

MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP AND THE ETHICAL IMPORTANCE OF LEGACY

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ABSTRACT: *A good theory of public trust should unite personal integrity, moral commitments, legal authority, and accountability and effectiveness. This article presents leaving a legacy as an approach to organize managers' and leaders' reflection. This approach unites personal search for meaning with an organizational focus on mission. It connects the individual's preoccupation with self-worth and significance with organizational results. It embeds leaders in an historical setting, linking their inheritance from the past and their obligations to the future. Finally, thinking of a legacy can guide individuals to a less controlling leadership style, supporting people and institutions capable of adaptation and growth. While legacy does not capture all aspects of managerial leadership, it maps a broad and rich understanding of leadership and individuality linked to trusteeship. Legacy unites many of the best aspects of the most common normative explanations of trusteeship.*

*And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains round the decay
of that colossal work, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.
Percy Bysshe Shelly, *Ozymandias**

A long moral tradition conceives of public office as a trusteeship where public officials exercise power and responsibility as a trust to work for the good of the public. The United Nations enshrines this view in its *International Code for Public Officials* that states that public office is a position of trust (United Nations 1996). A trust means officials act as stewards of law and institutions. At a deeper level, officials have obligations to attend to the long-term welfare versus the short term and attend to the

equity and dignity of persons. Trusteeship or stewardship presumes a range of discretion for public officials who serve as leaders and managers (Terry 2003; Greenleaf 1991; Cooper 1991, 1998; Bloch 1996; Armstrong 1997). The challenge of the trust conception and its wide range of discretion is always to articulate the nature of judgments permitted and the mechanisms of accountability to counteract pressures toward corruption (Adams and Balfour 2004; Huber and Shipan 2002; Dobel 1976, 1999). Theories of public trusteeship range from insistence upon strict adherence to law and procedure to emphasis on the importance of principles to inform judgments to the contention that only virtue and character address the unpredictability of life and sustain persons through the tribulations and temptations of public life (Burke 1986; Denhardt 1988; Cooper and Wright 1992).¹ Alternative traditions epitomized by Rousseau with modern variations in the reinventing government movement and the post-modern critiques emphasize that no individuals should be trusted with the power and discretion to proscribe reality, and that public officials per se pose threats to human freedom. Human dignity and efficiency require that political power reside in democratic participation or discourse, which guide public officials (Osborne 1993; Osborne and Plastrik 1998; Farmer 1995).²

If we accept the inevitable and desirable role of discretionary judgment by public officials--elected, appointed, and career--a good theory of public trust should unite personal integrity, moral commitments, legal authority and accountability and effectiveness (Burke 1986; Rohr 2002; Cooper 1998; Huber and Shipan 2002; Dobel 1999). Ideally, a model of public trust should incorporate these issues but in a united fashion, since each captures a critical aspect of public trust but on its own will not cover the full moral and political complexity of public discretion. Public trust integrates legal and process commitments, the long term and externality dimensions, and the regime values and character that support deliberation and action. Public trust also should build in accountability and limits upon power. Finally, an approach to public trust should avoid what John Rawls (1971) calls the strain of commitment, and be livable and usable by individuals to act with integrity and effectiveness. Because discretion requires judgment, it entails an element of leadership where individuals assess, decide, and act in ways that are not predetermined, but require initiative and responsibility. The leadership element--changing the world and people through self-initiated action and interaction--remains inextricable with discretion. Persons should be able to use this model to judge and live in a way that sustains their emotional and moral commitments, technical expertise, accountability, and effectiveness.

This article presents leaving a legacy as an approach to organize managers' and leaders' reflection. The concept itself often arises in a valedictorian setting where people comment upon what a person accomplished and the meaning of his or her life. Funerals, retiring, or moving to another job evoke such reflection. This article argues that an individual's legacy actually unfolds daily through cumulative judgments and actions. This method reveals how people make a difference in the world and emphasizes personal responsibility and significance.

Legacy's relation to meaning indicates its advantages to thinking through the frames and obligations of leadership. First, it unites personal search for meaning with an organizational focus on mission. Second, it connects the individual's preoccupation with self-worth and significance with organizational results (Denhardt 1989, 2000). Third, it embeds leaders in an historical setting linking their inheritance from the past and their obligations to the future. Finally, thinking of a legacy can guide individuals to

a less controlling leadership style, supporting people and institutions capable of adaptation and growth. While legacy does not capture all aspects of managerial leadership, it maps a broad and rich understanding of leadership and individuality linked to trusteeship. Legacy unites many of the best aspects of the most common normative explanations of trusteeship. Thinking this way highlights that moral reality that everyone leaves a legacy. The article explores the concept of legacy, metaphors that elucidate the range of human legacy, the dimensions of time in action, and the possible problems with using legacy as a way to organize deliberation.

THE CONCEPT OF LEGACY

When people depart, the consequences of their actions upon people and the physical and social world endure as their legacy. Why care about a legacy? It seems a concept more at home with death or retirement than leading for the future. It can seem egotistical. As one head of a state social service agency remarked, "If I thought of this as *my* legacy, I'd start putting myself before the public." Yet legacy matters, because the idea joins responsibility and consequences with a person's search for meaning. Hard but fundamental questions such as: "Why am I here?" or "What difference does it make that I have lived?" remind people that finding meaning in life remains of elemental importance for human moral and social life (Baumeister 1991; Wolf 1990). Human mortality adds urgency to these questions. People usually only ask the questions as they approach the end: "Has my life had any meaning?" "Is the world a better place because I have lived?" While most prefer to avoid these questions or segregate them from work, most people entering public life seek a sense of meaning in public work (Goodsell 1985; Bloch 1996). More than a few prominent leaders have spent their later years writing memoirs or trying to craft an understanding of their legacy after the fact.

People are not gods who never die and who infuse meaning in reality by acts of will and power. Persons cannot control or determine transcendent purpose for the world. Many persons relate to God or a transcendent purpose to find meaning and structure that guide decisions (Warren 2002; Daloz et al. 1996, 140-151). These relations reflect human mortality and the yearning for transcendent or immanent purpose to secure meaning. Living as mortals with limited time on earth infuses urgency to the question of meaning. Committing to others or organizations seldom happens if life feels futile, purposeless, and devoid of meaning beyond personal satisfaction (Denhardt 1989, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi 2003). This type of commitment can be a temptation to transcend death by contributing to something immortal or beyond oneself.

To have meaning in life provides psychological and moral resources to order commitments and make decisions about what fits or does not fit within one's life and integrity (Dobel 1990, 1999; Carter 1996; Petrick and Quinn 1997). The thought of leaving a legacy connects to meaning by insisting that the consequences of what people do matters and should be taken seriously. When individuals cease to exist physically, their actions still affect people, institutions, and the environment--the world differs for good or bad because of a human's presence. Much of the meaning that can be culled from life arises from the outcomes of living that provide tangible proof that a person made a mark. Recognizing that all individuals leave a legacy buttresses responsibility by insisting that each human contributes.

The word legacy derives from the word legate--one to whom is delegated responsibility. Both words derive from the Latin root for laws (*leges*) and attending to the public dimensions of life. The concept fits naturally with the tradition of public leadership as a trust where leaders hold office as a temporary legate, steward, or trustee for the good of individuals. The ideal of legacy bridges with the trustee model when individuals who take leadership positions make promises. Their moral legitimacy depends upon their promise to obey the law, frame their judgments by statutory intent and principle, be accountable to authority, consult with the public, and be competent and efficient in performance. The promise has an implicit requirement that the leaders attend to the institution and hand them on in better shape. The vulnerability of citizens and colleagues who depend upon organizations for service heightens leaders' obligations. Each public leader inherits an office with legal obligations and moral webs of reliance supporting those obligations. They hold responsibility as trustees of the legitimacy and public point of view of institutions that go beyond the welter of advocacy surrounding a public organization (Rohr 2002; Cooper 1991; Huber and Shipan 2002).

When an individual realizes that he or she leaves a legacy, it also means that the person realizes that he or she inherits a world and has responsibilities towards the inheritance and the legacy. Any person who claims credit for the good of a life or institution must also take responsibility for the harm or bad of that institution and life. Too often trustees and legatees focus only upon the good they want remembered or pursued, but the historical responsibility of a legacy orientation entails acknowledgement and responsibility for the good and the bad.

The idea of a legacy scales to a context. A legacy orientation helps organize public reflection because leaders experience life as a series of entrances and exits, whether they enter a meeting, a new agency, or leave a project group or organization. Attending to legacy as a managerial leader helps individuals to bridge these comings and goings intellectually and morally, for an individual can leave a legacy with each human interaction. These can be as casual as a piece of advice, a comment which impacts a person's worth or performance, a slight or recognition, or an act as powerful as firing. Each interaction can change another human being. The scale extends to groups, meetings, projects, teams, or organizations. An individual's impact could ripple out through other groups, families, or interactions within and outside organizations. Actions can affect a particular person whom an individual serves one-on-one, or affect hundreds when a policy changes because of an individual's contributions. A person can always ask of himself or herself, "What do I wish to leave, or what have I left behind?" in each interaction, precedent, meeting, rule or policy. The cumulative impact or aggregated impact of actions adds an almost strategic scale to legacy. Often the quality of individuals one leads changes not with one inadvertent or swift interaction, but due to the accrual of modeling, educating, and feedback. This can be positive or negative for the person.

The temporal and spatial scales connect the immediate with the long term. Once individuals realize that actions accumulate in their impact, then the dichotomy of sweating small things and keeping an eye on the big things fades. Legacy scales in time with consequences moving out into hours, days, weeks, and years. Small things and big things meld over time in the individual's responsibility, contributions, and realities of life. A physical or social environment changes through aggregated accumulation of waste or neglect or the opposite. A building does not run down all at once and an office does not deteriorate without slow, persistent neglect. Cultural norms of interaction or styles of disagreement change over time, seldom suddenly. Legacy is amplified when a group or organization reaches a tipping point and individual actions help transform norms or patterns (Kelling 1999; Gladwell 2000).

Legacy endures after individuals depart and no longer control a situation. The paradox is that life consists of an infinite number of arrivals and departures, and legacies accumulate continually through every moment and interaction. Those touched by an individual's actions or their consequences carry on in their lives. This carrying on may be as before or may be enabled by a person's actions, or it may differ in some ways because of a leader's actions. Becoming aware of one's legacy focuses upon the questions: "Who carries on and how do they carry on because of my actions? What is different about the world or the people in it because I acted?" It raises to self-consciousness a person's initiation of differences in the world that resonate or endure.

The concept of leaving a legacy exists in the shadow of the counterfactual of what would have happened if "I" had not been there. The job may still get done, the laws may still get passed, but the nuance and style of the doing of the job, the exact wording or implementation of the law, the cumulative impact of outcomes on people, and interactions on those with whom one works can be immense--ask anyone who has had a good or bad boss while working in the same position. This focus upon legacy underlines moral responsibility and emphasizes the consequences of being there.

At an abstract level legacy extends in several dimensions. The first covers the range of our contribution. This includes the magnitude of contributions to actions, but also the temporal proximity to the consequences. Many of the most interesting or compelling consequences occur down the line from the actual contribution, such as a report read later that influences people, or individuals helped by social service who later make good or bad lives for themselves. It is possible, but not predictable, that the farther away from an individual's contribution to results, the less responsible a person becomes. It could also be that what an individual did thoughtlessly might seem trivial at the moment but may grow in importance for a person or system over time, and an individual's responsibility increases. Second, the issue of the temporal durability and traceability of consequences follow from the contribution. Some consequences can evanesce. Some consequences are immediately apparent and endure; others may seem to have no impact but turn out to have significance later. Actions can resemble ripples or seeds, or engender receptivity in people for future change. They can also erect concrete monuments or foundations. When Abraham Lincoln crafted the Gettysburg Address to commemorate those who had died at the Battle of Gettysburg, he gave the words considerable thought, but at first the speech made barely a ripple. Over time the address grew to become one of the foundational documents of the American political creed (Wills 1992). Third, the meaning of actions and consequences is mutable. Actions and consequences possess no one stable meaning. Individuals may have one intention and they may battle to ensure that their interpretation of their action's meanings dominate

memory and deliberation; other people, however, may have very different interpretations of the meaning of actions (Lynn 1987; Levi 1989, 2001; Wolf 2004). Even if everyone agrees on the meaning of an act at one time, this meaning can still mutate over time as individuals or society change. Finally, a legacy is often linked to a person who seeks or receives credit or blame for the results; this can affect individuals both when they are alive and also their reputation after death. This is especially important if persons are motivated by the desire for fame and renown as a solution to meaning and mortality (Braudy 1986). Individuals may desire recognition for their legacy, but often their actual contribution may be unknown to those affected. Even if recognized and memorialized, over time the memory and meaning may fade. As with monuments, the original intent may be forgotten, ignored, or reappropriated (Goodsell 1988; Gallagher 2004). More than a few monuments named for forgotten dignitaries exist in shaded parks --a home for pigeons, or a meeting place for young lovers or drug dealers.

Legacies can extend to people, the world, and domains of the physical, ecological, social, or psychological. Often all realms interact, such as when a leader creates a physical space that affects the institutional perceptions of authority and equality in a way that changes people's self-perceptions (Goodsell 1988). This in turn could affect the quality of service they deliver to the citizens who depend upon them.

Legacy and trusteeship situates individuals in these dimensions:

- 1) The physical, social, and psychological impact of what is immediately done and the perceivable consequences that flow from actions;
- 2) Durability of impacts and whether they endure, permute, or dissipate, as well as how far out they might impact;
- 3) Temporal and physical proximity to actions and whether consequences occur immediately or reverberate down the road, impacting people and organizations;
- 4) Indirection as a proximate and long-term factor. Influenced individuals or environments may change or assimilate influences in indirect or long-term ways; people affected may be enabled to act later, having forgotten the impact. Many outcomes will be unknown, delayed, or unacknowledged;
- 5) Responsibility identifies persons with contributions and dignity. It emerges in the search for reputations and claims of credit or blame;
- 6) Cumulative impacts mount over time, sometimes imperceptibly. Rather than isolate one critical action for an assessment, many of the most important results of leadership and management occur over time and gradually transform an institution; and,
- 7) Meanings of a legacy will be contested. While one's intentions may motivate the contribution, the interpretation of the meaning of actions will be contested by others, and meanings will vary and change.

These dimensions frame reflection and responsibility that flow from leaving a legacy. A legacy orientation acknowledges responsibility, dignity, and contribution. It deliberates in a temporal continuum where individuals attend to what they inherit in their position, what occurs while they live in office, and the consequences of actions after they move on. These contributions and impacts exist in dimensions of temporal and physical proximity. Individual contributions possess short-term direct as well as

long-term or indirect effects. Many consequences flow from enabled actions others take because they were helped through service or mentoring. Results evolve over time, usually not as one-time sudden impacts. In theory, one could map the magnitude and proximity of contributions, the areas in which it occurs, the durability over time, and the contested meanings, to refine how a person might think about legacy.

MODES OF LEGACY

Everyone leaves a legacy whether he wants to or not. I believe legacies can helpfully be understood as metaphors that depict the ways people influence the world. The ones I discuss were developed in an iterative process using case studies and a series of interviews with senior public and nonprofit officials.³ Interestingly, many of the metaphors have long historical antecedents in past stories of leaders. Obviously other metaphors could be used, and these metaphors, while distinct, can overlap and reinforce understanding, such as when a monument serves as a foundation or a seed grows inside a womb. Senior public officials responded powerfully to these metaphors, and used them often in their speech. The metaphors integrate the abstract aspects of legacy and create heightened awareness of how individuals make a difference.

Monuments

All political cultures create monuments. Pyramids, aqueducts, tombstones, or walls come to mind as enduring reminders of the successes and failures of governments. A monument focuses upon the physical presence left after a person leaves, and physical reminders leap to mind when people think of legacies. Yet few managers spoke of monuments per se, but often mentioned building monuments to ideals or good people. Monuments stand out by their autonomous existence, durability, and obviousness. They are usually physical, like buildings, memorials, public spaces, art, writing, or law. Monuments can serve functional purposes or can reflect attempts to memorialize something or someone for history. Many government buildings try to do both by memorializing a person or event but also by creating a public space that permits debates over conceptions of governance and legitimacy (Goodsell 1988; Wolf 2004; Gallagher 2004). A monument can reflect a collective attempt by a society to enshrine memories or recover aspects of identity. Leaders who create monuments can bring society to deliberate over social understandings. The existence of monuments can become a gathering point for social and political reflection about its meaning and the meaning of the events memorialized or the people or ideals remembered. Modern archeologists believe that building the pyramids, for instance, served not as megalomania for pharaohs but as a national enterprise uniting the country and reaffirming its identity and gods. The Jefferson Monument, engraved with his magnificent defense of human freedom, reminds people of unfulfilled dreams as well as the fallibility of humans when a great leader and slaveholder preaches liberty. Creating a monument often reflects social deliberation about what a society values and wants to remember. The creation of a memorial to the women veterans who served in Vietnam began with one woman who served in Vietnam and believed that the role of women had been ignored in the history of the country and war. She and her allies worked for ten years of discussion and political conflict. The process forced the public, government, and military to rethink

their own self-definition and standards of heroism *Celebration of Patriotism and Courage: Dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial*, 10-12 November 1993).

Foundations

Buildings cannot survive without strong foundations. Buildings can also be torn down and rebuilt on the same foundations. Learning in areas like language or math depends upon individuals acquiring a foundation set of skills upon which more advanced skills can be built. Individual character becomes the foundation of good judgment and supports sustained action in the face of obstacles (Norton 1976; Sherman 1989). With skill or character as foundations, people can act with independent deliberation. The most interesting paradox about foundations as a metaphor for legacy is that people can build upon them things that have not been anticipated or controlled by those laying the foundations. Foundations of character and knowledge become a source of freedom and empowerment, but can also be a socialized means of control and limitation. Leaders who mentor people lay future possibilities for growth, but the knowledge they impart can be used in many different ways. Creating healthy environments or public safety provides foundations that enable communities and individuals to flourish and act in ways uncontrolled by fear, which can make legacy unpredictable, potentially liberating, or imprisoning (Kelling 1999). The foundation of an organization permits those who follow to work from existing capacity to construct new policy and actions.

Wombs and Incubators

Special environments permit new life to gestate, grow, and be born into the world. Individuals, organizations, groups, and projects can all engender interactions among individuals, a place and time to gestate new possibilities and give birth to fresh lives, ideas, creations, or decisions in people and institutions. From earliest civilizations people have identified the womb (both in women and the earth) as a source of creativity and mystery. More than one manager described him or herself as a midwife as they thought about their impacts on others. The famous Lockheed skunk works for aircraft development, or development teams like the computer team described in Tracy Kidder's *The Soul of a New Machine* (1997) generate organic cooperation that gives birth to relations that form not only ideas and creations but often individuals who go out as different persons. Institutions like the Social Security Administration, Wells Fargo Bank, Proctor and Gamble, or the U.S. Marine Corps are noted as organizations that give birth to strong leaders who later influence other organizations. Strong leadership provides the social space and institutional protection and resources where people, ideas, and practices can be born and grow to influence others. Incubating leadership and management aims to succor the growth of autonomous individuals, ideas, and policy.

Coral Reefs

Quotidian life accumulates minute by minute, day by day, imperceptible in its impact on people and places, much like a coral reef. In a healthy reef, after an individual dies or moves on, the place they occupied becomes a possible home for others or a new anchorage where others can add to the life of the reef. The reef life generates interdependence and nurtures a system where other individuals and organizations thrive in relation to the reef. In high performing and successful organizations built to last, managers and leaders see themselves as contributing to a project of lasting duration (Collins and Porras 1977; Collins 2001). Allies, groups, schools, and clients cluster around, not just as sycophants but as part of a thriving organizational ecosystem (Perrow 1993). The reef-building metaphor reminds us that even if one's accomplishments seem insignificant, they are not. The reef grows and contributes because of individuals' help, and the shell of what one accomplished, whether building an office, a record, or a space, becomes a potential building block for another. This person can enter the space (which might seem empty) and use it as a place from which to work and continue the mission. It means that leave taking leaves an addition for carrying on or renewal.

Webs

Management and leadership occur through relations (Lynn 1987; Bloch 1996; Bryson 1992). Actions create or impact networks of relationships. In the primordial story of the *Odyssey*, Queen Penelope and the goddess Athena both refer to how they weave plans and patterns to lead (Homer 2.90-142, 23, 19.149-180). Webs can be woven in complex ways that create elaborate hierarchies, convoluted spheres, or webs of webs with horizontal threads. Webs can unite people in new and unique ways and from these relations different lives and consequences flow. Like the goddess Ariadne, they can also trap people in webs not of their own choosing. These relationships generate new patterns of action and communication. The web reveals or creates interdependencies and connections that might have been missed or never existed. Webs can create alternative arrangements, where true leaders work with each other rather than work under imposed hierarchy (Wren 1994). Especially in modern public life, public leaders build relations across sectors and organizations. In a classic metaphor identification test, one range of executives always identify themselves as spiders, not because they capture people in webs to devour them, but because they bring together and create community, communication, and possibility where none existed. These webs make possible not only new ideas, but coordination and accountability as well as feedback. If the webs grow strong, they can become sources of self-initiation and non-hierarchical coordination (Collins 2001; Bryson 1992). The web metaphor means every system presents opportunities for bringing together and coordination where relations have not existed--or becomes frayed or strangling.

Sowing Seeds/Cultivating Soil

Max Weber called politics “the slow boring of hard boards.” His metaphor emphasized the importance of tenacity and patience for durable accomplishment. Ancient Thebes, on the other hand, believed its people grew from the dragon’s teeth planted by the hero Perseus. Ancient agricultural civilizations treat the rite and metaphor of planting and harvest as central and sacred. Planting and cultivation provide another way to think of patient influence that recognizes durable and healthy change grows often from small insights or possibilities. Successful change needs to grow roots in a community, organization, or person. This understanding sees change as occurring over time and identifies responsibility as its initiator. The cultivation aspect recognizes the need to prepare others and achieve consent. Thoughtful interactions with a long-term view involve conversation and interactions that plant seeds of ideas, policy, or different ways of being. Seldom does such planting take immediately: often seeds need to be replanted or cultivated. Every interaction with people and organizations plants seeds of possible change and action. William F. Schulz of Amnesty International likes to speak of seeding as the major activity of human rights activists (Schulz 2003). Good leaders spend time planting seeds of knowledge and possibility, and nurture them for the right moment when the window of opportunity opens for action. One senior social services manager described her day as “spreading seeds of possibility among stakeholders.” She discussed the need to “fertilize and make people and places receptive to ideas.” Sometimes with “patience you can harvest ideas, and sometimes others harvest the results, it doesn’t really matter.”

Sometimes seeds lodge in dry ground; cast to the wind they settle where they might and either shrivel or bring forth fruit quickly. The fruits can be harvested by others or oneself. An Ethiopian health ministry official pointed out that a leader may spend time thinking about the right type of seed to plant in a particular environment. The challenge of constantly fertilizing soil can often exact too high a cost to sustain. He mentioned, “I must know the ground first to pick the right seed for the earth, then it will grow within the people.” Most top-initiated change fails because the initiatives never take at the lower levels of the organization and wither as soon as the leaders leave (Collins and Porras 1997; Kotter 1996). Engendering receptivity in people, language, and culture and adapting initiatives to them are vital forms of leadership.

Ripples

Actions reverberate like the ripples of stones dropped in a pond. The ripples move out in concentric circles and touch, disturb, or change the direction of things around them. Sometimes they barely rustle the world. At other times the ripples collide, intersect, and overlap, growing arithmetically into waves. The ripples move out far beyond the person who tossed the stone, and often the effects are hidden from the originator. Those affected may not know who moved them, and people find themselves moved as others disturb social norms, generate emulation in others, and move people to action. An executive director of a humanitarian relief organization commented, “I think it’s the ones who simply stand up and say ‘no’ or ‘yes.’ They disturb the order, and

others see it can be done and they move also.” Multiple stone throwers create ripples that merge into tidal waves like social movements.

Lenses and Dreams

People’s quality of mind and imagination can change under the tutelage of individuals and experience. Plato portrayed leadership as a form of getting new sight by moving from the cave of shadow to the light. Cognitively, individuals focus attention and organize the world with frames of reference that order perception and provide context and meaning (Morgan 1997; Senge 1990; Bolman and Deal 1997). Imagination expands when individuals learn to see the world in new ways or picture other possibilities for themselves. Old frames are replaced or supplemented by new frames of reference. Individuals discover aspects of reality they had missed. Their perception can be sharpened or their imaginations made more supple, and they learn to see situations in different ways rather than being trapped in one comfortable internalized frame (Daloz et al. 1996; Morgan 1997). In his Nobel Prize lecture, Saul Bellow could have been describing good leaders when he suggested that artists “should give new eyes to human beings, inducing them to view the world differently, converting them from fixed modes of experience” (1994, 88-97). Movements to restore the dignity of marginalized groups involve not just collective power, but changing how members of the group and members of society see themselves--to understand that actions once acceptable can no longer be accepted because of the injustice hidden beneath them. The aspirations of individuals can be changed by leaders who believe in them and manage them in ways that they see new possibilities in their lives for growth and change. As one local utilities manager said, “The most important leader can be the one who sees possibilities for you that you do not see in yourself.” A Pakistani World Health Organization official described how a small, low tech program provided training for village girls at power looming to provide economic benefits for their local rural community outside of Karachi. This changed their self-understandings and initiated a ripple of change where the girls, in an unprecedented event, united to convince the mayor of their small village to convert part of the government center into a community center. Young girls ensconced in traditional families with no options slowly grew into a new image of themselves. At a local meeting a young woman spoke up and stated simply, “We have dreams too.”

Each metaphor highlights a range of influence individuals can have upon people and the world--good and bad. They expand the ways of seeing how people lead. Acknowledging them deepens a leader’s array of strategies and sense of responsibility.

The dimensions and metaphors of legacy also illuminate three paradoxes.

1. An individual’s goals may not turn out to be his or her legacy. The goal orientation of managerial leaders can blind them to the accumulating impact of their actions on people, processes, and relations. These indirect impacts may influence people more than the putative goals.
2. People do not control the final meaning of their legacy. Because legacies entwine with meaning, they will be contestable. Debates over the meaning of actions will occur among those who view them and those who experience them. The meaning of an action may change over time as individuals reinterpret experiences in light

- of experience. Because legacies transcend the results, they are entangled with meaning issues. Mutable expectations will be a profound influence on legacies.
3. The actual nature of good and bad legacy can be very complicated. Primo Levi points out that “the memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even grow, by incorporation of extraneous features” (1989, 23). Often, actions individuals initially experience as wrong or negative can induce changes in people or policy that end with positive developments. A public organization forced to face private competition can fail, or adapt and become more efficient and creative in how it deploys resources and understands its actual goals (Osborne 1993; Kettl 2000). More than a few managers commented upon the paradox of how a bad or painful experience with leaders changed them in complex ways. One senior transportation authority manager commented, “My experience with Bill made me a better leader. When I thought of what Bill would do in this situation, I did the opposite.” A senior military officer reflected, “I thought it was the worst experience of my life. But I learned my strength and how to recover. I can’t thank him, but if I hadn’t experienced how badly he treated me and others I’d never known how to become a good leader.” One young deputy executive director resigned after an intensely bad experience and noted, “We all felt trapped with no way out, but within five months, the entire staff had left. My act came from despair but it freed others.” Time and again what people experienced as harm does harm them, but becomes a chance to grow if they learn from the experience. The learning is not guaranteed to be positive. Survivors of traumatic experiences fall into three categories: those who decay under the sense of failure and pity, those who adapt and restore their life to normal levels, and those who become more at peace and stronger people (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

The legacy approach to leadership reminds individuals about the connections among people and the world. The connections mean each action can contribute to wombs and incubation, foundations, ripples, reef coral, lenses, or seeds that influence how people act. This viewpoint reinforces the relationship between present and future.

TIME AND HISTORY

Managerial leaders inherit people, institutions, relationships, expectations, and culture. People in organizations and environments possess memories and a sense of purpose and legacy. The inherited personnel are the guardians of what exists and what has been accomplished. The mission, history, and culture remain alive in the personnel (Schein 1985; Denhardt 2000). Every leader who attends to his or her legacy should attend to the inherited legacy--for good or bad.

This approach asks for more humility about the fabrication of goals and missions without the sustaining support of people and the political system. It asks for more diffidence about univocal definitions of success. It asks for reticence about ego involvement while demanding energy and commitment. It requires attending carefully to the history and culture of an organization. Creating an institutional legacy begins with understanding inherited meanings, accomplishments, and stories. This understanding enables leaders to anticipate how staff will interpret actions or respond to

initiatives. An institutional legacy needs to be adopted by the members of the institution and stakeholders, co-creating the meaning and mission. Whether a leader wishes it or not, personnel and clients will create their own meanings for their actions (Schein 1985; Morgan 1997).

Legacy-oriented leadership requires a continuity strategy that addresses mission and organizational practices and norms. This builds upon the foundation that exists with care, moving internally from within the meanings available. If it means significant changes, so be it, but leaders need to be aware of the levels of resistance and changes emerging from the existing matrix of meaning and commitment.

Thinking of a legacy and inheritance reminds leaders that they owe respect to those who have come before and built the inherited legacy. This gives leadership a chance to honor and build upon the foundations and recognize the monuments. But true respect means honesty--no legacy is flawless. Even fine legacies can be contested and entail unanticipated consequences. Humility should inform the quest for a new legacy and evaluations of the past. An inheritance should be honestly evaluated and brought forward with good intact, not undermined by hidden resentment or unrecognized failures. To claim the good of inheritance imposes the obligation to not make things worse, but also to correct the wrong done in the institution's name. At times, it may involve destroying part of the inheritance.

Any realistic interpretation of legacy should incorporate cumulative and time dimensions. This refocuses leadership upon the present, the daily interactions and performance, not just the enticing game of high-level policy change. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in his *Meditations*, reflected, "Even if you're going to live three thousand more years, or ten times that, remember: you cannot lose another life than the one you're living now, or live another one than the one you're losing . . . The present is the same for everyone." Later he reminds himself to stay attuned to the present and stop drifting (Aurelius I.14, III.14). He could be speaking to all managerial leaders when he tells himself, "Life is short. That's all there is to say. Get what you can from the present --thoughtfully, justly" (IV.26).

The small stuff matters for a legacy. Leaders manage the quality of relations with people and organizations, the competence and performance of individuals, the technology, political support, and structure to sustain the organization's effectiveness. These emphases keep leaders and personnel coupled and emphasizes that the most durable legacy left will be the quality of people led and served. Impacts upon people, environments, and policy remain largely cumulative. Windows of opportunity can permit sudden changes to occur. These significant changes depend upon the webs, seeds, cultivation, changed lenses, and dreams that laid the foundation for movement.

Attention to the present means working hard to achieve results that accomplish good and impact others in intended ways. It focuses upon the real impact and the reality of what people and institutions face. This focus fights against the temptation of many senior managers and leaders to focus upon big policy change as their legacy. An experienced state and local executive remarked, "Leaders tend to underemphasize management because they want the big score, the notch on their belt, and then after the policy victory, they move on." An honest legacy encourages leaders to ensure that people see the connection between competent daily work and the legacy for citizens and colleagues who benefit or suffer from it. Leaders need to help all their colleagues see their own legacy by seeing the worth and impact of their work. Establishing a connection between competent daily work and its legacy fights the cynicism, boredom,

and exhaustion that erode performance and self-worth (Petrick 1997; Csikszentmihalyi 2003).

Building an institutional or policy legacy means the slow, hard work of acquiring the resources to hire, train, and direct people. Even competent, caring performance does not guarantee continuing support. To sustain performance and the impact on lives of individuals even after one leaves requires attending to the politics of building support. Laws, policy, and institutions do not survive on automatic pilot but live through deep roots, strong foundations, and webs of support and power.

Focusing leadership on legacy naturally leads to a performance emphasis which underlines the reality that people are creating their legacy on a daily basis. Performance focus demands that leaders and workers ask what they are seeking to accomplish and to connect their actual work with the legacy impact they seek. It engages the realities of accomplishments, failure, and improvement and gives more reality to the belief that people are better off because individuals perform their jobs well. Performance over time means building an institution's capacity with strong support structures, but also with training and competence.

Legacy links so profoundly with the meaning of action that it converges on culture building. The question for leadership becomes what type of culture helps individuals to achieve a legacy. People who work in institutions will construct their own meaning of actions. This insight invites leaders to engage meaning as part of managing and leading (Schein 1985, 1999). A managerial legacy that focuses upon the quality of individuals as well as performance devotes time and effort to build the meanings, practices, stories, myths, and symbols for people (Doig and Hargrove 1987).

The time dimensions of legacy present the greatest challenges and paradoxes. Once it becomes a focus of judgment, the challenge of legacy building for leaders is to reflect upon what it means to leave behind accomplishments that matter and endure without one's will to nourish them. Time acts as a prism, refracting unpredictable meanings and purposes. Emphasizing what remains after one leaves and the fragility and uncertainty about how actions will be understood underscores the importance of humility in transmitting a legacy.

This future orientation links with the concern to create something that endures. The durability issue meshes with the agendas of both public management and administration (Lynn 1987; Rainey 1991). Concentrating upon durability means working on culture where the commitments are imbedded in organizational practices and passed on. It means learning, training, and persuading so personnel continue to commit to goal competencies. If individuals who come later are not committed to the same issues and beliefs, all the institutional stability and resources will not make much difference. The legacy will end differently than intended. A legacy requires building support among authorizers and stakeholders to sustain the organization and policy. But a supple legacy should also leave the freedom and creativity for people to adapt to new changes in the environment. Foundations, webs, roots, corals, soil and seeds, dreams and lenses provide the means and ends of this approach to legacy.

The future holds little but uncertainty. Environments change, policy changes, people change, evaluations change, and unanticipated consequences, for good or bad, emerge. Organizational or mission survival will not continue in pristine form. Organizations that cannot adapt to changed demands will not flourish. The mission itself will permute as people learn about the full implications of their goals and adjust to mistakes or credible changes of emphasis and direction. A future-oriented legacy always exists in the lives enabled by competent public service. However, it should not exclusively focus on rigid but clear outcomes. Any achievement is tenuous and open to future interpretations. Performance measures simply provide baselines for learning and growing, not permanent answers. The battles over the meaning of accomplishment and failure launch their own momentum to address or rectify actions. True leadership legacies generate wombs, webs, foundations, and soil and seeds that become the source for others to grow, adapt, and achieve autonomy without one's sustaining will.

The writer of the *Bhagavad Gita* wrote, 3000 years ago, that "you have a right to your actions, but never to your actions' fruits. Act for the action's sake . . . The wise man lets go of all results, whether good or bad, and is focused on the action alone" (2.45-49). The reality of legacy is that once an individual leaves, he or she should leave and let people and institutions change or even die on their own. Anything humans build will change, die, be destroyed or rebuilt over time. Yet individuals will be lured by the indispensable person temptation where they believe only they can lead the institution. Consequently, leadership demands a strong sense of humility in leaving legacies. This is compounded by the need to welcome accountability and to adapt to the changed will of legislatures, people, and the environment, as well as the capacity to adapt to unanticipated consequences and new information. To build a legacy in a liberal democracy means to be humble, and willing to not only learn but accept that learning will change the shape or meaning of one's legacies. In this light, one of the most enduring legacies will be the quality of people helped. They will move on to live or continue a leader's work in new and unpredictable ways, even as the leader moves on. As a teacher, a leader sows seeds of skills, ideas, and commitment, and these grow in new and different ways. Often individuals will not even know the final results of a legacy. Individuals should remember that they enable people to achieve in ways they could not have without help.

LIMITS AND PROBLEMS

Focusing on legacy is not a panacea for organizing the cognitive attention and moral evaluation that go into deliberation (Petrick 1997). Like all concepts used by mortals, it has problems. The trouble arises because the concept intimately links to the self and the search for meaning. Too often the individual seeking to leave a legacy overinvests in both a specific legacy and meaning for that legacy. While I have insisted upon the importance of humility, another strong tradition of politics emphasizes that individuals enter public life seeking glory, reputation, and advancement (Braudy 1986; Machiavelli 1992). This desire for glory and fame provides powerful motivation for action and mixes together with more public-spirited motives. Yet the desire to stamp a legacy with one's name can cause several problems. First, the approach can encourage organizational rigidity. Second, it misunderstands the importance of memory and limits of control. Third, it tempts people to grandiosity. Fourth, it tempts people to focus on

the physical rather than the human. Finally, it encourages people to confuse fame with legacy.

Building strong political support for policies or organizations and constructing sturdy cultures are hallmarks of legacy-oriented leadership. Ironically, these very attributes can induce organizational rigidity and impermeability. Supporters, commitment, and success raise a form of organizational fundamentalism that shores up institutional inertia. This conflicts with both accountability and adapting to the environment. This organizational rigidity can become a serious problem and lead to unanticipated consequences, harmful adaptations, and goal displacement, where serving past practices becomes a substitute for achieving public purposes. When Ralph Burger took over as the head of A&P after the retirement of the founders, the Hartford brothers, he spent his decades of leadership asking the question, "What would Mr. Hartford do?" This insistence upon the dream and lenses of the founders trapped him and the company into a spiral that limited their adaptability and led to its decline (Collins 2001).

The notion of legacy can presume that those who come after one leaves actually remember and acknowledge one's contributions. More interestingly, it can presume people will continue to interpret one's contribution in the terms desired by the legatee. Several problems undermine this assumption. Human memory is notoriously unreliable, selective, and changes over time. Others' memory or interpretation of legacy-intended actions may not be congruent with an individual actor's intent. For example, as we age, our evaluation of how our parents behaved changes. What seemed bad or troubling once may be seen as helpful later on. What seemed like a good idea at one time may turn out to cause problems later.

More dangerously, a person's intention and legacy can fuse in their mind. It is extremely difficult, however, to control the meaning of actions in others. While successful leadership requires strategic attention to influencing how stakeholders interpret meaning (Lynn 1987), leaders cannot always control how they are perceived. Different individuals will read actions in different ways, although they may publicly go along with a manager's interpretation if the manager has great power. The desire to control how others interpret action induces individuals to spend time and resources to control the meaning and to imprint organizational and political rigidity rather than attend to the actual impact upon lives. At its logical extremes it leads to an authoritarian insistence on control or a leadership cult.

Paradoxically, many legacies will be unknown or forgotten by recipients. Changes in people's character or competence may occur gradually under the tutelage of several individuals. The cumulative changes matter, but the actual memory of exact personal impact may fade before a general sense of change. The lenses a person uses later in time may change how they view impacts people had on them earlier. Often the impact of an action will not be known to those who benefit from them. Supervisors and mechanics who fix a problem in a bus or a senior manager who solves a scheduling glitch will be not known to those who benefit, like riders or drivers who benefit from reliable, safe service. Contributions to clients that seem routine may enable significant changes in their lives without clear acknowledgement to those who helped, yet all produce legacies.

An aggrieved sense of inadequate recognition or the slipperiness of human memory tempts many individuals to focus upon the big picture, the big score, the big policy. A widely experienced senior state appointed official and governor's advisor commented, "Policy folks always look for the big score. It makes their reputation . . . They don't have much time. They leave the details to others." This temptation leads a person to see legacy as big change, a major innovation, and something that visibly endures. This tempts people to grandiosity and a sense of their indispensability. The heroic mode of managerial leadership with its emphasis upon what "I" can hold together by force of my talent and will distorts the legacy orientation. This approach can help agencies flourish but forgets that people create meaning and legacies together. It undervalues how others will function on their own without the heroic leader. The heroic model can subvert attention to capacity building for a narrow focus on the leader's direction. Organizational culture and the depth or quality of people falls by the wayside in the search for high-profile outcomes. Organizations flourish but do not develop people or the capacity to adapt to new environments after the leader departs (Collins and Porras 1997; Collins 2001).

The dynamic of focusing on the physical rather than the human impels many managers to think concretely, as in bricks and mortar. A long-time city council member took pride in his legacy as "changing the way we think about delivery of social service to at risk kids. That's my real accomplishment." At the end of the interview, however, his senior staffer interjected, "We are spending lots of time on rebuilding the station. We want something physical that we can point to, to prove we left something behind." Monuments scale from the simple, such as new paint jobs, furniture, or technology, to creating laws or buildings. Government and nonprofits starve for physical or technical infrastructure and successes there are obvious and endure. New equipment remains in place. They upgrade personnel with Hawthorne effects and help citizens in direct ways such as a new park structure that invites children to play and families to congregate. A new public space or art can contribute to a new culture and respect for an organization. With these rewards, leaders often concentrate upon physical achievements and pay less attention to the quality of people or whether staff can use the new technologies or keep up the new buildings or systems.

A legacy focus easily confuses fame with legacy. As with Ozymandias, many think of their legacy as their solution to a mortal world. Memory, like the songs the Greeks sang of their heroes, grants them a surrogate for immortality. This focus upon wanting to be remembered for doing things usually gets in the way of leaving a good legacy. It can paralyze a person with the temptation to grandiosity or incite people to underachieve because they are less willing to give credit or share power in achievement. Aggrandizing one's ego and enshrining correct memories of oneself displace the real goals of making life better or even making a difference as opposed to making 'my' difference and making sure everyone knows it. It can redirect energy into building reputation or monuments at the expense of real achievements. At the same time, it makes legacy out as a possession of the great and powerful and discourages everyone from understanding the real differences individuals make in the world. This denies humans a deepening of their own dignity and worth.

Human memory and human change haunt all the problems with legacy-based leadership. To return to the lure of concrete, a building might be perfect and cutting-edge when built. Ten years later it might be seen as a stagnant artifact of an architectural fad. A space embodying the latest human-relations insights becomes obsolete in five years. In a virtual world where half-lives of computer programs are six months, new technologies will be passed by as they are installed. Even a park or monument can end up a dangerous, unused space or become nest for pigeons. To ask too much durability and too much interpretive stability invites abuse of power and goes beyond what individuals should reasonably seek.

CONCLUSIONS

I have several ideas about how to think about leaving a legacy as leaders and managers. They flow from seeing individuals serve as stewards of a trust given by those who came before and handed on to those who remain.

- 1) Beware of pigeons on your monuments. Monuments and foundations matter as social memorials, achievements, foci of action, and touchstones for the future. However, focusing mainly on the monumental or physical and insisting on credit invites disappointment and distortion of personal energy and aspirations.
- 2) Begin sooner rather than later. A person's legacy unfolds every day, from the beginning. An individual's cumulative actions, relations, precedents, and attention contribute to create a slow and almost imperceptible influence that reaches into organizations and people. People can think they are going along and staying low as they wait to get power and position--then they will really make a difference. This misreads the slowly accreting influence of actions and people's ability to control the meaning of actions. At the end, when individuals feel freer, they often possess less leverage. To think people can make a legacy late and fast ignores that people have already engendered much of it. Much of what a person actually does builds upon the wombs, foundations, seeding, monuments, webs, and corals they helped earlier.
- 3) Accept the inheritance as a prelude to legacy. Individuals do not manage or lead alone, and leaders build upon or are trapped by what came before. Leaders have obligations to learn the history--the true good and the true harm done by an institution and its people. The true history should be integrated into strategies for action. Respecting, truth seeking, and sometimes destroying are central to legacy creation.
- 4) Scale actions. Every job carries with it a reasonable scope of action. The temptation to go big and permanent when thinking of a legacy downplays the present work to look beyond to what really matters. This is a fundamental mistake. Communication and relations sustain the quotidian legacy and enable other people to link their commitment and meaning to their service. The scaling of action and aspiration from person, to group, to institution; from purpose to institution; from immediate to long term permits legacy to unfold as an organizationally enduring phenomena, not an imposition of will. It aligns with the need to build foundations, weave webs, change lenses and dreams, build reefs, start ripples, or prepare soil or plant seeds.

- 5) Link the small and large. Insist upon the connection and meaning from the smallest acts of the present to the deepest aspirations of the future. Enable colleagues and workers to appreciate the meaning and legacy of their actions and communicate this endlessly. Legacies depend upon the linkages and feedback loops between broader goals and daily interactions. Each modeled behavior or interaction trains and directs in this way. When leaders hand on knowledge and inculcate behavioral expectations and norms, they connect real action with purpose. Every person touched in these interactions can become different, for good or bad. Every person served by competent performance benefits in their life for good or bad.
- 6) Not controlling the final meaning. While influencing meanings is a necessary aspect of strategic and tactical leadership, in the end, the meanings of a legacy will emerge from dialogue, accountability, and impacts. Memory and history will exact their own costs, as memories will change or forget the original intent. Too much time spent controlling after one leaves not only distorts one's own efforts, but also the truth of the legacy.
- 7) Leading and letting go. The paradox of leading for a legacy resides in learning to let go. The *Tao te Ching*, agreeing with the *Baghavat Gita*, comments that "he who clings to his work will create nothing that endures [J]ust do your job, then let go" (Tao, chap. 24). The old wisdom argues that the capacity for accomplishments to endure and continue to help the public good resides in the ability of the individuals and institutions to adapt and recreate their meaning and performance in changed circumstances. One of the true bequests of leadership is that webs, foundations, corals, lenses, dreams, and wombs enable other persons to grow, move on, and build their lives and successes from an individual's contribution. This means understanding that what endures must do so without the will and ego of the 'I' to sustain it or control it. This humility should not sap the drive to do good or the strategic need to fight for agendas and educate the public. Individuals should take work seriously but hold it lightly.

Everyone leaves a legacy, whether they want to or not. This knowledge remains central to democratic leadership. In ancient Athens, when the young men reached the age of citizenship, they took an oath. One of the central promises in the oath was that they would hand on their city, not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than they received it. Remembering this and organizing ethical reflection around it offsets the tendency to emphasize ends over means and stresses their inherent connections. Understanding this links ethics, responsibility, position, and action. The self-understanding permitted by legacy-oriented leadership asks individuals to understand the full range of impact they can have on life, institutions, and people. The reality of legacy reminds people that they are stewards with significance and power.

NOTES

1. The debate over whether strict adherence to the law or character-based discretion never really ends. Plato discussed both alternatives in *The Republic* and *The Laws*. The Chinese legalists argued with the Confucians about the relative importance of the two (Wren 1994, 13-35). In America the classic argument between Herman Finer

(1941) and Carl Friedrich (1940) covers the need for legal adherence and accountability versus the stress on expertise and character, and reflects a debate that has no definite answer but will always be with us given the limitations of human beings and of the two models.

2. Rousseau's combined critique of human nature made trust of autonomous or trustee power impossible, while his emphasis upon the capacity of human beings to participate together and free themselves from the tyranny of autonomous government power laid the basis for most modern variations of these themes. Recent post-modern thought in public administration tends toward the same direction with its denial of any independent and legitimate position and responsibility to government or public officials given its epistemology. At the same time, modern critics of government that focus upon reinventing often see themselves not only as guardians of efficiency, but also as creating better accountability and moving government close to citizens.

3. This article draws upon over fifty semistructured interviews with middle to senior managers from ten countries. I conducted the interviews from 1998 to 2003 under strict confidentiality. The interviews occurred in Seattle, Washington; Washington, D.C.; Kansas City, Missouri; Hanoi, Vietnam; Mexico City, Mexico; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The citations are based upon my personal notes.

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