

Leadership dreaming

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BACKGROUND

The inspiration for this piece arose with the first Spirituality, Leadership and Management Conference held at the University of Western Sydney in 1999. Having migrated from South Africa five years earlier, I had grown up through the terrible years of apartheid and left just as Mandela was inaugurated as President. With the recent passing of Mandela and the growing understanding of how sharply and remarkably he manifested the overlays of spirituality, leadership and management, it seems apt to use this piece to consider how *leadership* and *management* can be imbued with *spirituality* in a living and embodied way.

Leadership Dreaming¹ works with ideas about leadership in an imaginal and psychological way.² Like a process of dwelling in the phenomenon, I have attempted to break from analysis of the phenomenon towards an exploration where meaning is found or created.³ I have tried to use imagination and reverie to bring an aesthetic sensibility to the phenomenon. "Imagination is not, as its etymology would suggest, the faculty of forming images of reality; rather it is the faculty of forming images which go beyond reality, which sing reality" (Bachelard 1987, p.15). Bachelard says that reverie enlarges our lives by letting in that which is usually hidden. I have therefore stepped out of a utilitarian consciousness to be drawn into the phenomenon in order to explore it as a witness rather than a critic.

INTRODUCTION

The capacity for good leadership seems to be a psychologically, emotionally and spiritually based capacity that certainly goes beyond organisational position. It is manifest in particular individuals at particular times, although it appears that some people carry a heavier mantle of leadership than others. The word *leadership* often jars for me, as it evokes something distant, something unattainable. I want to consider how to bring the phenomenon closer rather than allow it to drift further away.

The current edges of one's leadership are also the edges of one's experience. To go beyond these or even to operate at one's leading edge is to tip over the edge and notice the dreaming. The dreaming manifests as an almost unconscious and unnoticed process with frequent little thoughts that bubble up like a fountain. A conversational process and sometimes one's reflections may reach into this fount. In order to explore these arenas, the normal bounds of leadership are loosened and the phenomenon is expanded back to a personal and creative responsiveness. This is achieved through deconstructing the notions of leadership and of dreaming. Dreaming is framed as a source of creativity and of creative response. What happens when

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¹ The name *Leadership dreaming* is the wish to consider leadership in a more contemplative way. Just as Aboriginal people have a dreaming for each of the animal and bird species, I want to capture a broad vision that can track ideas without a set path, and yet following the path itself is an expression of what I am trying to more deeply understand. An anomalous desire, indeed!

² Hillman (1992) speaks of the imaginal as being a reflective speculation. The world of the imagination is the only mode of access to knowledge of the soul and the fantasy-image is at the base of every feeling and observation. Imaginative processes are therefore the basis of the mind and of experience.

³ Moustakas (1990) refers to the idea of 'indwelling' as a turning inward to find a deeper, more extended comprehension of the quality of human experience. This is like an unwavering gaze into some facet of human experience to understand its constituent qualities and its wholeness.

leadership reaches towards the dreaming?

“Leadership dreaming” is a reflective and personal essay that explores the basis of actions that appear to be of an inspirational nature. These are actions that may touch or move one emotionally because of their surprising and appropriate nature. This essay questions the nature of leadership that is embodied, actions that are somehow inspired, and the kind of preparation needed to develop an inner readiness for such action.

I invite the reader into an imaginal exploration of leadership, through my South African experience of leadership and great change, and through my imagination. What follows is more like contemplation about leadership than an analysis.

A SHORT STORY – THE INAUGURATION

The night of May 10th 1994 is probably not one that has lived on in your memory. Two events happened on that day. The one was the announcement of the latest Federal Budget by the Australian Labor Party. The second was the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Having immigrated to Australia from South Africa only three months earlier, I had a desperate need to watch every moment of this momentous inauguration and was extremely frustrated because I had to watch the Budget, which dominated the television space and limited coverage of the foreign event to a minimum.

The inauguration was a celebration, a triumph of the forces of good over evil. It was captured in the personality and the supreme leadership figure that Mandela represented. Here was a man who had retained his vision, his ‘dream’ over a 27-year period of incarceration; a man who is Black; a member of the often oppressed peoples of the world. The event had a sense of the magical or the extraordinary. It was unrecognisable in any terms other than that of a dream being realised. The extent of its peaceful realisation could never have been planned for – ten years, five years or even one year before. Being a South African had previously carried a sense of shame for me; this night, I experienced enormous pride as well as a longing to participate in the work that would be needed in the years ahead.

THE PROCESS: A DREAMING AND A REALISATION

The experience of the preceding years, especially the pain of the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa, makes the inauguration event seem magnificent and, contextualised within the supreme work and effort of countless people, a simply appropriate and beautiful resolution. This crowning moment was part of a dream that was claimed by many people, ordinary people.

For about a decade before this monumental event, various groups of people had begun taking the risk of crossing the racial divide. Women had been illegally meeting in small gatherings. Multicultural youth programs were created. Some businesses had been taking affirmative action to address past injustices and to overcome apartheid-created boundaries. Countless other individuals and groups displayed acts of courage in taking steps towards creating a more just society. Each of these attempts involved great risk and even attracted physical danger to the participants. Most were illegal. Punishment resulted in incarceration or death. Courageous action was often thwarted. Depression and hopelessness were close companions amongst the population in the country at that time.

Personally, as an English-speaking white South African, I had always felt marginalised in that society. There were two major players in the battleground: the white Afrikaner regime and the Black majority parties (the African National Congress (ANC) or the Black Consciousness movement). Whilst my ethical vote and identification was clearly with the Black majority, I was acutely aware that I was not a part of that cultural group. I supported the downfall of the government, and passively accepted the seemingly inevitable revolution and bloodshed that would necessarily follow. It was either that or the maintenance of an impossibly racist and immoral regime. This was the situation through the 1970s and until the early 1980s, when a significant turning point in the way of conceptualising outcomes for South Africa arose.

Clem Sunter, an executive with Anglo American, had been working with the scenario planning team of the Shell Oil Company.¹ In 1985, he lectured and launched a book that changed the conceptualisation of two seemingly dismal outcomes for South Africa and offered a new vision for the future of the country.² He spoke of a 'high road' and a 'low road' vision for the future of South Africa. The high road acknowledged the unsustainability of both apartheid and the current levels of violence and bloodshed of the Black movements. It offered a vision for a future or transitional governance that included representatives of all racial groups participating in the creation of a shared future with an open political and economic system. Business would be a major player in forging this way ahead. Strangely, this was not a scenario that had publicly been expressed before. The low road meant that any one of the major players would control the outcome. It was not relevant which player had that role – either the Afrikaner minority apartheid government or one of the Black movements.³ Each solution excluded the other groups. As the two possible scenarios were fleshed out, it was realised that either of the visions was possible. Scenario planning itself is a dreaming process, for it is a dreaming into possible visions for the future. Suddenly there was the idea of a dream that was inclusive and broad-based; although it was accepted that the transition might not be peaceful. The vision was inclusive and belonged to all of us, as ordinary people, irrespective of particular orientation.

This was inspiring. I began to believe that I had a part in the creation of the future of the country. Dreams of change were already arising in the hearts and souls of many people, but the possibility of a democratic and non-violent way of creating it was new. This way of thinking invited all racial groups to participate; it thereby offered the potential for the population to free itself from an endemic, self-protective, fear-based response to the country's predicament. Soon, many unpredictable quarters of the population, including the intelligentsia of the conservative apartheid movement, began to share in this vision of a high road. This development started occurring about five years before De Klerk's historic speech in February 1990.⁴

The process of dreaming a new nation into being was a long and incredibly arduous one, characterised by pain, doubt and frequently, disillusionment. The possibility of coming through the years of apartheid without a massive loss of life had always seemed remote. Now, Mandela, in becoming President of the South African nation, reflected back to the nation what it was already demanding. The inauguration itself became an important symbolic world event. It represented peaceful liberation, political fairness and a leader who assumed worldwide heroic proportions.

THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Working with, reading and thinking about leadership over the past number of years, I am struck by how young and actually immature our conception of this subject still is. People may either like or dislike leaders. They meet one's approval or they do not. The very notion of leadership conjures up literal meanings as individuals, cultures and communities. Expectations of the population are for leaders to be cloaked in heroism.

I partially regret using Nelson Mandela as the exemplar of a leader in my story, because he distracts us into the common notion of leaders as being people on a pedestal, somehow apart from ourselves. He thereby easily becomes a heroic figure and far beyond the capacities of an ordinary person. Moreover, being the attractive and praiseworthy person that he is, he typifies many of the qualities people imagine would be desirable in all

¹ Clem Sunter is now a motivational speaker on the South African speakers' circuit. He is the author of several books, including a recently published book on the AIDS crisis in South Africa. His book, *The High Road – Where are we now* (1984), emerged out of his work with the Shell scenario planning group.

² Further information about the Shell scenario process can be found in Jaworski (1996, p.148). Jaworski was chairman of the Shell scenario group for 4 years.

³ At this stage, the Black Consciousness (BC) movement and the ANC (African National Congress) were not very different in ideology. It could be said that BC was more exclusive of white people but both had already been driven to militaristic solutions and were determined to achieve power, albeit with violence.

⁴ De Klerk was President of South Africa in the years before Mandela was elected President. In February 1990, his address to parliament shocked South Africans because he permitted (cancelled the ban on) all the previously prohibited organisations and indicated that Nelson Mandela would be released from his more than 27-year incarceration.

leaders. My belief, however, is that while he is a highly capable and sensitive man, his leadership encompasses far more than him as an individual; the people of the country have played a significant role in creating the possibility for him to play his role. The relationship between him and the country is intricately connected. He has come into his role because of the South African country with its particular history and its readiness for his leadership at a specific moment in time.

This unfolding story provides the strands that I see as intrinsic to developing and expanding a conception of leadership that challenges an authoritarian, hierarchical and egotistical notion which may be held.

These include:

- The years in South Africa preceding Mandela's leadership were fraught with pain, doubt and struggles. Real change involves painful and difficult processes.
- Countless people and groups, constituting a multitude of small and large acts of courage, all contributed to the leadership that Mandela represents.
- Leadership is much more than something controlled by one person – it represents a shared dreaming.
- Leadership emerged out of that situation and was not imposed onto it.
- Extensive preparations over many years were carried out by Mandela and the people. This long and arduous task is romantically captured only in retrospect.
- Behaviour change is a reflection of an underlying dreaming; the latter is forgotten in the drama of the action. This cannot be simply imposed on a situation – it emerges out of a larger group process.
- It is easier to see the dream in retrospect.
- Business/corporate leaders are fundamentally well-placed for effecting change that can benefit the world. These professionals led the way with many of the changes implemented.

This was a huge event of change and leadership. Yet there is a kind of intimacy to it, for the leadership that was embodied by Mandela subtly touches everyone. The very nature of being touched implies a relationship with or between oneself and the leadership. An ironic aspect of this process is that whilst this change and leadership could not have been anticipated, in its manifestation it is recognisable as being almost obvious. Because it was the manifestation of such a broadly felt dream, it is as though the changes that eventuated were enabled rather than directed by the leadership concerned. Nothing has been forced, and yet change has transpired. Peter Senge, in *The Dance of Change*, refers to this kind of change as being profound change, for profound literally means 'a movement towards the fundamental' (Senge 1999, p.15) where the emphasis is on both inner and outer changes. These cannot be easily quantified or predictable.

THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP IN CHANGE

Where does this kind of leadership come from? Who is responsible for it? What is it, really? These are big questions that invite more of a speculative response than definite answers. The asking itself is a soulful activity and these questions offer the possibility of a more soulful approach to leadership.¹ But what is meant by 'soul' or 'soulful'? Hillman (1992, p. xvi) offers the following psychological understanding of soul and soul-making activity:

By soul I mean, first of all, a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint towards things rather than a thing itself. This perspective is reflective; it mediates events and makes differences between ourselves and everything that happens. Between events, between the doer and the deed, and us there is a reflective moment – and soul-making means differentiating this middle ground.

A logical step needs to be taken here. It is as follows: when profound change happens and it is found to resonate with those who are affected by it, the possibility exists that it was already in the field or in the

¹ 'Soul' or 'soulful' is a form of description that is particularly evocative, psychological but also difficult to define. Hillman (1996) has inspired most of my ideas about soul.

dreaming of those people. As Yeats expresses it: "It is dreams that lift us to the flowing, changing world that the heart longs for" (cited in Moss, 1996, p. 33)

Both the terms 'dreaming' and 'leadership' are burdened by their connotations. I intend to offer a somewhat fresher approach to each of them and show how they complement one another. I will show that leadership without the dreaming component is actually out of touch with reality; furthermore, the way to peoples' inner leadership is through their dreaming.¹

Towards open-mindedness

I have introduced several new concepts above. Their fullness and applicability will unfold. Further, I would like to suggest that some of the following ideas and theorising may seem vague and not tightly defined. Much is personal and in formation. These ideas are still on the edges of my own thinking. I notice the ideas maintain fluidity that is identical to the content they describe. My belief is that excessive clarity and certainty maintain our conceptions of the world in a fixed form and may prevent new ways of understanding, ways that our souls are longing for. I therefore invite you, the reader, to read on with an open mind.

FROM INSPIRATION TO PERSONALISATION

Mandela's presidential inauguration in April 1994 was a big occasion, a major event of fairytale proportions, one that the entire world could be moved by and share. Each person and each nation finds their meaning in that event in accordance with what matters most to them. They may wonder what effect this event may have on their part of the world; they may consider its effect on the diamond price, even feel a little envious and wish that their country had such a fine President; they may have their belief in humanity temporarily restored. Their thoughts may even be, "If this could happen in South Africa, why, it could happen anywhere!"

At the time, and for weeks, months and years after, people everywhere have dreamt into Mandela's presidency. Mandela is one of the precious few in the world who has been in a major leadership role and whose leadership has had an inspirational nature. He has touched and continues to touch many people through his actions. I include myself in that list.²

But what meaning or substance does this have? The leader is experienced as a hero figure, someone separate from oneself. The terms 'we are touched', 'he is inspirational' or 'he is so brave' remain as ideas or idealisations. The business of 'touching' is romantic and flimsy. It is insufficient to simply think about or glamourise his qualities. The leader, in his visible role, holds the potential to awaken the inner leader that is dormant within oneself.³ However, it requires a more conscious and active dreaming into the particular qualities and a creative action for any actual change to transpire within oneself because of another person's influence. The creative value of the inspiration that someone can offer comes through the reflection on and personalising what and how those qualities that are admired, manifest or do not manifest themselves in one's own life.⁴ That is, in order to take on the mantle of leadership oneself, it requires a shift in one's thinking from admiration of something outside of oneself to integration within oneself so that the origin of action derives from oneself. However, this is not how the effects of leadership are generally conceptualised.

DISTANCING AND AWAKENING

Copious books and articles have been and continue to be written on the subject of leadership. The notion of

¹ I use the term 'inner leadership' in relation to subjective and personally motivated or authored actions of leadership.

² This is borne out when I run workshops on leadership and invite people to volunteer the names of leaders who have inspired them. The name Mandela is usually on the list.

³ I use the masculine voice since I am using Mandela as the example in this case.

⁴ I believe that the qualities that we admire in another are only useful insofar as they are personalised and their particular manifestation in our own lives understood. My supposition here is that we project onto another what we long for in our own lives. However, there is energy in this projection if it is applied and reflected on in relation to the self.

leadership is widely researched. So many people claim to understand, to know and to show others what it requires to be an effective leader. The ingredients needed to lead are spoken of with clarity and a carefully considered logic. The assumption is made that leadership can be neatly defined, wrapped up and packaged. Formulations are stated where the attributes of effective leadership are prescriptive and generic. If one takes the leadership of Mandela as an example, it is surely quite easy to note the many qualities of leadership that appear to shine out of Mandela's portfolio of capacities. The tendency among writers and change agents is to carefully examine the particular qualities that Mandela reflects, and then to extrapolate from him (and maybe a few other leaders) to arrive at conclusions about what leadership is and therefore what is needed for someone to be a leader. This rather mechanistic way of thinking continues to dominate the current literature on leadership.

Peter Block (1998), author and co-founder of a new school for managing, argues that as a concept, leadership is a distraction from the meaning and the value of an inner leadership. The creation of a hero figure is like creating a god. With a god comes the possibility and conditions for also creating the devil. Although he does not state as such, it appears that the devil is the denial of what he calls peer accountability and civic engagement.¹ The very attraction to the term leadership goes against the authentic change and transformation being sought. The concept takes people outside of themselves and into the world of others, those on the stage as leaders at the time. Leadership is thereby couched in terms that keep their distance from people's direct experience; its place is comfortable in the authority of the intellect or the abstract. Perhaps it even bears resemblance to the way love is often thought of. It is dreamed of, generalised, idealised and written about but kept at arm's length. Brilliant ideas, even poetry, are generated but they are maintained as ideas.

Further developing this contrast between maintaining ideas at a distance and awakening to one's own capacities, psychoanalyst Carl Jung speaks of people's capacity to admire others rather than bringing their own gold. His language is couched in psychological terms when he emphasises that people sterilise themselves by casting off their own shadows.² Hillman (1992) also draws on Jung to emphasise our love of hero-worship. He continues with the penetrating idea that it is easier to get the skeletons out of the closet than it is to get gold out of the shadow. People are more frightened of their nobility than they are of their dark sides. They project their gold out onto others, anyone else, which is why they indulge in hero-worship.

Worshipping or simply admiring others maintains a safe distance from self-examination. In that admiration, there is a source and therefore, the potential or energy for recognising the projection.³ That admiration comes from within an individual and in order to get the gold out of the projection, the uncomfortable act of self-reflection and ownership of the projection is required. This implies the willingness to be the author of one's thoughts and take the concomitant responsibility that comes with authorship or personal authority. The implication here is that people have the capacity and the responsibility to take back or own their projections and thereby awaken to themselves. I think of this capacity as being a reflection of personal or inner leadership. Owning one's projection is consistent with these oft-quoted lines that are incorrectly attributed to Mandela:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our Darkness, that most frightens us.⁴

Theodore Zeldin, Oxford scholar and member of the European Academy and a fervent advocate for

¹ He is arguing that our lifestyle is getting progressively more isolationist in its structure and the lack of community results in individuals not taking citizenship responsibilities. This in turn leads to greater isolation and total trust is placed in the hands of leaders.

² The 'shadow' is here taken as the darker or unlit aspects of oneself. This is not saying that these are negative aspects, but rather that they are unexamined parts of oneself (Bly, 1988).

³ A projection is the process of attributing a quality onto another without realising that the origin of the attribution also carries that quality.

⁴ These words are said to be part of Mandela's inaugural speech but are not. It is interesting how they have been misquoted and attributed to him; quite feasibly, as he could have said them. They are in fact from Williamson (1992). The correction is alluded to on the website included with the reference.

conversation, agrees with this idea when he says the imitation of heroes has always been feeble. He suggests that real heroism happens when two people engage in conversation, for therein lies a journey of creativity and discovery.¹ Furthermore, in this kind of engagement, people bring their own inner leadership to bear. I want to explore further and examine more deeply what is meant by this term 'inner leadership' and how it might be manifest in action.

LEADERSHIP WITH SPIRIT

In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted.

C G Jung (1977, p. 325)

When Mandela was incarcerated on Robben Island, he had no formal role of leadership.² In spite of this, he maintained a consistent capacity for flexibility, resourcefulness and creativity in creating improved conditions for all the inmates. There are many examples of this, including: developing a relationship with his cell warden; making Robben Island a place of study; risking smuggling out his writings in order to continue the work of the ANC; his discipline in personal well-being; and a continuous, uncompromising dedication to the South African struggle beyond his sphere. Surely most people would have succumbed to the constraints of the situation and become a dispirited victim. My belief is that he maintained an inner strength and faith through the small acts he performed. He also thus maintained the spirit to continue his work.

INSPIRED AND EMBODIED³

People discuss leadership and conduct intelligent workshops on this subject without feeling affected. They remain unchanged, maintaining the comfort of their known ways of operating. By maintaining these divisions, people speak of things without feeling them or noticing what happens in their bodies while they do. Inspired means imbued with spirit. Spirit is breath, life or force. William James (cited in Bly, 1988, p. 70), philosopher and father of American psychology, discussed how the spiritual and the sensual aspects of relating tend to part company. This is reflected in human behaviour and reflects a social mindset. It is generally thought preferable to keep the thinking about our spirituality apart from and not sullied by the sensual, the experiential.

To be inspired is to allow the breath, the idea, the meaning to penetrate into one's body. It is to take things into oneself, to question oneself and enable oneself, as substance, to be embodied. This is what it means to be inspired. Leadership has nothing to do with attending conferences or courses on leadership, unless one gets inspired. Leadership is not about what one knows or how much one knows; it is what one embodies and thereby expresses in oneself. Inspiration moves one to action. The spirit is driven to express itself.

I am not trying to invoke the deity in speaking of spirit. To illustrate my meaning, most of the dictionary definitions of 'inspired' point to the idea of being 'imbued with' and then motivated to act.⁴ It is a complex word to define; therefore most definitions are in terms of action examples:

- To affect, guide, or arouse by divine influence
- To fill with enlivening or exalting emotion: *hymns that inspire the congregation; an artist who was inspired by Impressionism*

¹ Theodore Zeldin, author of *An Intimate History of Humanity* (1994) is a well-known historian and advocate of conversational processes. These ideas come from a lecture of his that I attended at Sydney University, August 1998.

² Robben Island is the island a few kilometres from Cape Town where Mandela and other activists were incarcerated for nearly 25 years.

³ Capra (2002, p. 43) says "The experiential state is always 'embodied', that is, embedded in a particular field of sensation". He explains that the state of being embodied is when one's experience is coloured by a dominant sensation.

⁴ This dictionary reference is found on the web at <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=inspired>

- To stimulate to action, motivate: *a sales force that was inspired by the prospect of a bonus*
- To affect or touch: *The falling leaves inspired her with sadness*
- To draw forth, elicit or arouse: *a teacher who inspired admiration and respect*
- To be the cause or source of, bring about: *an invention that inspired many imitations*
- To draw in (air) by inhaling (archaic)
- To breathe on, to breathe life into (archaic).

Inspiration or inspired action reflects a personal and creative relationship with the world. It appears to come from an individual who is acting from an inner directedness. This grasp of the world reflects an imaginative action that is directed by a kind of dreaming. I would like now to explore and demystify this somewhat imaginative term in order to understand how it may relate to leadership.

DREAMING AND ITS DISCOUNTING

Peculiarly, dreams are both discounted and valued by society, almost concurrently. 'Interesting, but it's just a dream' is a frequently heard response to both those perplexing night-time events and ironically, to any ideas that seem a bit far-fetched. These ideas are then put aside, and other than a momentary discomfort faintly noticed, life continues as before. At the same time, night-time dreams are generally considered to contain wisdom, albeit just out of reach. To speak about people's dreams (night-time or vague ideas) is always tainted with uncertainty, with doubt and even a little fear. It is as though people believe in their wisdom but their revelation is inaccessible, and exploring the dreams could be seen as trespassing across an invisible boundary. Ideas that do not fit into the 'easy to understand' mould, are often discounted as useless or just 'dreamy'. The world of the dream is therefore just beyond the conscious grasp. It has a just-out-of-reach, unattainable nature.

The 'big dream' in South Africa was little spoken of until it was within arm's reach. It was somehow too far removed, perhaps too difficult for people to imagine its eventual appearance. The dream was therefore marginalised; coping, frustration and complaining were mainstream.¹

But I want to expand and broaden the notion of the dreaming. I will begin with the premise that the world is continually in creation, it is never complete but is forever evolving and taking shape. The world is dreaming itself into being.² Like a great and overwhelmingly enormous world consciousness, creation is in creation; even now, even at the next moment. Through each person's small, limited consciousnesses, they participate in, help to create and are affected by the unfolding dreaming that moves creation along.³ The unfolding dream can be seen to have its own self-perpetuating power.

World-famous process-oriented psychology practitioner Arnold Mindell has followed and developed Jung's ideas about the unconscious and the active imagination. Whereas depth psychology has a strict division between the conscious and the unconscious realms, Mindell (2000) sees these two realms as fluidly interconnecting, each feeding into the other. Normal day-to-day reality is the consensual reality. This is a known region of experience. It is a mutually understood and defined reality with clear edges and boundaries. Most daily operating is carefully maintained and lived within these known boundaries. People wear various hats to suit the different roles and situations in which they find themselves. In this arena, diversity and difference of opinions separate people from one another. However, just outside or over these edges, is the dreaming or the sentient reality. It can be imagined as pictures of states that are trying to happen. It includes the place from which night-time dreams come. It is a vast arena of possible consciousness. Referred to as 'lucid

¹ Mainstream is a way of describing well-understood or generalised ideas or behaviours. This is an opposite of marginal.

² This conceptualisation of the dreaming is resonant with Australian Aboriginal and American Indian spirituality and appears to be increasingly gaining more general western credibility.

³ This is my understanding of creation.

dreaming', it is unexpectedly accessible to the awake consciousness.

Between the known and the dreaming

The ongoing business of doing and being is the continual process of the sentient level or the dreaming, expressing itself in the consensual reality. This is like the surface level of human reality. The edge can be considered as an invisible boundary between 'consensual reality' and the dreaming. It defines the self, with the limits of self-concepts and capacities. Like a filter to perception, it protects and maintains habitual experience. It maintains consistency of identity. When one comes to an edge, one loses one's clear perceptions and one may get confused. Something else is there, but one cannot get a full awareness of it (Mindell, 1992). The skill of using the dreaming or the sentient reality is the capacity to appreciate what is happening below the surface, outside of the obvious events that are occurring. This vast realm also includes the magical, the connections between all things, the irrational experiences that one would usually ignore, the unconscious dream-like movements, the accidents and slips of the tongue. How does one access this dream state and yet still be awake and conscious?

Just as the night-time dream is a report of a deep process that is occurring, body sensations or momentary thoughts that seem to be unexplained and unpredictable are part of the dreaming process (Mindell 1993, p. 21). The theoretical basis for the ideas of process-oriented psychology, also called dreambody work, is that by being attentive to the experience, and in particular, the body sensations within experience, and allowing experience to direct the action of living, people recover their wholeness and become 'the agent of personal growth' (Goodbread, 1987, p. 13). It sounds quite straightforward. However, whilst people have experience, consciousness is not tuned into the more subtle body sensations, momentary doubts or fleeting thoughts that are aspects of experience. These are not quite in the conscious world of experience; rather, they exist on the edges of what is generally known and consensually agreed.¹

In a breakthrough book on leadership by Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer and Flowers, called *Presence*, the authors go to great lengths to show how habitual thoughts tend to shape people's basic experiences, beliefs and sense of self (Senge et al., 2004). They argue that it requires the very active and conscious processes of shifting and stopping the usual or everyday awareness in order for the consciousness to penetrate into our deeper experience. Their idea of deeper experience is what I refer to as the dreaming. Inevitably, people avoid the discomfort that results from this realm of experience by careful analysis and organisation. As Margaret Wheatley, accomplished organisational author describes: "We take the complexity of human life and organise it away. It is not part of the story we want to believe" (Wheatley, 1998, p. 343). She too is referring to the relative ease of maintaining the self in the realm of habitual experience, without deeper personal reflection and without inviting the dreaming into personal experience. However, I wish to consider how the dreaming or deeper experience manifests itself in order to appreciate how it can be accessible.

CONSIDERING THE DREAMING

The dreaming becomes all that which exists below or just before or outside of our state of clear-minded consciousness (Mindell 1998). There are hints of its presence from:

- The quality of consciousness remembered from sleep
- That which makes its presence felt by a momentary glance, a thought, a doubt
- That which people have an intuition about, but not a fully formed conceptualisation
- A sensing, an unformed idea
- An uncomfortable feeling without knowing the reason why
- Something outside of conscious perception realms

¹ I use the word 'world' in relation to the idea that different levels of reality are like many parallel worlds. The majority of time, we operate in a unitary world of consensual reality that serves the business of doing and coexisting. But there are other worlds of undercurrents, emotions and then more spiritual beings that require a conscious effort to access.

- Ideas preceded by uncertain words like 'just' or 'only' as people shy away from them
- Those moments when people step outside the busy-ness and the 'doing' and step into a receptive mode.

These hints fleetingly emerge and then the world seems to move on. Their presence assumes a world that is emerging, continuously in creation. Being in touch with this level of consciousness places one in a position to respond to what is arising. Brian Arthur, a writer and noted economist of the Santa Fe Institute, says in an interview with Scharmer, colleague of Senge: "Every profound innovation is based on an inward-bound journey, on going to a deeper place where knowing comes to the surface"¹. Many current corporate thinkers, such as Block (1998) and Heifetz (2002), debate similar ideas.

Greenleaf speaks of the future as something that is being created at every moment. It is not something that is simply 'out there' but can be brought into the present through the capacity to be conscious of what is unfolding in the moment (Greenleaf, 1998, p. 19). He says that each person has this capacity but it takes a particular stance of intention and the courage to enable it.

Jaworski, another author on leadership and colleague of Senge, expresses the creative impulse beautifully by saying, "We participate in creating the future, not by trying to impose our will on it, but by deepening our collective understanding of what wants to emerge in the world, and then having the courage to do what is required" Jaworski (1998, p. 266). I believe that he is referring to the courage to consider and name what is subtly or faintly noticed; things that are outside the mainstream; that which seems to go against the tide of opinion. The very act of naming brings the unspeakable into a form that can now be addressed. I would like to give an example of collective understanding or active dream work from a recent experience that I had with an organisation.

Case example of work with dreaming

A group of social facilitators had been working together for many months but the members had recently become increasingly aware of some discomfort within the group. This was said to be affecting their capacity to move forward on the various projects and commitments they had to complete. I was invited to work with them. I was told that something was holding the group back but no one could isolate an actual problem, yet the group was unproductive and this had led to great dissatisfaction and some anger. A few hours was set aside to work for a facilitated group process.

The group sat around a large board table. After initial introductions, I explained and created the conditions for a dialogue or group process where the invitation was made to simply mention feelings and thoughts that emerged. These were feelings that were in response to what others said or even random thoughts and feelings that arose. Debate, discussion or argument was discouraged. The intention was not to be right or wrong about the issues, but to identify the issues.

Ideas and feelings were aired and not analysed. People spoke about their own feelings without having to justify their feelings. Frequently, uncomfortable feelings about their colleagues arose. When judgements did arise, these were noticed by naming them as judgements. They could then be put aside. Hours were spent noticing and naming the many feelings. This dialogue became a dreaming space; without justification or explanations, feelings could be told and be heard.

Towards the end of the time together, the feeling present in the group was described as sobering. A space was created in the group that was somehow clearer. People said that in the conscious noticing of each individual, something quite different had been given the opportunity to emerge. From that sentient place, a new

¹ Brian Arthur is an innovative thinker who has had a profound influence on the thinking and development of ideas of Senge, who frequently references Arthur's ideas. Scharmer is a thinker and writer whose interests and influences on his thinking on organisational change are extremely similar to my own, including Francisco Varela and Goethe through Bortoft (1996). It may appear that I have taken many ideas from him and yet, this is a case of synchronicity and serendipity. Scharmer's Arthur was one of Scharmer's first interviewees in his project interviewing leaders on their ideas on leadership and change. These make fascinating reading and are available on www.dialogonleadership.org.

dreaming together into the future began. It appeared to be considerate and conscious of what was needed by each of the participants as well as by the group. Suggestions for the future were shared. The process was delicate, respectful and cohesive. After our session, the participants engaged in business planning; they later reported an ease of operation due to a different awareness. The shared dreaming appeared to have helped ease tensions and make ready a path ahead or a readiness to move forward together. It is almost impossible to name the exact ingredients of what had changed or taken place.

CREATION

Every statement made, every thought that is thought, every action taken, is a reflection of an underlying process or the *dreaming*. This creative process is continuously taking place, seemingly in spite of people's potential blocking. Scientist John Wheeler, currently Professor Emeritus of Princeton University in New Jersey, says that the universe is constantly in a process of looking at itself, constantly in a process of creating itself but never able to fully know itself (cited in Barrow et al., 2004). This reminds me of the ancient Sufi hadith (words of God) that says: *I was a hidden treasure and I longed to be known, so I created the world that I may be known.*¹

These ideas, almost identical, from a western scientist and from a mystic, point to the process of creation as a kind of continuous longing or loving. They speak of the hidden and then the revealed and the journey between the two as a process of longing. The inner world has a longing to be known.² The inner world speaks in a different language – often a whisper, an allusion, a hint, a signal, a dream. It is often accompanied by a slight discomfort. Perhaps that discomfort acts as a wake-up call; perhaps that is a way of alerting people to its presence. Mostly, these vague sensations and thoughts are ignored and thus the accustomed states of consciousness and ways of operating and understanding continue. The cost is that the habitual modes of functioning in the world are maintained and change is resisted, for it is not understood.

DREAMING AND CREATION

If thoughts are like the tip of the iceberg, where the iceberg itself is the dreaming, then these thoughts can be considered as pointers or indicators of what is trying to express itself or come through into consciousness.³ Bly (1988, p. 48) argues that perceptions are reflectors of their origin. Holding the theory that the universe is in a constant state of creating itself, that which is noticed is simply a reflection of what is trying to come into expression through a deeper consciousness. My hypothesis is that until people notice and invite their conscious thoughts to emerge as indicators, they keep themselves in the world of the habitual or the sameness, with fixed beliefs and strong ideas about matters. This is the consensual reality, the place of diversity. People can assert all the principles and well-versed ideas about leadership but remain blind to what is lurking below, to what the deeper experience may actually be saying. These may include the contradictions, the doubts, the fears, and other internal blocks that we sustain and that prevent us from embracing our more creative capacities.

Ken Wilber (cited in Moss 1998, p. 2) insists that “until the full spectrum of knowing is acknowledged, the full spectrum of being – the comprehensive world view - will likewise remain hidden”. Inspirational leadership is about finding the means of people expressing the fullness of their humanity through drawing on all aspects of the knowing and dreaming realms.

CONCLUSIONS

¹ These words come through the mystic Ibnul Arabi, author of the *Fusus al Hikam*, which is an esoteric commentary on the Koran. I have known them for over thirty years and cannot remember where I first saw them. They are profound words that require great contemplation to appreciate their nuances and depth.

² Whilst one may assert an inner world and an outer world, this is more a symbolic reference to two points along a spectrum of consciousness.

³ These ideas come from notes taken at a workshop with Mindell, Byron Bay, 1998. This idea is frequently discussed by modern physicists who are in the forefront of acknowledging the possibilities of awareness to operate in a far larger field than usually realised.

In its original state, the soul was feathered all over. So now it is all in a state of ferment and throbbing; in fact the soul of a man who is beginning to grow feathers has the same sensations of pricking and irritation and itching as children feel in their gums when they are just beginning to cut their teeth.

Plato, from Phaedrus (cited in Moss 1998, p. 1)

I began this article speaking about a big leader and a big dream; I end on a somewhat humbler note. By bringing the understanding of leadership out of the general and into the particular of each person's experience, people can come face to face with themselves. It takes courage to pay attention, to allow oneself to dream into the unfamiliar, to feel the doubts and the fears and to respect their presence too. I believe that significant change requires imagination, perseverance, dialogue, deep caring and a willingness to change on the part of millions of people. That is what happened in South Africa.

I believe that another such revolution is currently transpiring worldwide, as growing numbers of people are increasingly willing to open themselves to their creative potential and grapple with the discomfort that it carries. How people are inspired into action is a reflection of their leadership dreaming.

My wish is that with time and further research and reflection, the combination of leadership and dreaming will become a partnership. Together they foster understanding and a deepening awareness of the potential of a person and what they could best be doing. Leadership, without the dreaming, stagnates in the past. The partnership of leadership and dreaming can provide a way of stepping consciously into the present and improving the future.

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