution that fits in a deeper situational or social sense.

David E. Kelley

Anyone can make the simple complicated. Creativity is making the complicated simple.

Charles Mingus

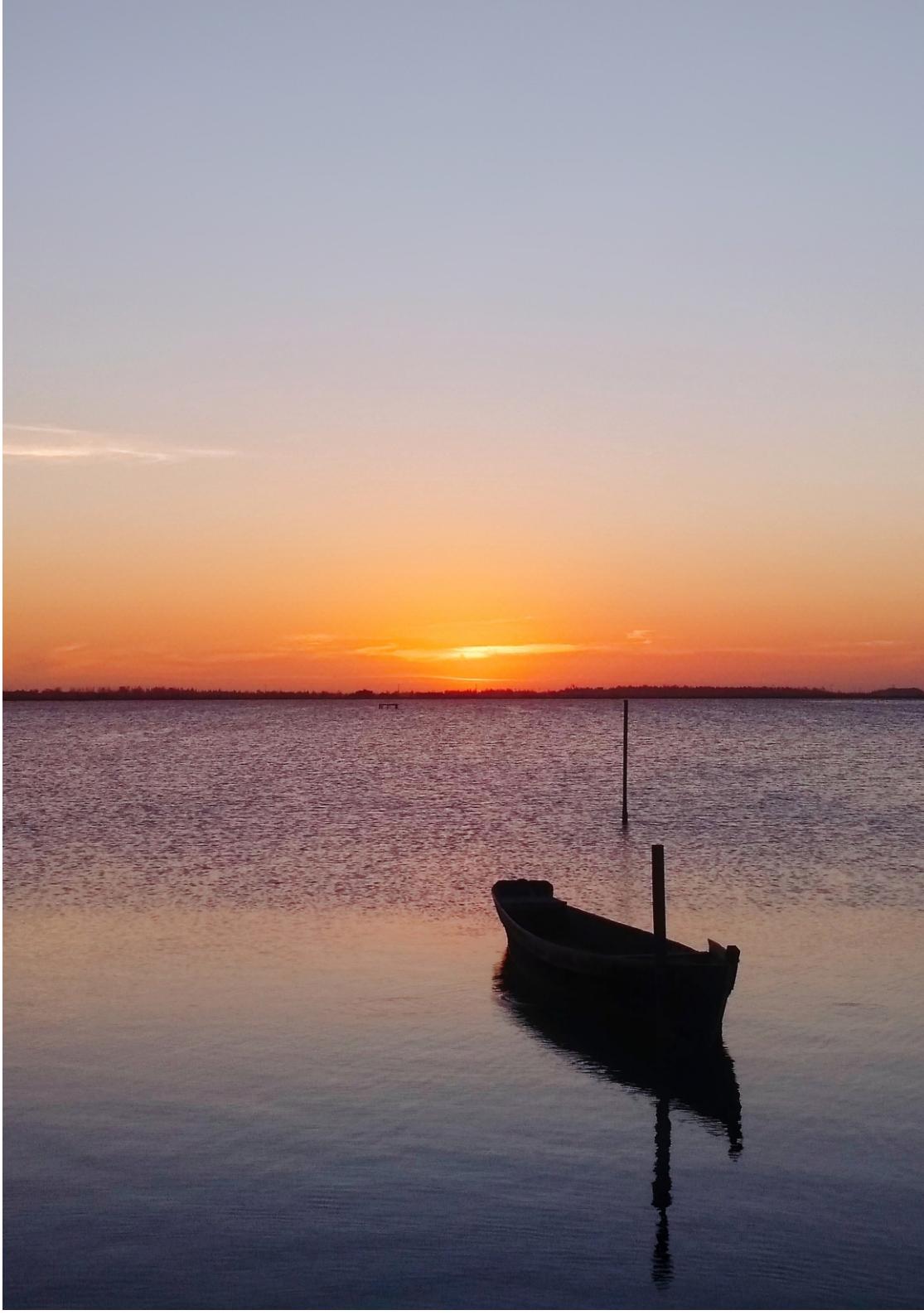
I did not think of language as the means to self-description. I thought of it as the door — a thousand opening doors! — past myself. I thought of it as the means to notice, to contemplate, to praise, and, thus, to come into power.

[T]here is the thing that one does, the needle one plies, the work, and within that work a chance to take thoughts that are hot and formless and to place them slowly and with meticulous effort into some shapely heat-retaining form, even as the gods, or nature, or the soundless wheels of time have made forms all across the soft, curved universe — that is to say, having chosen to claim my life, I have made for myself, out of work and love, a handsome life.

Mary Oliver, quoted by Maria Popova

Elegance is usually confused with superficiality, fashion, lack of depth. This is a serious mistake: human beings need to have elegance in their actions and in their posture because this word is synonymous with good taste, amiability, equilibrium and harmony.

Paulo Coelho



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Sketches, Observations and Notes



How might we hold and encourage journeys of personal and systemic transformation?

There's a plenty of talk about transformation in leadership work, but transformation from what? to what? And following what path? How do leaders inspire, design, enable and support these transformations, for themselves and others, and help to hold the containers that (might) make them possible?





Yes, your transformation will be hard. Yes, you will feel frightened, messed up and knocked down. Yes, you'll want to stop. Yes, it's the best work you'll ever do.

Robin Sharma

To transform yourself, you don't need to do big things. Just do small things in a big way. Transformation will follow you!

Rahul Sinha

The one thing that I have learned from all these projects is that the key to transformative change is to make the system see itself. That's why deep data matters. It matters to the future of our institutions, our societies, and our planet.

Otto Scharmer

Personal transformation can and does have global effects. As we go, so goes the world, for the world is us. The revolution that will save the world is ultimately a personal one.

Marianne Williamson

I've never seen any life transformation that didn't begin with the person in question finally getting tired of their own nonsense.

Elizabeth Gilbert

Every positive change - every jump to a higher level of energy and awareness - involves a rite of passage. Each time to ascend to a higher rung on the ladder of personal evolution, we must go through a period of discomfort, of initiation. I have never found an exception.

Dan Millman

If it is written and read with serious attention, a novel, like a myth or any great work of art, can become an initiation that helps us to make a painful rite of passage from one phase of life, one state of mind, to another. A novel, like a myth, teaches us to see the world differently; it shows us how to look into our own hearts and to see our world from a perspective that goes beyond our own self-interest.

Karen Armstrong



We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

Manifesto for Agile Software Development

When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness.

Joseph Campbell

And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in.

Haruki Murakami

The most beautiful people I've known are those who have known trials, have known struggles, have known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready. The challenge will not wait. Life does not look back.

Paulo Coelho

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, many are strong at the broken places.

Ernest Hemingway



The Vision Quest, or perceiving quest, is the way we must begin this search. We must all follow our Vision Quest to discover ourselves, to learn how we perceive of ourselves, and to find our relationship with the world around us.

Hyemeyohsts Storm, quoted by Steven Foster

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Serenity Prayer, often attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr

Transformation isn't sweet and bright. It's a dark and murky, painful pushing. An unraveling of the untruths you've carried in your body. A practice in facing your own created demons. A complete uprooting, before becoming.

Victoria Erickson

I take pleasure in my transformations. I look quiet and consistent, but few know how many women there are in me.

Anais Nin

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

Maya Angelou

I believe that life is a journey, often difficult and sometimes incredibly cruel, but we are well equipped for it if only we tap into our talents and gifts and allow them to blossom.

Les Brown

But self-transformation is a gradual, painstaking process won at the expense of joy and sorrow, or so it has been for me. Nevertheless, certain power events, or growth events, blaze out from the background of my life. These events mark the juncture at which my restless heart touched the timeless, transforming heart of the universe. The year I spent in the desert was filled with many such events.

Steven Foster



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Sketches, Observations and Notes



Epilogue

We would love to engage with you to help you discover your own unique answers to these questions with others or on your own.

We do this work with young people moving out into new chapters in life and work...

... with people of all ages moving to new stages...

... and with organisations and communities seeking to discover collective inspiration and bring it to life.

We'd love to co-create with you.

If you agree, please get in touch.

From Scott

I have had the privilege of spending the last dozen years or so working with some of the most progressive thinkers and coaches in the modern space of leadership and organisational culture. From this experience, I have seen that the personal and organisational leadership programs I most admire offer a range of approaches, practices and techniques for advancing the leadership journey. It's an intriguing challenge to think about how diverse streams of insight can be connected and brought into relationship.

My own reflection, based on my connections with great leadership teachers, students and catalysts, and on my own reading and study, is that the best personal and organisational leadership work I know about gravitates around these nine important questions.

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From Gerald Doyle

Across a nearly four-decade career in higher education, the “work of thinking about” 9 Questions has challenged me to rethink the entirety of my responses to “leadership in life and work” — to think more deeply about questions of intersectionality, gender, identity, privilege, bias, equity, social justice and the fields of social emotional learning.

In ***Chess for Zebras***, Jonathan Rowson writes,

... real learning is often a painful process, because you are not just collecting new ideas and stocking them up in some sort of expanding cognitive warehouse.

... learning is hard, because you have to unlearn so many other things that made sense to you.

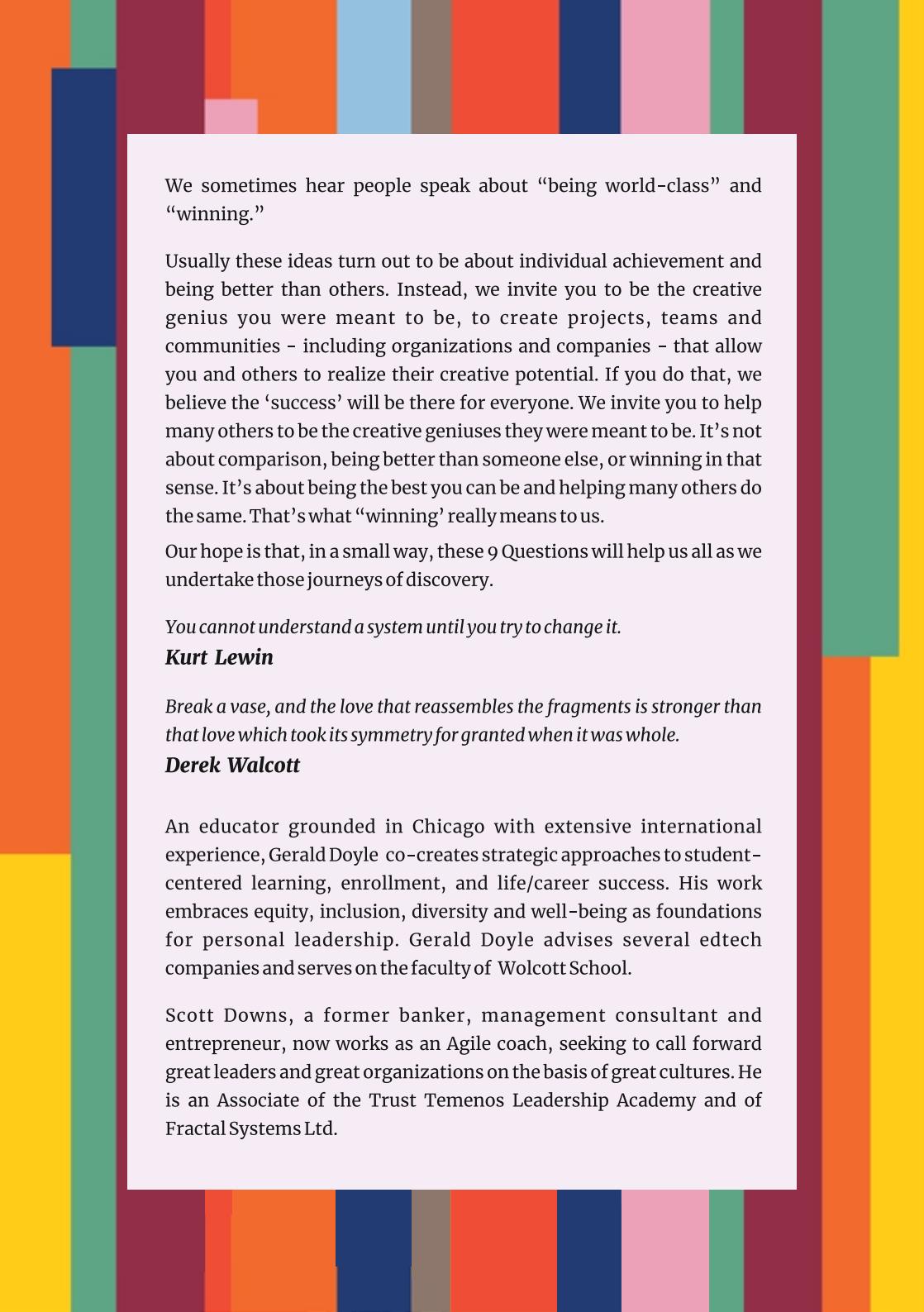
... learning needs resilience, because things won't always make sense straight away and you might have to be willing to feel stupid or ignorant before things begin to clarify again at a higher level.

... the kind of learning that is most useful for chess [and life] improvement is actually “unlearning.”*

I am very much at the moment of “unlearning” everything before I begin to (re)learn within a co-creative and co-participatory frame.

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We sometimes hear people speak about “being world-class” and “winning.”

Usually these ideas turn out to be about individual achievement and being better than others. Instead, we invite you to be the creative genius you were meant to be, to create projects, teams and communities - including organizations and companies - that allow you and others to realize their creative potential. If you do that, we believe the ‘success’ will be there for everyone. We invite you to help many others to be the creative geniuses they were meant to be. It’s not about comparison, being better than someone else, or winning in that sense. It’s about being the best you can be and helping many others do the same. That’s what “winning” really means to us.

Our hope is that, in a small way, these 9 Questions will help us all as we undertake those journeys of discovery.

You cannot understand a system until you try to change it.

Kurt Lewin

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.

Derek Walcott

An educator grounded in Chicago with extensive international experience, Gerald Doyle co-creates strategic approaches to student-centered learning, enrollment, and life/career success. His work embraces equity, inclusion, diversity and well-being as foundations for personal leadership. Gerald Doyle advises several edtech companies and serves on the faculty of Wolcott School.

Scott Downs, a former banker, management consultant and entrepreneur, now works as an Agile coach, seeking to call forward great leaders and great organizations on the basis of great cultures. He is an Associate of the Trust Temenos Leadership Academy and of Fractal Systems Ltd.