

**The First and Second of Five Pre-Course Readings  
for the Leadership Course titled  
“Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An  
Ontological / Phenomenological Model”**

**Reading 1: The Transformational Experiences That Leave Ordinary  
People *Being* Leaders**

Selected quotes from “Crucibles of Leadership” by Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas  
with comments (see below)

**Reading 2: “Education as Stretching the Mind”**

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**Assignment: Leadership Project, Part I**

## Abstract

This document (compiled by Erhard, Jensen, Granger, and Echeverria) contains **the first and second of five pre-course reading assignments** and the **Leadership Project Assignment, Part I** for the leadership course: "Being A Leader and The Effective Exercise Of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model" developed by Erhard, Jensen, Zaffron, and Granger.

The course was first developed by the authors at the University of Rochester Simon School of Business, NY, USA, from 2004 to 2008, working each year with 70 to 115 undergraduates, graduate students, administrators, alumni, business executives and consultants, and faculty from various academic institutions. The course was taught in the curriculum at the US Air Force Academy from 2008 to 2011 and in 2014 and 2015 (a version of the course was taught in 2012 and 2013); at Erasmus Academie Rotterdam, Netherlands, in June 2009 (a version of which was taught at the Erasmus University Law School from 2009 and 2010); at Texas A&M University Mays School of Business, USA, in June 2010; in India under the auspices of the IC Centre for Governance and MW Corporation in November 2010; at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College, USA, in June 2012; at University of British Columbia's entrepreneurship@UBC, Canada, in June 2013; at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, in July 2014; and held at the Zayed University Convention Center in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in January 2015. Courses offered for the benefit of the Erhard-Jensen Ontological / Phenomenological Initiative include: Whistler, B.C. Canada, in October 2012; Cancun, Mexico, in October 2013; and Bermuda in November 2014.

In 2010 we taught a program at the US Air Force Academy to train 41 scholars (from various academic institutions in Europe and North America) in delivering the course (all of whom had previously taken the course) under the sponsorship of the Kauffman Foundation, the Gruter Institute and the Air Force Academy and in July 2013, August 2014, and July 2015 we taught the "Creating Course Leaders Workshop" in Toronto, Canada, to train a total of 92 scholars from around the world, 22 of which are currently teaching the course in their universities or colleges. We have also taught the course to a group of over 200 consultants from more than 60 firms who now offer the course to their clients.

The intention of the course is to leave participants actually being leaders and exercising leadership effectively as their natural self-expression, and for the course to contribute to the development of a new science of leadership. The course is founded on an ontological/phenomenological model of human nature and the way in which human beings function.

Located in this document:

The first of the two pre-course reading assignments in this document contains quotes selected (with permissions) from Warren Bennis & Robert Thomas, “Crucibles of Leadership” (2002).

The second of the two pre-course reading assignments in this document is “Education as Stretching the Mind” by Jamshed Bharucha (2008).

Part I of your Leadership Project Assignment.

The third, fourth, and fifth of the five pre-course reading assignments are listed below. You will receive them in separate document and can also locate them at the URLs listed below :

“Integrity: Without It Nothing Works” (an interview that serves as an introductory summary of our new model of integrity) <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1511274>

“Integrity: A Positive Model that Incorporates the Normative Phenomena of Morality, Ethics and Legality - Abridged” <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1542759>

“Introductory Reading For the Course: Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model” and Part II of your Leadership Project Assignment <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1585976>

## **Reading 1: The Transformational Experiences That Leave Ordinary People *Being* Leaders**

### Reading 1.A: Selected Quotations from “Crucibles of Leadership” by Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas

Compiled by and with comments by Erhard, Jensen, Granger and Echeverria

In the following excerpts from the Harvard Business Review article “Crucibles of Leadership” by Warren Bennis<sup>3</sup> and Robert Thomas,<sup>4</sup> for each of the leaders studied you will see that they all shared a common access to becoming a leader. This common access for each of the leaders was personal experiences that the authors named “crucibles”.

As Bennis and Thomas point out, it is not the crucible experience itself that leaves one being a leader; rather it is the way in which a crucible experience is dealt with that results in a *transformational experience* that leaves one being a leader. By *transformational experience*, we mean an experience that alters one’s relation to life, others, and oneself that are “the sources of their distinctive leadership abilities”.

In this course, through the use of opportunities for such *transformational experiences* (which while personally challenging do not involve the trauma or pain of a crucible), you will have the opportunity to discover for yourself what the great leaders studied by Bennis and Thomas discovered for themselves in the process of dealing with their personal crucibles.

As we said, we do not employ crucibles to provide the opportunity for the transformational experiences that left the people Bennis and Thomas examined as great leaders. However, we do want to be clear that a part of what is necessary to realize the promise of the course is your producing certain transformational experiences for yourself. And, while we will provide you with opportunities to do so, you must be willing to do so, in fact committed to doing so.

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<sup>3</sup> Warren Bennis, pioneer in the field of leadership, was University Professor and Distinguished Professor of Business Administration and Founding Chairman of The Leadership Institute, University of Southern California.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Thomas, visiting professor of leadership and transformational change, is Executive Director of the Accenture Institute for High Performance and Chair of the advisory panel for the Perlmutter Institute for Global Leadership at Brandeis University.

The following indented material is all direct quotes from “Crucibles of Leadership” by Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2002 (from the HBR At Large Version). (emphasis added).

In interviewing more than 40 top leaders in business and the public sector over the past three years, we were surprised to find that all of them – young and old – were able to point to intense, often traumatic, always unplanned experiences that had transformed them and had become the sources of their distinctive leadership abilities.

We came to call the experiences that shape leaders “crucibles” ... A crucible is, by definition, a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity.

For the leaders we interviewed, the crucible experience was a trial and a test, a point of deep self-reflection that forced them to question who they were [in our terminology, “the way they wound-up-being”] and what mattered to them [that is, mattered as a ‘created committed to’ rather than as a ‘wound up committed to’]. It required them to examine their values, question their assumptions, ... And, invariably, they emerged from the crucible stronger and more sure of themselves and their purpose – changed in some fundamental way. (p. 3)

Everyone is tested by life, but only a few extract strength and wisdom from their most trying experiences. [It isn’t what happens to a person during a crucible event, rather it is the way in which that person deals with what happens that makes it transformative.] (p. 2)

Crucibles force leaders into deep self-reflection ... (p. 1)

As we see from the excerpts from the article “Crucibles of Leadership” by Bennis and Thomas, “crucibles” when dealt with authentically result in the *transformations that are the genesis (source) of being a leader*. In the course you will be provided with opportunities to authentically generate for yourself the transformations required to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively as your natural self-expression (again, in the course without the pain of a crucible event).

As Bennis and Thomas point out, these transformations require you to identify and question what you have been taking for granted – that is, your values, what really matters to you, who you know yourself to be, and what you believe or assume to be true about yourself, others, and the world. In short, this is creating a transformation for yourself that takes you well beyond “the way you wound up being”, and leaves you in a new world.

Opening up for yourself a world in which being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership becomes your natural self-expression is in a sense what this course is all about.

In addition to opening up this world of being a leader, Bennis and Thomas also point out: “In the extreme, this capacity for reinvention comes to resemble eternal youth – a kind of vigor, openness, and an enduring capacity for wonder that is the antithesis of stereotyped old age.” (Bennis and Thomas, p. 6)

## Reading 2: “Education as Stretching the Mind”

by Jamshed Barucha

With comments by Erhard, Jensen and Granger

Responding to the question, “What have you changed your mind about?”, then Professor Jamshed Bharucha responded with the following profound insight into the importance of one’s worldview and frames of reference as cognitive lenses.

### Education as Stretching the Mind

Jamshed Bharucha  
President, The Cooper Union

Source: Edge, World Question Center 2008: What Have You Changed Your Mind About?

[http://www.edge.org/q2008/q08\\_16.html#bharucha](http://www.edge.org/q2008/q08_16.html#bharucha)

I used to believe that a paramount purpose of a liberal education was threefold:

1) Stretch your mind, reach beyond your preconceptions; learn to think of things in ways you have never thought before. 2) Acquire tools with which to critically examine and evaluate new ideas, including your own cherished ones. 3) Settle eventually on a framework or set of frameworks that organize what you know and believe and that guide your life as an individual and a leader.

I still believe #1 and #2. I have changed my mind about #3. I now believe in a new version of #3, which replaces the above with the following:

a) Learn new frameworks, and be guided by them.

b) *But* never get so comfortable as to believe that your frameworks are the final word, recognizing the strong psychological tendencies that favor sticking to your worldview. Learn to keep stretching your mind, keep stepping outside your comfort zone, keep venturing beyond the familiar, keep trying to put yourself in the shoes of others whose frameworks or cultures are alien to you, and have an open mind to different ways of parsing the world. Before you critique a new idea, or another culture, master it to the point at which its proponents or members recognize that you get it.

Settling into a framework is easy. The brain is built to perceive the world through structured lenses — cognitive scaffolds on which we hang our knowledge and belief systems.

Stretching your mind is hard. Once we've settled on a worldview that suits us, we tend to hold on. New information is bent to fit, information that doesn't fit is discounted, and new views are resisted.

By 'framework' I mean any one of a range of conceptual or belief systems — either explicitly articulated or implicitly followed. These include narratives, paradigms, theories, models, schemas, frames, scripts, stereotypes, and categories; they include philosophies of life, ideologies, moral systems, ethical codes, worldviews, and political, religious or cultural affiliations. These are all systems that organize human cognition and behavior by parsing, integrating, simplifying or packaging knowledge or belief. They tend to be built on loose configurations of seemingly core features, patterns, beliefs, commitments, preferences or attitudes that have a foundational and unifying quality in one's mind or in the collective behavior of a community. When they involve the perception of people (including oneself), they foster a sense of affiliation that may trump essential features or beliefs.

What changed my mind was the overwhelming evidence of biases in favor of perpetuating prior worldviews. The brain maps information onto a small set of organizing structures, which serve as cognitive lenses, skewing how we process or seek new information. These structures drive a range of phenomena, including the perception of coherent patterns (sometimes where none exists), the perception of causality (sometimes where none exists), and the perception of people in stereotyped ways.

Another family of perceptual biases stems from our being social animals (even scientists!), susceptible to the dynamics of in-group versus out-group affiliation. A well known bias of group membership is the over-attribution effect, according to which we tend to explain the behavior of people from other groups in dispositional terms ("that's just the way they are"), but our own behavior in much more complex ways, including a greater consideration of the circumstances. Group attributions are also asymmetrical with respect to good versus bad behavior. For groups that you like, including your own, positive behaviors reflect inherent traits ("we're basically good people") and negative behaviors are either blamed on circumstances ("I was under a lot of pressure") or discounted ("mistakes were made"). In contrast, for groups that you dislike, negative behaviors reflect inherent traits ("they can't be trusted") and positive behaviors reflect exceptions ("he's different from the rest"). Related to attribution biases is the tendency (perhaps based on having more experience with your own group) to believe that individuals within another group are similar to each other ("they're all alike"), whereas your own group contains a spectrum of different individuals (including "a few bad apples"). When two groups accept bedrock commitments that are fundamentally opposed, the result is conflict — or war.

Fortunately, the brain has other systems that allow us to counteract these tendencies to some extent. This requires conscious effort, the application of critical reasoning tools, and practice. The plasticity of the brain permits change - within limits.

To assess genuine understanding of an idea one is inclined to resist, I propose a version of Turing's Test tailored for this purpose: You understand something you are inclined to resist only if you can fool its proponents into thinking you get it. Few critics can pass this test. I would also propose a cross-cultural Turing Test for would-be cultural critics (a Golden Rule of cross-group understanding): before critiquing a culture or aspect thereof, you should be able to navigate

seamlessly within that culture as judged by members of that group.

By rejecting #3, you give up certainty. Certainty feels good and is a powerful force in leadership. The challenge, as Bertrand Russell puts it in *The History of Western Philosophy*, is "To teach how to live without certainty, and yet without being paralyzed by hesitation".

### **Afterword**

Please think carefully about what Professor Bharucha has said. If you do, during the course you will be well prepared when we deal with the enormous importance of worldview and frames of reference as they relate to being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership.



## Leadership Project Assignment, Part I

By engaging with what is presented in the course in light of (seeing its fit with) a Leadership Project of your own, you will make an important difference in what you get out of participating in the course. (Remember that the course starts with the Pre-Course Reading Assignments.)

For use in the course, the Leadership Project you select or create should not be a long-term, or highly involved or demanding project. The project you select or create will be one you can without a lot of time and effort get your arms around and your hands on the levers and dials of, and make some real progress with or even complete during the eight days of the course. While your project will be relatively simple, it is important that you select a project with a future to be realized that is worthy of yourself.

There are two parts to the Leadership Project assignment that you will be asked to complete before the first day of the course, Friday, February 5, 2016. In Part I of the assignment you select or create a Leadership Project (see Part I below). In Part II of the assignment, after having read all five Pre-Course Reading Assignments, you are to respond to a series of questions (found at the end of Pre-Course Reading Assignment #5). In addition, you will receive further assignments related to your Leadership Project during the classroom part of the course.

For the purpose of this assignment, please use the following definition for leadership: *the realization of a future that wasn't going to happen anyhow, which future fulfills or contributes to fulfilling the concerns\* of the relevant parties.*

\*Concern: A matter of fundamental interest or importance. As it is used here, *concern* does not mean something you are worried about or troubled by.

### Part I: Selecting or Creating a Leadership Project

Right now look around you and in your life for near at-hand situations in which a concern of yours, or a concern of others, or a concern that you and others share is not being fulfilled, and is unlikely to be fulfilled without an exercise of leadership. For this exercise select or create a project that requires you to exercise leadership not only with yourself but with at least one other person. An acceptable Leadership Project could be the fulfillment of (or a contribution to the fulfillment of) a concern that involves your family or friends, or that involves this or that area of life, or a concern to be fulfilled related to your professional or business life.

Remember, for your Leadership Project the definition of *leadership* is: the realization of a future that wasn't going to happen anyhow, which future fulfills or contributes to fulfilling the concerns of the relevant parties. (A *concern* is a matter of fundamental interest or importance to someone or some group of people.)

### Criteria for selecting your project

- Your leadership project must be a future to be fulfilled that you have some sense is fulfillable but you don't already know how to fulfill. (If you already know how to fulfill it, it would only require competent management.)

- Your leadership project must be something bigger than yourself – something beyond your personal concerns for yourself. In choosing your project don't be limited or constrained by the current *conditions* (the so-called 'facts of the matter', or 'the way things are'). In fact, it is likely that your Leadership Project will intervene in the current *conditions*.
- Your leadership project must involve at least one other person – it will require your leadership but not necessarily you taking all the actions.
- Each course participant will have their own Leadership Project.
- Finally, you will have a lot more fun with this if to some degree the realization of the future to be realized with your project moves, touches and inspires you.

### **Crafting Your Leadership Project:**

Please respond to the following items below and bring your responses with you to Day 1 of the Course:

1. Identify a fundamental concern.
2. Name your project – give it a handle (something that will call your project to mind).
3. What is the future that your project will create? (A future *that wasn't going to happen anyhow, which future fulfills or contributes to fulfilling the concerns of the relevant parties.*)
4. Identify the *relevant parties* in the future your project will create.

*The relevant parties include:*

- (1) *those whose concerns will be fulfilled or contributed to being fulfilled by your project;*
  - (2) *those whose concerns will be damaged or limited by your project; and*
  - (3) *those who will have to act to realize the future your project will create.*
5. Look to see if the future your project will create fulfills, or contributes to fulfilling, a concern\* of the relevant parties.

\*Concern: A matter of fundamental interest or importance. As it is used here, *concern* does not mean something you are worried about or troubled by.