2
The Circle of Leadership Integrity Within Business Organizations

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Part one: theorizing

In recent times, the economic crisis and associated meltdowns of companies have contributed to an increasingly negative perception of business and industry. Numerous corporate scandals and failures have motivated people to ask questions about the leaders at the forefront of these organizations, and about their integrity. The public is losing trust in leaders who are not putting their words into practice. In short, the integrity of leadership has been called into question, and integrity is considered one of the values most important to the practice of leadership (O'Toole, 1995; George, 2007; Carroll, 2007; Fairholm, 2001).

Good leadership is said to depend on integrity. Mills, president and CEO of Office Interiors, asserted that "[i]f you don't demonstrate the values you expect from others, you sabotage your ability to lead" (cited in Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 84). If a leader cannot demonstrate the values that he/she expects from others, it often ruptures the trust between her/him and the people she/he is leading. Without trust, there is no leadership. A break in trust can create damage from which it is almost impossible to recover. When people begin to lose trust in their leaders due to seeing integrity lacunae in their leaders, they are apt to become disengaged, detached, and/or cynical towards the organization or group of which they are a part (Bolchover, 2005). Loss of faith in the integrity of leadership has a recursive and interactive effect on the integrity and purpose of the organization as a whole.

O'Toole (1995) and Bennis (1989) argued that organizations need to create a culture of candour, and that the most effective means to achieve this is through the personal transformation of leaders. They recommend that leaders practice honesty; create an atmosphere and practice that encourages workers to be honest with leadership; reward people who have contrary views; practice having unpleasant conversations; and

acknowledge their mistakes. It is not difficult to imagine that these suggestions are challenging to implement and involve personal transformation. The question is: How does one achieve such a personal transformation? In this chapter, we will inquire into the challenges to integrity in our current culture, especially in the business environment, and explore how such transformation and integrity may be cultivated. In the process, we will also suggest interdisciplinary and cross-cultural philosophies and practices that we believe to be facilitative for such cultivation. What we will be suggesting has implications for organizations, for organizational leaders, for future business leaders, and for business education. The paradigm and practices we will discuss offer a significant refocusing and transformation as to how business students are educated. We believe that the world of business and organizations is both a reflection and initiator of culture. Our proposal offers a shift in values, practice, and philosophy. It has the potential to shift how business is done and to shift the culture within which business takes place. In particular, our chapter will state that integrity in leadership is an outgrowth of human wholeness, and that such wholeness is an ongoing developmental process that comes from a process of inner work. We define inner work as being the work on the constructed self that interferes with the truest expression of a person's nature. As well, we will make the point that leaders are models for organizational citizens, and that inner work modeling and facilitation will shift the organizational paradigm towards increasing integrity. In short, a more integrated human being will tend to behave with more integrity.

The need for integrity

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2004) defines integrity as: "The quality of having strong moral principles," and "The state of being whole" (p. 738). The Latin etymology of the word, *integrity*, has to do with wholeness and soundness. O'Toole (1996) says the following:

> Integrity has at least two meanings relevant to a discussion of leadership. It is synonymous with truth-telling, honesty, and moral behaviour....In addition, the leader needs that related type of integrity that has to do with "selfness" with the integration of one's personality (to use the language of psychologists). Integrity in this sense refers to the much-admired trait of wholeness or completeness. (p. 46)

To have integrity is to be able to maintain the structure and sustain its wholeness. The moment the structure begins to crumble, integrity is eroded. A lack of integrity in leadership can show up in many ways, including deceitfulness and corruption. In the current culture of economic challenges, cutting corners and rationalizing the jettisoning of ethical values

if the organization is financially struggling do occur , as we know. The confusion, frustration, and fear that come with financial dilemmas can create pressures that motivate even the most ethical of individuals susceptible to making bad decisions. For example, ethical breaches are more likely to occur when leaders are in conflict between short-term and long-term perspectives. Leaders may want to look at things from a larger perspective and plan for the future, perhaps five to ten years ahead, but are often caught between immense and conflicting forces. For example, being evaluated on a quarterly basis by the shareholders and the stock exchange may 'force' leaders to make decisions that are not in the best long-term interests of the organization. At a basic level, personal integrity means having the internal resilience to withstand the crushing pressures to abandon moral values that come from a challenging environment, and afterward to rationalize the abandonment.

At the highest levels, today's business leaders are immersed in the global economy, which can simultaneously create great challenges and great opportunities for organizations. Leaders are faced with complex trade environments that are further complicated by the pressures and temptations of corrupt practices, such as bribery or kickbacks that seem to offer quick and lucrative solutions along with personal financial gains. A leader's lack of integrity is often accompanied by rationalizations that arise out of necessity in an atmosphere of moral ambivalence. What is meant by "moral ambivalence" is the reframing, in a language that makes them seem acceptable, of concepts and actions that we would have once called "corrupt." Jackall (1988) noted: "What is right in a corporation is not what is right in a man's home or his church. *What is right for the corporation is what the guy above you wants from you*" (p. 109). A startling statement, but the sad truth is that many organizational leaders and organizations take this as a given.

Integrity and leadership theories

Following our above preliminary assay of integrity in business environments, we turn to the business leadership literature to see how our understanding of integrity and its acquisition fits with various conceptualizations of leadership. What further insights about integrity can we garner from leadership theories? What follows here is an outline of the evolution of generational leadership theories. We will rely on the work of Fairholm (2001), who suggested that the first generation focused on "who the leader is," the second generation focused on "what the leader does," the third generation focused on "where the leadership takes place," and the fourth generation focused on "what leaders think about, value, or do" (p. 93).

The first generation of leadership theories addressed a leader's behaviors, traits, and characteristics (Fairholm, 2001). Within this generation, there are two main theories: the great man theory and the trait theory. Following the great man theory, leaders are born with the capacity to lead, and these men – at the time, leadership was considered a male quality – were often depicted as heroic and mythic. We consider people such as Abraham Lincoln, Buddha, and Gandhi to be 'great men' in that sense for their strong personal integrity and ability to withstand the challenges and pressures that would have bent and crumbled others with ordinary degrees of integrity. The question that arises for us is: How does one come to possess an uncommon degree of integrity? The great men theory is no help to us at this point, as its starting point would be that these great men were born with integrity. Let us now see what the second type of first-generation theory, the trait theories, offers.

Trait theories are similar to the great men theories. Trait theorists such as Stodgill (1948, 1974; Bass, 1960) believed that some people had *inherent* traits and qualities that enabled them to be good leaders. Personal integrity was identified as one such trait. In the early 1900s and even as late as the 1970s, many trait studies were conducted. Results were consistent with the idea of a leader as someone who achieves status through demonstrating the ability to facilitate the efforts of the group in obtaining its goals. However, the studies failed to support the basic premise of the trait approach: that a person must possess a particular set of traits to become a successful leader.

The second generation of leadership theories focused on what the leader does, or leadership behavior. Behavioral theories of leadership (Fielder, 1967; House, 1971) are based on the idea that great leaders are made – not born. These theories focus on the leader's actions – not her or his mental or emotional qualities or inner state – specifically those behaviors that are related to tasks, relationships, and change. Task-oriented behaviors are primarily related to task completion, use of staff and resources, and overall maintenance of orderly and reliable operations. Relationship-oriented behaviors are geared toward improving relationships and helping people, increasing cooperation and teamwork, increasing job satisfaction, and building identification with the organization. Change-oriented behaviors are directed at improving strategic decisions, adapting to changes in both the internal and external environments, and at making major changes in processes, products, and services. Once again, studies found that there was no fixed combination of behaviors that would guarantee leadership effectiveness.

The third generation of leadership theories focused on where leadership happens. Within this generation of leadership theories, we find contingency theories and situational theories. Contingency theories of leadership focus on the variables in the organizational environment that determine what particular style of leadership is best suited for it. According to contingency theories, there is no one best leadership style for all situations. Great leadership depends on a number of variables, including leadership style, the followers' styles, and the particulars of the situation. Situational theories suggest that leaders choose the best course of action based on situational

variables. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for different situations. We agree with this view but argue that it is the inner condition and wholeness of the leader that give rise to the ability to respond to the context, the moment, and the overall conditions that constitute integrity, and not the opposite as espoused by the contingency theories.

We now come to the fourth generation of leadership theories. These are the contemporary theories, and we consider our own leadership theorizing to belong centrally here, not because these theories are contemporary to us, but because we see the theories addressing in some manner the questions we have: How does one come to possess integrity, and how is integrity cultivated, personally, and collectively? This generation of leadership theories is primarily focused on "what leaders think about, value, and do" (Fairholm, 2001, p. 93). We agree with George's (2007) assertion: "Leaders are highly complex human beings, people who have distinctive qualities that cannot be sufficiently described by lists of traits or characteristics. Leaders are defined by their unique life stories" (p. xxvii). This generation of leadership theories includes values-based leadership, authentic leadership, mindful leadership, and spiritual values leadership (O'Toole, 1995; George, 2007; Carroll, 2007; Fairholm, 2001).

Values-based leadership is not about traits, behaviors, or situations: It is more about an "attitude, philosophy, and process" (O'Toole, 1995, p. 14). In practical terms, values-based leadership refers to leaders who have internalized their values and who, by their way of being, model these values for the group. The leader 'walks the talk.' Such leaders can maintain their values under pressure – as well as their authenticity, honesty, and congruence – in situations afflicted with bureaucratic compartmentalization and institutional falsehood (see below).

These aforementioned theories are all grounded in moral values such as authenticity, honesty, and integrity. Hence, while the varieties of the fourth generation leadership theories have different names, in essence they are all value-based leadership theories. Leaders demonstrate their personal values by living them. Part of what might be modeled by leaders is their ability to modify their own personal values as they learn from their followers, their inner work, and life. Such attitude and practice is based on the leaders' fundamental respect for themselves, their followers, and life. A leader's fundamental respect in and for these domains leads to development of a culture that encourages full stakeholder involvement and nurtures the development of wholeness in each individual and in the organizational community as a whole.

We propose that a major component within values-based leadership is integrity, and such integrity as we mean it arises from a process of inner work (Cohen, 2009). While different leaders may have different values, integrity is the one value that all value-based leaders must have (George, 2007). Simply put, if you don't have personal integrity, it is unlikely you will be trusted. The test of values-based leadership is not what values the leaders say that they have, but what values they demonstrate when they are under pressure, and in 'ordinary' times. If leaders cannot walk their talk, particularly when they are under pressure, their followers will lose faith in them. As already mentioned, our increasingly complex and complicated world brings overwhelming and enormous pressures on leaders. Let us look at some of these.

Bureaucratic compartmentalization along with incredible complexity and quantity of details is highly problematic and provides 'acceptable' rationalizations for not knowing about problems and/or not trying to find out about them, as people work within their own little boxes or departments. Institutional falsehoods are the lies that are told in order to maintain a 'workable' status quo. For example, an organizational leader makes an unpopular decision that negatively affects one of its largest customers. The customer threatens to withdraw its business, and then the customer is told that it was the manager's decision, and the manager did not know better when in reality the decision came from above and the manager is the most 'efficient' location for blame. The manager knows that he is being used as a scapegoat but rationalizes that it is okay because it is for the betterment of the organization (and preservation of his job), and therefore stays silent. This example alludes to the enormous pressures that threaten to break the integrity of leaders and their followers.

We make the case that the leader's ability to work wisely within the atmosphere and context of these overwhelming pressures depends on the available capacity of one's integrity. As a leader loses his heart, mind, nerves, and/or spirit, he crumbles and falls apart, and the organizational environment and its workers crumble along with the leader. To say that someone has (moral) integrity means that this person does not easily crumble and lose her moral fiber or moral standing under pressure. She maintains her commitment to moral values that arise from her inner sense of wholeness, that support and sustain her, and that continue to guide her even in times of great stress and pressure. Integrity implies wholeness, being able to sustain wholeness, and having access to inner and outer resources that will respond to breaches as they appear.

How do we cultivate this kind of robust and resilient wholeness? How do we cultivate its outcome, integrity? In Part Two, we take a narrative approach to our exploration as it enables us to get into the nuanced subjective dimensions of "what leaders think about, value, and do" (Fairholm, 2001, p. 93). To repeat George's (2007) assertion: "Leaders are highly complex human beings, people who have distinctive qualities that cannot be sufficiently described by lists of traits or characteristics. Leaders are defined by their unique life stories" (p. xxvii). And, we would add, by their ability and by their commitment to an ongoing research into their life stories, how it changes, and how to facilitate these changes.

Part two: narrative explorations

Inner work for integrity

Maria, the CEO of a mid-sized company is meeting with her top leadership team of ten people. The meeting is scheduled for two and a half hours. The main agenda item is a decision that will affect employees at all levels in terms of their participation in the decision-making processes of the company. The group is sitting in a near perfect circle. There is no intervening furniture. Material and equipment that are related to work sit on the floor behind, beside, or under the chair of each person. Nobody is holding anything. The CEO, Maria, starts the meeting by offering the group seven minutes for quiet time and personal reflection. After seven minutes she says simply, "Let's bring our attention back out into the room now." She then addresses the group and says, "This is our time for you to let the group know whatever you would like that is personal and that will assist you to be as fully present as possible; to let the group know whatever you would like them to know that would be helpful to you to be here in the most optimal way possible, that you believe would be helpful to them in working with you in our time together today, and for us to grow as community and as individuals within this community. You may also share any feelings you have that are related to your work within the company. Anything that is directly about the work itself, we will save for the part of the meeting that is about work.

The scene sketched above is hardly a familiar way of beginning a meeting anywhere, let alone in a business environment. What does sitting in a circle quietly and reflectively have to do with the conducting of business meetings? What does sharing personal feelings have to do with developing integrity in a business environment? What group of business employees would be willing to spend their time in such a contemplative, self-reflective, and dialogical activity as described here? We anticipate some familiar questions and comments as reactions to the scene above: "What is this? Some kind of touchy-feely, hippy-dippy experience? I don't need to have a navel-gazing experience to do my job. I need to get down to the problems and figure them out. I don't need to hear about my colleagues' personal problems. In fact, this will interfere with my ability to concentrate. I am not their therapist. Let my colleagues do this on their own time. Spare me the pressures of hearing everyone's feelings and thoughts. That stuff should be for outside of work. We are all professionals here."

These reactions would be most reasonable, except that everyone comes to work with personal experiences and emotions that are related to what matters to them personally and that affect them in overt and covert ways, which in turn affects others in the workplace. As well, everyone has thoughts and feelings about what has been happening at work and about the people with whom they work. Even all this would not be a problem if people were not affected by these experiences, and if these experiences were not strong enough to interfere with a person's ability to do their job and communicate with those with whom they are working. In reality, we are feeling and sensing animals through and through, and we cannot switch off our emotions, perceptions, and feelings. No matter where we are, and in what settings, including our business work environment, internal 'stuff' shows up – often with damaging effect. What this means is that we would benefit from having ways to work with and transform ourselves through engaging our own and each other's feelings, perceptions, and emotions. When we cannot or are not allowed to attend to and work with this internal stuff, our inner lives – the wholeness of our personal being – crumbles, and integrity suffers.

Fuller (2004) makes the following observation about the need for personal recognition and validation by our community:

> A nameless ache pervades the body politic. It is not so much new as it is something we are becoming more aware of as other more prominent pains subside. Once our physical survival and that of our children is assured, concern goes to the survival of something less tangible. We think of it as our identity. Just as our body is sustained by food that compensates our labor, our identity is sustained by the recognition we receive from others for the contributions we make to them. As physical needs are met, the kind of hunger people feel most acutely is the hunger for recognition. (p. 46)

As Fuller (2004) indicated, a lack of recognition and validation is rampant and damaging in organizations. What we are demonstrating with the narrative thread from Maria's organization is a very complex form of recognition. Everything that is said by a member of the group is a showing of self. The group's attention and responses are recognition. Even dealing with difficult or conflict-ridden situations constitutes recognition. Making these expressions part of the organizational culture needs to be initiated from the leadership. Developing such a culture is also an intrinsic statement of recognition, and the importance of recognition.

Let us now turn to another aspect of Maria's meeting facilitation story. What was the seven minutes of silence supposed to do in a business meeting? What connections are there between contemplative practices and the personal recognition and validation and, furthermore, between both of these and fostering integrity? Recent neuroscience research demonstrated physiological brain changes and positive adaptive transformation of emotional responses in a variety of both short- and long-term contemplative practitioners (Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009).

Davidson (2010) noted: "[A]ffective processes are a key target of contemplative interventions. The long-term consequences of most contemplative traditions include a transformation of trait affect" (p. 10). *Trait* refers to an innate emotional response of an individual to a situation and stands in contrast to the term *state*, which refers to top-down processes such as conscious cognitive appraisal or attention state (Lutz et al., 2009, p. 2). The distinction between state and trait is analogous to the distinction between effortful and effortless or spontaneous that is observed as skills develop when one advances from novice to expert in any practice (Lutz et al., 2008). Inner work might be thought of as an internal, bottom-up orientation to education, and that implies working with internal emotional and unconscious processes as a means of primarily acquiring knowledge about the self. On the other hand, the top-down approach implies working with conscious and rational processes as a means of primarily acquiring knowledge external to the self, and ignores the emotional and embodied aspects of experience. In our view, this latter has great potential for disastrous consequences.

These findings suggest there are intrinsic properties of the brain that are associated with emotional transformation. Indeed Fosha (2009a) held that "transformation is fundamental to our natures," and that it is the term for "the overarching motivational force that strives toward maximal vitality, authenticity, adaption, and coherence, and thus leads to growth and transformation" (Fosha, 2009a, p. 175). The brain is more "like a living creature that can grow and change itself with proper nourishment and exercise" (Doidge, 2007, p. 47). The positive nature of the experience is the motivation for the brain to seek more, much as a seed in the ground strives to break the surface and rise towards the sky (Fosha, 2009a).

Furthermore, Fosha (2009b) proposed that there is a convergence of understanding between psychology and contemplative practices because the "phenomena under consideration are not the epiphenomena of a particular practice rather, they are qualities of mind that are wired within us, intrinsic properties of the organism associated with healing and well being" (Fosha, 2009b, p. 252). For example, an evaluation of a contemplative practice known as loving kindness (*metta*), in which the practitioner focuses on positive regard for others, leads to practitioners experiencing positive emotions more often, increased awareness, along with a greater sense of purpose in life, augmented social support, and decreased illness symptoms (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

Daoist contemplative practices that have an open intention have similar effects (Tang et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2009). Contemplation is not about doing nothing. Rather the tranquility of contemplative practices and of cultivating inner stillness enables or enhances the functioning of the intrinsic transformative capabilities of the brain, which results in a positive change in emotional response. Unlike the Western emphasis on training conscious cognitive skills, Daoists give priority to the 'a-rational,' sensing embodied aspects of being. The authors of the *Neiye*[1] assumed that it is critically important to create the conditions of tranquil body, emotions, and thoughts to enable the emergence of virtue and a return to the authentic self. Unlike our usual thinking, the body is assumed to play a critical role in providing a foundation for tranquility in the process of contemplation. Emotions play an important role as well in that they must be settled as a means of enhancing states of mental tranquility. Finally it is assumed that daily practicing of virtues contributes to the emergence of emotional and mental tranquility. To elaborate on the concept of emergence, there is an assumption that each person contains, within, the ability to transform positively, given the right conditions. Here, we use the term positive in the sense that a physical, mental, and emotional healing or transformation is enabled through the practice of achieving tranquility.

Another aspect of contemplation and inner work that may assist the facilitation of groups is that the leader's moods are contagious: That is, they are transferred to subordinates in self-managing groups and influence group processes that are critical to group effectiveness (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). According to Daoists, those who engage in personal work of contemplation gain awareness of their innate self, move towards personal authenticity, and become more virtuous, which influences others to be moved similarly. The process by which this occurs is known as *resonance* (Major et al., 2010). There is a psychological and medical explanation of resonance. Lewis et al. (cited in Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002) held that the limbic system is open to signals transmitted in a way that can alter hormone levels, cardiovascular function, sleep rhythms, and immune functions of others. It has been observed that heart rates and other physiological responses of two people synchronize after a 15-minute conversation (Friedman & Riggio, cited in Goleman et al., 2002). Synchronization can occur even when there is no conversation and, further, "the more cohesive the group, the stronger the sharing of mood" (Kelly and Barsade, cited in Goleman et al., 2002, p. 7). In view of what all these researchers suggest, we propose that beginning a meeting with a contemplative exercise led by an individual who engages in deep contemplative work enables opening of the limbic system of those present and participating, leading to resonance, all of which greatly enhance the potential for the creation of a more cohesive group.

It is not difficult to imagine that a facilitator who is calm and content will have a calming influence on a group. Also, you may well imagine the compounding and synergistic effect of such reflective practice at the beginning of every meeting over time. The individuals and the group have an opportunity to support the changes in brain function described above. This has potential to foster personal growth, organizational culture, and community development.

Circles within circles in organizations

Let us continue with our narrative to garner further insights about cultivating integrity in business organization:

Maria, the leader of the organization and of this meeting, speaks. She says, "Okay, let's go around the room and hear from each of you: your experience, either in the moment, about your inner reflection, about your life, or about your personal experience at work. At the outset, I think it will be good if we just hear from everyone. Then we will have some time for additional comments, feedback, or dialogue with someone in the group. How about if I go first?" Everyone nods in assent. "My inner time was very quiet. I did have a felt sense of the group that was an integration of thought and feeling, as if the group was a part of me and I was a part of you all collectively . I had a very nice warm feeling with this. I also had some thoughts about my daughter who, as you know, is away studying in Japan. She is still being acclimatized to the culture and language there, and is reporting that she is missing her friends and family here. I tell you this as background. In the foreground for me is the Mother part of me that wants to fly over there and look after her. I miss her, and I know that she has to face all this. And, finally for now, having shared all this with you I feel fully present and am looking forward to hearing from each of you and to working with you here this morning."

She turns to her left and says, "Bob, how about if you go next?" Bob nods and starts to speak. His voice is halting and before he gets more than a few words out, he begins to shed tears. The room is quiet. Finally, he speaks, "My wife has taken a turn for the worse. I don't know if I can handle it. I never expected anything like this in my life. This is not how it was supposed to be. My kids depend on me, and I want to be there for them but I can barely keep myself together." Everyone in the room knows that Bob's wife has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and that the prognosis has been very grave from the outset. Everyone is attentive. Maria speaks: "Please let me and the others know what we can do to provide support for you and your family that is within our ability to provide." She looks and sounds very sympathetic and compassionate. Others join in with words of support. Bob looks a little brighter. He speaks again: "Thank you all, again. I can hardly believe the support I feel here. There is nothing to be done presently. I am ready to go on with the meeting and to hear from others." The woman to Bob's left speaks. She acknowledges in a more personal way her concern for Bob and his family, and then goes on to share some very positive feelings she has about how things have been going with her team in the company. She also speaks about her contemplative experience in the first part of the meeting, which she characterizes as very serene and peaceful. She looks serene and peaceful.

Eventually, everyone in the room has spoken. The total time taken is about 25 minutes. Maria asks, "Does anyone want to add anything? Are there any issues in the group that we need to address?" A younger woman, Wei-Lin, indicates that she has something to say. She addresses one of the Caucasian women, Janice. "I have some feedback for you. It may be difficult to hear. Are you open to hearing it?" Janice looks a little shocked. She hesitates for a moment, takes a deep breath, and says, "Okay. Yes, I would like to hear your feedback."[2] Wei-Lin starts to speak in her slightly accented but clear voice. "The other day we were out for lunch. We were at an Asian restaurant. The server, who was Asian, was a little abrupt with us. You made a comment about this, and a reference to some people having no sense of their place and their job, and that it must be their upbringing and maybe that they are new to the country. Your comment was difficult for me to take. I was personally affected by your comment. I am Chinese, as you know. You could have easily been talking about me and my family. I feel that I must say this to you. I want to give you a chance to speak for yourself and I want to be sure that I do not carry these hard feelings around inside me, as I know that if I do I will surely avoid you as much as possible. If I were to do this, it would not be good for me, for you, or for our relationship personally or as work colleagues." There is about five minutes of interaction involving respectful listening and speaking by Wei-Lin and Janice that is facilitated by Maria. In particular, there is acknowledgement of the cultural and collective wounds that Wei-Lin carries along with acknowledgment of the privilege that Janice carries as a native speaker, middle-class, white woman. There is also acknowledgement that this privilege carries its own burdens. The situation is resolved. Others give some feedback to both participants. At this point, there are no more takers for personal or interpersonal issues, and the meeting moves to the business agenda.

What are we to take from the above narrative, and what is the possible value of what is described? Furthermore, what does this have to do with integrity in leadership, leaders, and organizations?

Sitting in a circle with no intervening furniture is, as it turns out, a radical intervention into most group environments. Let us for a moment look at the meaning of this circular experience. Sitting without intervening equipment and/or furniture 'exposes' each person to each other person. Every person has the possibility to fully see the movement, body position, and state of each other person at each moment. Such 'seeing' allows for a level of knowing that produces a tendency to see, hear, and feel beyond the intellect – to see the wholeness, and/or the lack thereof, in the moment. This in turn produces a vulnerability that can be of great value even while it may be threatening in some ways. The chance of individuals misleading themselves or others is potentially lessened with this exposure. As we are attempting

to demonstrate here, the exposure must, of course, be well used, valued, and protected. If the group members were to be forced into an exposed stance, and this exposure were used to attack and humiliate, however subtly this might be done, the crazy-making double bind (Bateson, 2000) would ensue, and be a huge contributor to a culture of distortion, survival orientation, dishonesty, and pain: a culture that is very far from optimal business performance.

What we are suggesting is that the circle must not just create an opportunity for openness and vulnerability; it must actually be aligned with a culture of care, respect, and support. Central to this is creating a culture of feedback (Cohen, Bai, & Green, 2008; Cohen, 2009). The models for this will be the organizational leaders, who invite feedback of all kinds, who are capable of giving direct, honest, and constructive feedback, and who are seen to be responsive to all manner of feedback. Indeed, it is the leader's capacity to be present with goodwill, solicitousness, and compassion, and to skillfully facilitate the dialogue and feedback in the group. This is what makes the critical difference between spectacular success and disaster in these meetings. In order for organizational leaders to perform these roles, they will need to become skilful inner workers and group facilitators. We realize that this proposition is a far cry from what is on the curriculum for business leaders in professional or academic environments.[3]

The tradition of circles seems to go back to the dawn of time. Human beings have sat around fires to cook food, discuss what needs to be discussed, gossip, plan wars, weddings, funerals, and to generally conduct community business. Fehr (1999) gives us some ideas for contemplation:

> The circle often represents the womb or the origins from which life springs forth. It is the yin and yang of Chinese philosophy and the gold ring of being united in marriage. ... The circle is the earth upon which we walk. It is the sun from which the elements of life came. It is the solar system, the planets, and the stars. (pp. 1–2)

These poetic and metaphoric descriptions may seem to have little to do with the world of business and leadership in this domain. We contend, and we are not alone with this idea, that these images are rooted deeply in the collective human psyche, both consciously and unconsciously. C. G. Jung (1964) wrote extensively about the collective unconscious and symbols:

> Dr. M. L. von Franz explained the circle (or sphere) as a symbol of the Self. It expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature. Whether the symbol of the circle appears in the primitive sun worship or modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the mandala drawn by Tibetan monks, or in the ground plans of cities, or in the spherical concepts of early astronomers,

it always points to the single most vital aspect of life – its ultimate wholeness. (p. 266)

Our current technological Western world has consistently, persistently, systematically, and surgically removed us from this sense of wholeness, community, communion, and belonging (Cohen, 2009; Mindell, 1997; Mindell, 2002). It seems most likely that technology and social media create an illusion of community more than actually creating community and connection. One crucial point of the above narrative is to show a possibility within an organizational context of fostering wholeness. Our point is that organizations have the potential to be communities – communities working towards wholeness, and that wholeness development is crucial to integrity within and by organizations and its leaders.

The *prima materia* for the development of the wholeness is the lived and living experience of the organizational citizens and, in our example, the leadership group. The meeting portrayed in the narrative is comprised of the top leadership of the organization. Every meeting starts with personal time. The connections within and between people are encouraged, facilitated, and valued on a consistent, ongoing, and primary basis. The leaders are given ongoing opportunity to share their lives and to get to know each other and themselves better. The opportunity is to be part of the group, learn about oneself within the leadership community, to learn about the effect one has on the group, and to witness and be part of a community development process. The personal nature of the sharing is both the raw material for this process and the glue that holds it together. Intrinsic to this community/organizational wholeness is the ongoing process of becoming whole that individual leaders perform. These leaders are the role models for those they lead. Similarly, the organizational leadership group is the model of community, process, and connection within the organization.

Doing business within the circle

Without going into too much detail, let us take a quick look at a small slice of the next phase of the meeting – the business agenda.

> Maria turns to one of the group members, Janine, and asks, "Would you please give us your report about what you and your committee have found out about the employee views and feelings about their influence and desire to have influence on decisions, and your recommendations for us at this point?" Janine says, "I am pleased to report on our findings and the recommendations that we have come up with to date. First, the employees for the most part were very positive about the consultation process. The vast majority was very excited about the prospect of having a more substantial voice in decision making on major issues. They did want to know how this would work, and they recognized that there were

circumstances within which the process would likely be truncated and, on occasions when was some urgency, the consultation might be limited or nil. There was also a small and, in our view, significant minority who had a different view. They were concerned about situations that were too big for the level of knowledge and for the time they had available and that might compromise their ability to give knowledgeable and responsible input. I think that it is important that we discuss and think further, so that in the end we will have taken into account both the enthusiasm and the cautions that were so well expressed by our employees. I think it will be important that we make a realistic decision, that we develop processes that are eminently workable and that not only appear to have taken all the feedback into account but that show that we have, at the least, acknowledged the feedback and responded both to what we are and are not taking up. I have to tell you, gathering all this data by connecting with a large cross-section of our employees at all levels was a gratifying, valuable, and, I have to say, heart-warming experience. And, I can say without qualification that people are happy here, committed, and enthusiastic about being a part of this organization."

There follows an animated discussion with much appreciation expressed for the work done and with some suggestions that are very clear and straightforward, and obviously helpful to Janine in her role as leader of the committee.

How does the narrative above strike the reader? We anticipate many of our readers muttering: "What kind of a fairy tale is this?" What is in fact demonstrated here is the practice known as Deep Democracy (Mindell, 2002; Cohen, Bai, & Green, 2008). Mindell stated:

> The philosophy of deep democracy claims that *all* people, parts, and feelings are needed. Deep democracy appreciates present democratic forms but adds to them the need for awareness of feelings and atmosphere in moment-to-moment interactions and institutional practices. Deep democracy uses linear, organizational rituals, rights, and fair procedures *after subtle, nonverbal experiences have been articulated and valued.* (p. 13)

It is entirely likely now that some of our readers are again thinking: "This sounds crazy, and, besides, who can do all this?" If you have such questions, you are on the right track. Indeed, what we describe is not simple. In fact, it is far more complex than what has been outlined so far. As well, leaders must also be doing their own form of inner work. They need to be in an ongoing process of inner work that acknowledges their own blockages, vulnerability, unconsciousness, habits, defensiveness, the marginalized parts of themselves, and their magnificent potential. This is work that draws on a number of approaches, including contemplative practices (Hanh, 1975), Zen and psychotherapy (Magid, 2002and 2005), yoga (Iyengar, 2001), psychotherapy (Schneider, 2004), the martial arts (Ueshiba, 1984), and various other arts that have as their hallmark the polishing of the practitioner in concert with the polishing of the art. The inner world of the leader is interactively involved and in a persistent and consistent process of integrating with the outer world of the organizational community.

Beginning of the end

And finally, the ending of the meeting:

> Maria says, "Let's take a few minutes for any closing comments, feedback about your experience, unfinished business, anything you would like to say briefly about what is in you in the moment, and you need not say anything at all. We won't go into any dialogue now but we might note anything that needs to be picked up next time we meet, personally or work-related." Now, she turns to Indira on her right and says, "Let's go this way this time." Indira speaks: "I feel greatly refreshed from hearing all of you both in your personal worlds and related to our common grounds of work. I want to again acknowledge the suffering that you are experiencing, Bob. I look forward to getting at what we have talked about here today and to our next meeting when we will again meet both personally and professionally. Thank you, Maria, for a marvellous job of facilitating, and thank you everyone for your attention and presence." Everyone has a turn and the meeting ends on time.

Closure and transition are important aspects of community and organizational life. This last piece of narrative is a sample of what transitional experiences may look, sound, and feel like in an organizational context that is moving towards optimal integrity and wholeness. Hopefully, in reading this chapter, you have also found this 'meeting' enervating.

End of the end

Mastery makes the work that the masters do appear smooth, simple, and elegant. The dialogues that we described in three parts portray the leader, Maria, conducting the group meeting in a smooth, clear, and elegant way. The result of her facilitation is deep resonance that nourishes and empowers the participants. Such ability does not emerge separate from a deep personal cultivation. This cultivation consists of the integration of mind, body, and spirit, essential for leadership and organizational integrity. According to the *Huainanzi*,[4] one of the most important expressions of the will of a leader is to choose to train the mind to achieve tranquility by cultivating virtue through daily action and by practicing meditative techniques that facilitate a leader's ability to return to his or her innate nature. This recommendation is not likely to be endorsed by most Westerners because it appears to

suggest that one should meditate or apparently do nothing to become a better leader. Indeed, one of the authors of this chapter has taught contemplative techniques as part of a post-secondary business ethics class, and often the first reaction is that the exercises are a waste of time because "I am doing nothing, and I have so much other work to do." The *Huainanzi* emphasizes that to be an effective leader, it is vitally important to return to one's authentic self through the contemplative instructions provided in the *Neiye.*

Jung (1989) the progenitor of Jungian depth psychology tells us:

> The phenomenon of dictators and all the misery they have wrought springs from the fact that man [sic] has been robbed of transcendence by the short-sightedness of the super-intellectuals. Like them, he has fallen a victim to unconsciousness. But man's task is the exact opposite: to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious. Neither should he persist in his unconsciousness, nor remain identical with the unconscious elements of his being, thus evading his destiny, which is to create more and more consciousness. As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. It may even be assumed that just as the unconscious affects us, so the increase in our consciousness affects the unconscious. (p. 326).

This quote speaks volumes to leadership and integrity in organizations. There is no suggestion by us that organizational leaders are akin to dictators, although, no doubt, some might see their leaders in this way. Drawing from Jung (1989), our point is that many leaders are less than whole. This lack of personal integration will show up and be described as a lack of integrity, resulting in the damage perpetrated on employees, corporate culture and atmosphere, and consumers of products and services. All of these are central to spectacular failures in the marketplace, and as we have seen in headlines from time to time, in remarkable failures of ethics that lead to colossal financial losses, jail terms, reputational disaster, and overall wounding of an already wounded public consciousness that will frequently show up as profound cynicism. Jung stated quite plainly, and we agree, that the route out of this trap is the pursuit of an increasingly enlightened consciousness. We claim that this will result in leaders having more integrity and that it will also affect positively the still unconscious layers of the mind. The meeting and the ways of being of the participants that are described above and below give a path out of the trap that can be laid by the unconscious.

And, finally, we will move towards closure with the words of Takuan Soho (1987), a Zen monk, who offered the following:

> Well then, the accomplished man uses the sword but does not kill others. He uses the sword and gives others life. When it is necessary to kill, he

kills. When it is necessary to give life, he gives life. When killing, he kills in complete concentration; when giving life, he gives life in complete concentration. Without looking at right and wrong, he is able to see right and wrong; without attempting to discriminate, he is able to discriminate well. Treading on water is just like treading on land, and treading on land is just like treading on water. If he is able to gain this freedom, he will not be perplexed by anyone on earth. In all things, he will be beyond companions. (Soho, 1987, p. 81)

What are we to make of this enigmatic statement? Soho's advice in this little volume was apparently for the famous Japanese sword master, Miyamoto Musashi (2005). Our point is that the advice, while for a sixteenth-century samurai, has applications that are current and contemporary. Soho gives a line-by-line interpretation in the text. We suggest to you that the sword is a metaphoric representation for the actions, feelings, and consciousness of leaders. The idea of killing must translate into limit-setting, and being prepared to suffer the ego death that may come with acting with integrity. The idea of giving life speaks to the importance of nurturing the individuals in the organizational community and the organization as a whole. To summarize, he seems to be saying that the leader must be fully present and committed to and for all actions and experience. We would add that such presence and actions must be accompanied by care, compassion, openness, and honesty. The leader is in a process of becoming increasingly able to do what is called for in any given moment and circumstance. She is beyond all peers at and in the moment, and is unified with self, other, and all things. Such an enlightened state is perhaps reserved for a very few, such as the original Shakyamuni Buddha. However, the pursuit of such enlightenment as a life-long process and a way of being is not beyond anyone, and has, in our view, great potential to provide a more integrated/ integral way of being for organizational communities and those in leadership roles.

> No matter what the art, the most important thing is to establish who you really are. That is[,] move from the ego-centered self to the absolute self. (Stevens, 2007, p. 53)

Notes

1. The *Neiye,* which is dated to the early 4th century BCE (Kirkland, 2004), is dedicated to the objective of training individuals to be virtuous through contemplative practices (Culham, 2012). The influence of the *Neiye* cannot be overstated. Its contemplative practices are alluded to by Mencius and Xunzi, both influential Confucians, and touched upon by the authors of the *Zhuangzi* and the *Daodejing* – both considered canonical Daoist texts that were written after the *Neiye* (Roth, 1991; Slingerland, 2000).

2. We are aware that in most companies what follows here would never occur. In fact, there would likely be strong prohibitions against it. There would possibly be rules of engagement that preclude this content. What we are portraying here is a possibility, one that some of us have actually worked with, and that requires groundwork to set up an environment that allows for great openness and honesty, which in the end cultivates the integrity in individuals and organizations as a whole.

3. Discussing such a curriculum is outside the scope of this chapter. However, we refer the reader to the earlier work of Fiorini and Cohen (2011) as well as to Culham (2012).

4. The *Huainanzi* was prepared in the second century BCE by a large collection of scholars and presented to Emperor Wu of the state of Huainan. It is a syncretic text weighted to Daoist thinking that attempts to unify a variety of pre-existing Chinese philosophical and religious currents into a unified scheme for providing guidance to young aspiring leaders (Major et al., 2010). The *Huainanzi* advocated that the most important action a leader can take is to engage in cultivation of virtue by returning to one's authentic self utilizing the inner training practices of the *Neiye* (Culham, 2012; Major et al., 2010).

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