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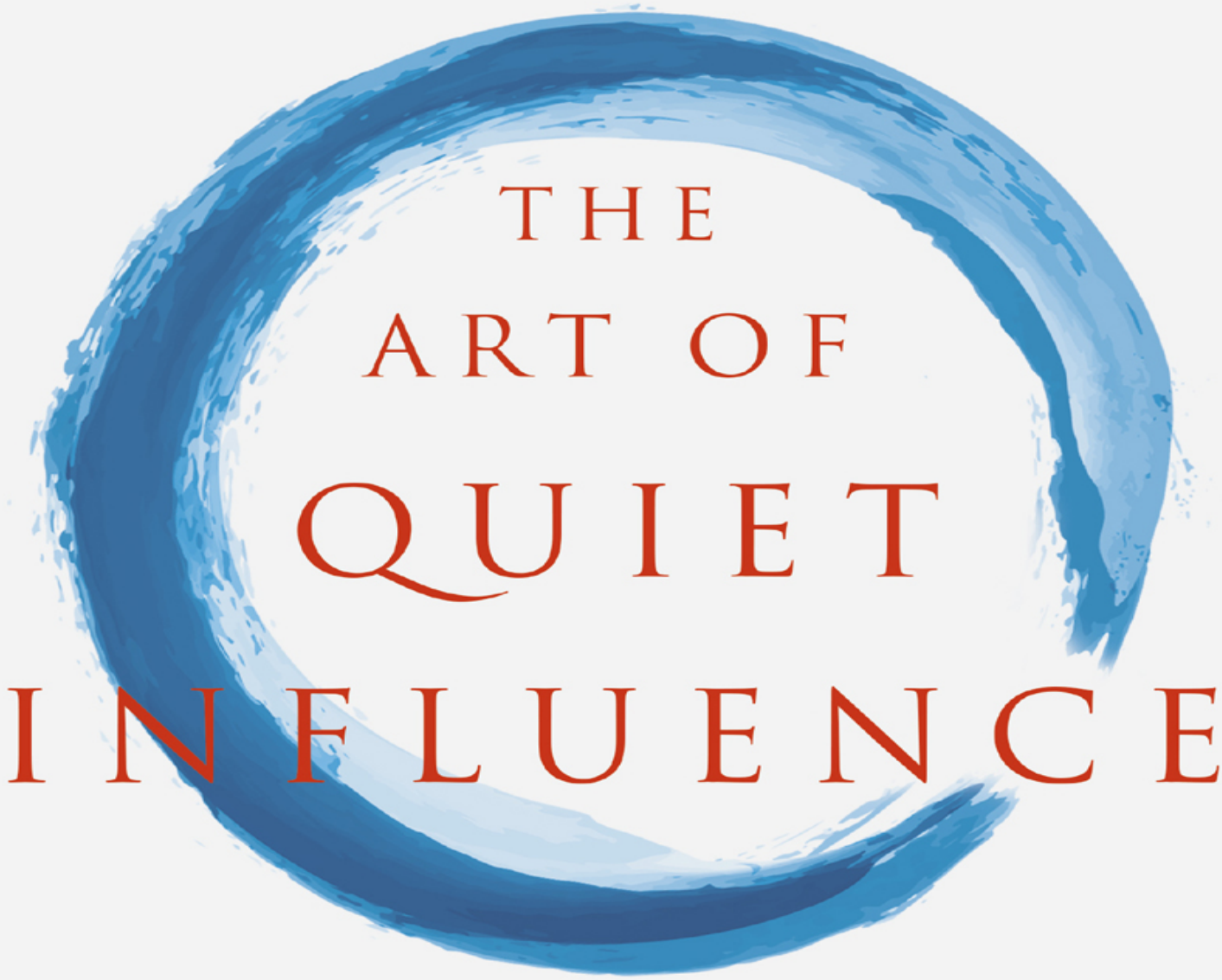
JOCELYN DAVIS



THE ART OF QUIET INFLUENCE

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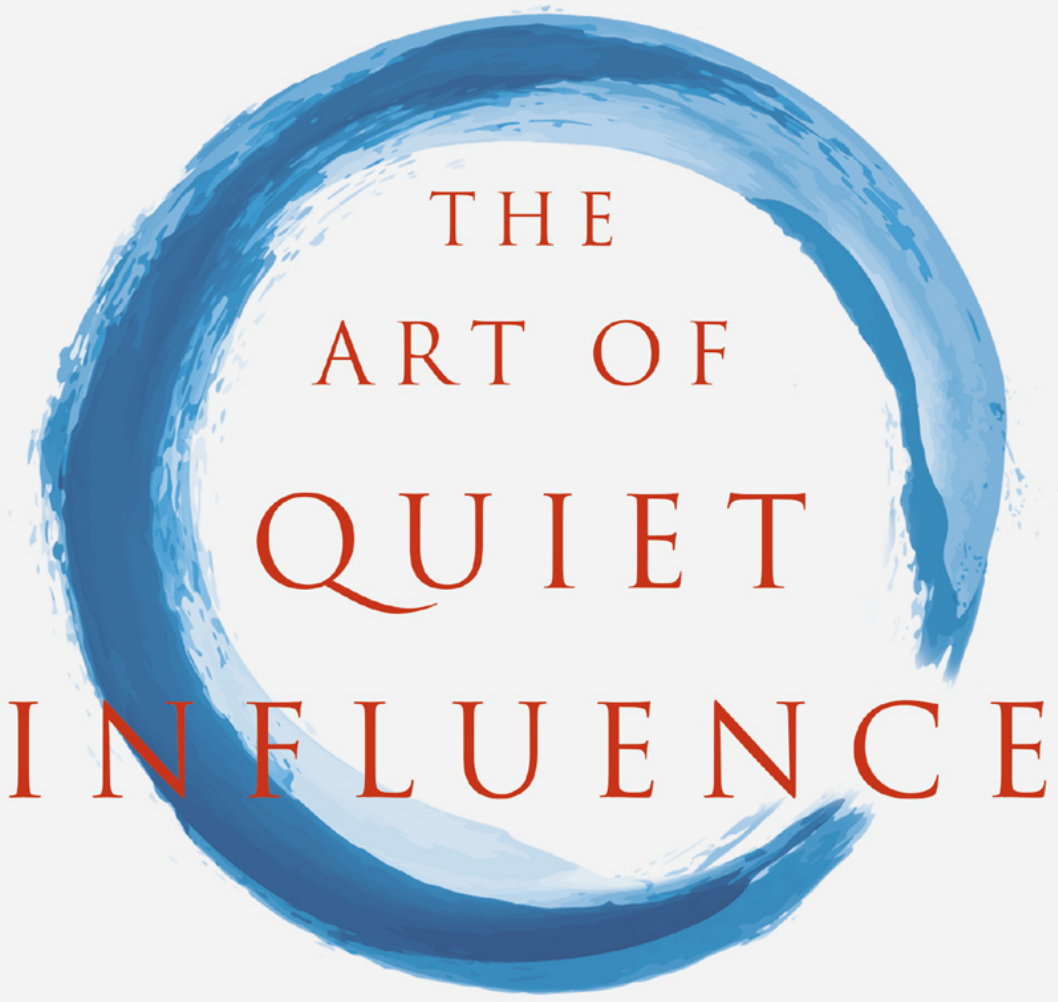

TIMELESS WISDOM FOR LEADING WITHOUT

AUTHORITY

THE ART OF QUIET INFLUENCE

Timeless Wisdom for Leading without Authority

Confucius ~ Rumi ~ Gandhi ~ the Buddha
Taoists ~ Zen Masters
and more

by
JOCELYN DAVIS

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Praise for
THE ART OF QUIET INFLUENCE

"Drawing heavily on the wisdom of sages from the past, Jocelyn Davis's terrific book boldly asserts that a person cannot gain influence over someone by using position, authority, or power to coerce. These techniques may get you leverage and control, but never influence. In contrast, genuine influence must be earned and won. It is through the quiet strength of caring, trusting, and affirming an individual that this is truly accomplished. A tremendous and relevant read!"

—Stephen M. R. Covey, *New York Times* and #1 *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *The Speed of Trust*

"Jocelyn Davis riveted my attention with her first sentence: 'Command authority is a poor basis for life.' I found it impossible to put down this captivating and inspirational book, full of stories, models, and wisdom of some of the greatest minds of Eastern philosophy. If you're open to a message full of hope, acceptance, and influence, spend a few hours with this gift to the world of insightful, true leadership—the ability to lead without authority."

—Doug Kirkpatrick, US Partner, NuFocus Strategic Group; author, *From Hierarchy to High-Performance* and *Beyond Empowerment: The Age of the Self-Managed Organization*

"Blends the timeless wisdom of Eastern sages with contemporary research, stories, and examples, providing both the inspiration and the how-to. A book for anyone who needs to lead without authority—that is, everyone!"

—Rasmus Hougaard, Founder, Potential Project; author, *The Mind of the Leader*

"*Command and control is dead!* Which raises the question, *What's next?* What's next is for you to utilize influence as a means of creating optimum performance. How can you make this challenging

transition? Let this book be your guide. Note the stories, research, tool kit of more than 75 tactics, plus the wisdom offered by sages such as Rumi, Gandhi, and Confucius. All this offered in the friendly writing style of an established author makes *The Art of Quiet Influence* a sure winner."

—Richard Whiteley, author, *Love the Work You're With* and *The Corporate Shaman*

"In *The Art of Quiet Influence,* Davis uses the power of stories both old and new to illustrate the theory of mindfulness and servant leadership, providing a mind-expanding yet down-to-earth guide for leaders, sales professionals, and influencers of all stripes."

—Craig Wortmann, Founder and Executive Director, Kellogg Sales Institute, Kellogg School of Management; CEO, Sales Engine Inc.; author, *What's Your Story?*

"Filled with memorable examples and stories, *The Art of Quiet Influence* is a deeply personal yet practical book that offers a roadmap to more mindful, compassionate, and effective leadership. Not only that, Davis does a great job of demystifying Eastern philosophy and showing its relevance to today's global business world."

—Karen Blal, CIPD Regional Director Asia

"This is an exceptionally thoughtful and creative book. I love the integration of ancient Eastern thought with modern business practice and situations. The result is a useful and resonant guide to leading in a more conscious, inclusive, and generative way."

—Court Chilton, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan Leadership Center

"Davis does a masterful job of seeing connections between the insights of the ancients, modern thinking about leadership, and the daily practice of leadership. Her reading of Eastern sages is wise, humane, and illuminating. Her concise exposition and good eye for a significant fable have resulted in a book that will give you much to chew on for years. Packed with powerful stories and teachings, this is 12 whole courses on leadership in a single book."

—Krishnan Venkatesh, Senior Faculty, St. John's College; author, *Do You Know Who You Are? Reading the Buddha's Discourses*

"I found the topic and sage stories so impactful and so vividly expressed that I immediately began to see the implications and applications for myself and others. Be prepared to be inspired and moved to change as I was. A must-read for future leaders."

—Cynthia Stuckey, Head of Sales Effectiveness Practice, Korn Ferry

"Unleashing the power of quiet influence is a provocative recasting of individual and organizational behavior. On the heels of *The Greats on Leadership,* Jocelyn Davis once again elegantly weaves diverse cultural perspectives into practical action for improving your influence muscle. Leaders cannot afford to miss this book."

—Brian J. Miller, VP Talent, Development & Inclusion, Gilead Sciences

"Digitization, globalization, generational shifts: Western ways of managing these forces are insufficient, and there is no reverting to command-and-control as a means of solving them. In her latest, Davis looks out to the East and back to the past to explore a mind-set, skill set, and 12 behaviors that are indispensable to every leader. Through contemporary examples and ancient texts, she reveals how human networks that endure on the strength of influence are structures built not only to withstand but to thrive in the 21st century."

—Gregory LeStage, Dean, McKinsey Academy at McKinsey & Co.

"Jocelyn Davis's excellent book connects ancient wisdom with current research and practice, making the power of quiet influence, an intrinsically counterintuitive concept, accessible and actionable. The book is a trifecta: enjoyable, engaging, empowering."

—John Humphrey, Co-founder, The Forum Corporation; Chair and CEO, Humphrey Companies; Chair, Lifespan Research

Foundation

"Combining trust, respect, caring, and demand for achievement in a harmonious way, *The Art of Quiet Influence* powerfully influences the reader to go beyond and accomplish greater performance."

—Wesley Luo, VP/COO, Honeywell Building Technologies

"For those who aspire to a higher form of influence, Davis presents a fresh perspective to getting things done without positional authority. Harnessing teachings from 12 Eastern sages, this book lends a fascinating look past the myth of authority at how to exert uncommon influence through calmly aligning words, tone, and body language. These insights and tactics are relevant in and outside of business, on and off the court, and can help us all to raise our game."

—Jessica Peña-Castillo, SVP Talent Development Solutions, Lee Hecht Harrison

"After reading *The Greats on Leadership* I was eager to dive into Davis's latest, *The Art of Quiet Influence.* Not only is it full of practical, hands-on advice and ideas, but it is written in a way that engages and, dare I say, influences the reader. If you need to work up, down, and across organizations this book is for you. You'll find the 12 quiet influence practices a powerful addition to your tool kit, helping you get things done in the short term while building trust-based relationships for the long term."

—Sylvia Celentano, VP Client Solutions, DoubleDigit Sales

"With a unique focus on the classic wisdom of Japan, China, and India, *The Art of Quiet Influence* stands out among leadership books. A valuable guide to business and life."

—Jiro Atsuta, President, Forum Japan

"An insightful new take on the perennial topic of building and sustaining influence. The stories from The Forum Corporation that run throughout make the concepts practical, engaging, and relatable. This is a book anyone can put to immediate use."

—Bob Stringer, author, *Motivation and Organizational Climate* and *Culture.com: How the Best Startups Make It Happen*

"The most effective leadership comes not with imperial commands, but getting things done, and done successfully, without banging your fist on the desk or your head against the wall. This is a book that lays out a more cooperative management style, and it relies on what some call 'the wisdom of the East.' But if you're looking for soft, 'spiritual' stuff, look elsewhere. This is a tough-minded book: clearly, invitingly written, and replete with instructive stories. Yes, a good bit of it might seem counterintuitive. But that's the point, and only adds to its value."

—John Agresto, author, *Rediscovering America* and *Mugged by Reality: The Liberation of Iraq and the Failure of Good Intentions*

For my tutors
in the St. John's College Program in Eastern
Classics—Cary, John, Julie, Krishnan, Michael,
and Patricia—with grateful admiration

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The teacher, if indeed wise,
does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom,
but leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

Of the best leader, when his work is done,
the people all say: “We did it ourselves.”

LAOZI

In a gentle way, you can shake the world.

GANDHI

Overview

Influence without Authority

Command authority is a poor basis for life. Whether you're atop a corporate jungle gym, reaching for the next rung, or off playing in the sandbox, your long-term professional and personal success is a matter of influence, not dominance.

Some consider *influence* synonymous with *persuasion,* but in this book, influence is the art of getting things done without coercion. More precisely, it's the ability to engage and guide others in collaborative work without relying on positional authority. To learn how to build and use influence, we'll be looking to a unique collection of teachers: twelve ancient sages of the East—from Confucius to the Buddha to Gandhi—plus an assembly of present-day experts from around the world.

Influence is strength without force, requiring neither title nor resources. When exercised at advanced levels, it is both quiet and powerful. A master speaks softly, walks lightly, and has no need of a big stick, yet collective success hinges on the master's words and deeds, and when the master's work is done (says the sage Laozi) the people all say, "We did it ourselves."

What does quiet influence look like in practice? Here's an example.

Sensei with a Racket

Björn Borg, tennis champion of the 1970s and '80s, was facing off against the up-and-coming John McEnroe. It was the summer of 1979 (writes Gerald Marzorati for the *New York Times Magazine*) and the two were meeting for the third time, in an indoor tournament in New Orleans. They were young: Borg was 22, McEnroe, 20. McEnroe,

already infamous for his on-court tantrums, was acting true to form, flinging his racket and abusing the officials. “I was getting all worked up and nutty,” he told a reporter afterward. The score was 5-5 in the third and deciding set when Borg beckoned McEnroe to the net. McEnroe thought Borg was going to rebuke him, but instead Borg simply put an arm around his shoulders and said: “It’s OK. Just relax. It’s OK. It’s a great match.” [1]

With a few short words and seemingly without effort, Borg undid McEnroe’s tangle of rage and anxiety. It was a turning point for McEnroe; in that moment, he later said, he realized that “if we could keep lifting our games, I didn’t have to worry about the crowd or the linesmen or anything.”[2] He went on to win set and match, but the change went deeper: henceforth he was civil with Borg on and off the court, and to this day he refers to Borg as his “great” rival. True, he was still McEnroe, but he was a better McEnroe: a player who would be ranked, with Borg, among the best of all time. His view of the sport, and of himself, had been transformed.

How did Borg do it? Not by force, nor through manipulative tactics. He didn’t craft a scheme or map out a plan to educate his opponent in appropriate court behavior. He didn’t exactly *do* anything. Rather, he simply *was:* was focused, was observant, was reassuring, was appreciative, was calm. His words, tone, and body language were aligned, all perfectly suited to the time and all unmoved by McEnroe’s storming. “Rest established in the self,” says the Bhagavad Gītā. No amount of pushing or pulling is more powerful than that sense of rest.

Imagine the effect had Borg used the same words but yelled them at McEnroe from the baseline: “IT’S OK! JUST RELAX!” (To such a display, I think McEnroe would have reacted as my dog Cassie did when she yipped at a house guest and he shouted, *“Jesus, relax!”* Cassie never relaxed in his presence again.) Imagine, too, what would have happened had Borg put his arm around McEnroe’s shoulders and delivered a solemn lecture about how he needed to stop worrying about the officials, how he should take a few deep breaths, how his game would never improve if he wasted energy on these ridiculous tantrums, and so on. The gesture may have been right, but the words and tone would have been all wrong.

Many can talk the talk. Some can walk the walk. But only a master influencer can—how shall we say?—be the being.

In retirement, Borg seemed to lose some of his equilibrium. He nearly went bankrupt as a result of failed business ventures and in 2006 put his Wimbledon trophies and two of his winning rackets up for auction in an attempt to raise funds.[3] Fellow tennis champions Jimmy Connors and Andre Agassi offered, tactfully, to buy the memorabilia in order to keep them together. But it was McEnroe who reportedly made the difference by calling his old friend and rival and confronting him, in as few words as Borg had used in that 1979 match, though in blunter style: "Have you gone mad? What the hell are you doing?"[4]

After that conversation, Borg bought back his trophies from the auction house.

The lesson at the net had come full circle. The grasshopper had become, for one phone call at least, the sensei.

The Authority Myth

Authority isn't the same as power. Power is the might (the ability to make things happen), whereas authority is the right (to rule or lead). The two often overlap, but rarely completely. An effective con artist, for example, has lots of power but little authority. An ineffectual executive has lots of authority but little power. A manager's title gives us the right to issue orders but doesn't mean our orders will be carried out as we envisioned—or at all.

"Being the boss means I can execute on my ideas," we think. "All I have to do is command it, and it will be so." That's the authority myth, and our belief in it has a tendency to escalate: "They aren't doing what I told them, so I'll issue clearer instructions . . . They still aren't, so I'll shout louder . . . What's wrong with these people? Now I'll have to punish someone!" And the beatings will continue until morale improves, as the saying goes.

New managers are especially likely to be taken in by the authority myth. In her book *Becoming a Manager,* Harvard professor Linda Hill follows a few dozen newly promoted sales managers through year one on the job. When first asked about their expectations, most of them said things like this:

- "The manager is the person in power, the authority, the expert."
- "Now, I'll be the one calling the shots."

- “I’m paid to make decisions. The buck stops here.”[5]

But before too long, says Hill, there arose an unnerving realization. As one manager put it, “[You aren’t] evaluated on your own production but instead on that of the people who report to you.” Another, when asked what she disliked about her new job, said, “The fact that you really are not in control of anything. The only time you are in control is when you shut your door.”[6] And a manager with six direct reports said this:

> You’re so used to being the only inhibitor. You define your own parameters and your limitations, but the other six define the parameters and motivations, and you try to alter their behavior and get them to increase their ambition, but basically that is real hard to do.[7]

Hard to do, indeed. I read Hill’s book years before I became a manager, and back then I scoffed at such realizations. “Obviously you can’t just fling orders,” I thought. “How stupid are these people?” When I was promoted to project leader, then later to first-line manager, things seemed to go pretty well, and I flattered myself I had leadership down pat. Then I got another promotion and encountered my first “problem” employee. “Joanne” (as I’ll call her) was a senior consultant, well respected by her colleagues and clients.* With me, however, she seemed to flounder, missing deadlines or handing in work half done. I redoubled my efforts to be clear, supportive, and motivating—to no avail. Finally I found myself trying to be more . . . authoritative. I stopped asking for her thoughts. I demanded weekly status reports.

After about six months, it was time for Joanne’s performance review. I downgraded her on a major goal, a Project X on which she’d been unable to make headway despite lots of helpful (as I judged it) direction from me. In her comments on the review Joanne wrote, “I could not meet this goal because my manager decided to do it herself.”

I was shocked. How dare she excuse her failures by pointing a finger at me?

But upon reflection, I knew she was right. About a month earlier, despairing of ever making progress, I had told Joanne over the phone that I would take on Project X and she could do another, less difficult task. I thought she’d be relieved. I didn’t see it as seizing control in a humiliating way, but of course that’s what it was.

Soon after her review Joanne took a job with another consulting firm, where, I later heard, she did well. So we lost a good employee to the competition. And Project X never did get done; it turned out nobody really wanted it done, so I dropped it, not considering until much later the possibility that Joanne had seen its futility long before I had. Overall it was quite the display of managerial incompetence, spurred on by the authority myth—a myth I had thought myself too savvy to believe.

I'm not saying managers shouldn't give assignments or that a commanding leadership style is never appropriate. After all, if you have formal authority, people expect you to do something with it. Team members expect their leader to wield authority on their behalf and to their benefit, when possible. And a sense that someone is firmly and legitimately in charge provides confidence in a crisis.

The best leaders, however, don't rely on command authority, because (as we'll see) its outcomes are neither as good nor as sustainable as the outcomes of influence. Even benignly exercised authority—such as the "clear direction" I kept giving Joanne—can get in the way of influence. Commands and instructions are unwieldy things. We can issue them with all the vigor and skill at our disposal, but most are like badly served tennis balls: they hit the net or go wide, ending up on the ground, inert.

The Mainspring

In my book *The Greats on Leadership,* I took a cue from the masterminds of Western civilization (and one or two Eastern thinkers as well) and detached leadership levels from authority levels.[8] I linked the former, instead, to the positive impact a leader makes. There are four levels of leadership impact, with the mainspring leader at Level 4.

The mainspring in a clock is the piece that moves the other springs, which in turn move the hands, which in turn cause the clock to tell time. We don't see or hear the mainspring, but with it, the whole system does its job, and without it, the clock is just an attractive object with numbers on its face. In the workplace, similarly, the mainspring is the person whose efforts are less obvious than everybody else's but without whom everybody else's efforts come to naught.

Mainsprings have great power, but chasing after power isn't the way to become a mainspring. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, we'll look at three types of power chaser: *barons,* who strive for dominance over their perceived enemies; *legalists,* who use rules and edicts to exert control; and *seducers,* who, lacking a platform or a taste for direct confrontation, seek to influence by means of personal charisma. We'll see why each of these approaches, while often temporarily or superficially successful, has hidden costs.

Nor is influence about racking up "credits" to exchange in an "influence market"—a view taken by some contemporary authors.* Research discussed below and in Chapter 1 debunks that idea, finding that favor-trading and mutual back-scratching aren't what make a strong influencer. Building credit in the sense of good karma is another matter; as Eastern cultures know, influence grows when you contribute to the community, weaving a web of goodwill that benefits you along with everyone else.* And of course there is an element of persuasion to influence in that you want to attract, not repel, potential collaborators.

Influence, however, is never about getting your way. It's about co-creating a new way, a better way, *our* way. To quote McEnroe, it's about lifting our game. Influence is a form of dialogue, which is different from debate: a debate is for winning, but when we engage in dialogue, says David Bohm (theoretical physicist and guru to management consultants), we partake in a "stream of meaning flowing among and through and between us."[9]

You might think the word *influence* is too suggestive of manipulation, and indeed there are other terms I considered for this book's topic: collaboration, dialogue, co-creation, and lateral leadership, to name a few. I kept coming back to influence, though, perhaps because of its etymology. The word derives mostly from the Old French *influence*, meaning "emanation from the stars," and the original meaning had to do not with political maneuvering but with the great ebbs and flows of the natural world. Influence, per the Oxford English Dictionary, described "the action of water and other fluids, and of immaterial things conceived of as flowing in." In astrology, it denoted "an ethereal fluid streaming from the heavens and affecting human character and destiny." Such images suggest that influence is

something much larger than us: a cosmic current we might tap, even dive into, but could never twist to petty purposes.

Eastern Guides

The best guides to these currents and streams of influence are found in the ancient East, specifically in China, Japan, India, and parts of the Islamic world.*

To see why, consider the acronym VUCA, coined by the US military, popularized by business consultants, and standing for the supposedly increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of human affairs. When things become VUCA, Western experts say, command-and-control leadership doesn't work and new approaches are needed. To most Eastern philosophers, however, VUCA is nothing new; it's simply the way things are and always have been. Instead of volatile, these thinkers would say the world is *in motion;* instead of uncertain, *conditional;* instead of complex, *contextual;* instead of ambiguous, *inclusive*. In other words, the world of the East is a fluid one. The physical universe consists of fields and forces rather than discrete objects, while the human universe consists of relationships that define individuals rather than individuals who freely enter into relationships. Were the world made of pistachio ice cream, a person of the East would see ice cream; a person of the West, pistachios.

That's a gross oversimplification, of course, as is the Orientalist myth that all Asians are Zen masters floating serenely above the world's struggles. Many Eastern leaders, both real and fictional, easily match their Western counterparts in political ambition and ruthlessness; moreover, being Buddhist or Taoist does not automatically make one a nice person. Nevertheless, anthropological studies show that the Eastern perspective is, generally speaking, less atomistic—or focused on discrete elements—than the Western one.* Cases in point: the twelve Eastern sages featured herein (see the Prologue). In their eyes, a leader's job is to channel the world's natural flow. Trying to push people around is as futile as trying to push water uphill.

One of my favorite expressions of this watery worldview is found in an ancient collection of Sanskrit hymns. The *Rig Veda* is the earliest Hindu religious scripture and the first long composition in any Indo-

European language. As translated by renowned Sanskrit scholar Wendy Doniger, the “Creation Hymn” of the *Rig Veda* runs in part as follows:

> There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? . . . Was there water, bottomlessly deep?
>
> There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own impulse . . .
>
> Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning; with no distinguishing sign, all this was water . . .
>
> There was impulse beneath; there was giving-force above.
>
> Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards.[10]

Aspiring corporate leaders might think about that last line: “The gods came afterwards.” In the beginning, says the poet, all this was water. Nobody knows what stirred there, but something stirred, with impulse beneath and giving-force above—and not one god had yet appeared. In later Vedic writings we meet many gods, who create and destroy, fight battles, make laws, and demand homage, as leaders do. But in the beginning (and perhaps still today) the world had no need of such authorities. All this was water, and it breathed on its own.

Influence Today

But suppose I want to get better at influence right now, in my work life and personal life. How “spiritual” do I need to be about it? Must I take up residence in a Tibetan ashram and meditate for a decade, or is there an easier way?

Mindfulness meditation is a growing trend in business, and for good reason. Research shows that as we learn to be mindful—that is, present in the moment and able to observe our thoughts and emotions without letting them rattle us—we become more effective as leaders, with improved focus and decision making.[*] Mindfulness isn’t just for Eastern spiritualists; many senior executives in global companies (Microsoft, Salesforce, and McKinsey, to name a few) are practitioners

and swear by its effects. Some contents of this book, especially Chapters 8, 9, and 11, are grounded in the concept of mindfulness.

A well-trained mind, however, isn't the whole answer when it comes to cultivating influence. We can make an analogy to the physical conditioning of an elite basketball player: fast and strong is essential, but the player also needs ball-handling skills, timing, knowledge of rules and strategy, and rapport with teammates, not to mention the ability to apply it all in actual games. In the same way, would-be influencers need a focused mind but have much more to learn and apply beyond that. And many introverts (like me) need extra help: we who naturally gravitate toward reflection rather than action need a playbook for taking mindfulness out of the gym and onto the field. *The Art of Quiet Influence* is that playbook.

To construct it, I've turned to two sources. The first is those twelve sages of the East mentioned above. The second source is more recent and not quite as profound—hard to compete with the likes of Confucius!—but arguably more practical. It's the influence research conducted by The Forum Corporation, a leadership and sales training company founded in 1971.* (I was a Forum employee for twenty-three years and was, for the last five of those years, executive vice president of research and development. The company has since merged with another and is now called AchieveForum. From 2015 to 2018, I was in their contractor network.)

Forum was one of the inventors of influence training. In the late 1970s, large organizations put their new and midlevel managers through workshops focused on the skills needed to supervise direct reports: assigning work, evaluating performance, and so on. Managers seen as executive material would be sent to business schools to learn about strategy and finance. The typical company structure was rigidly hierarchical, with work passing up and down the chain of command, rarely from side to side; managers, therefore, needed to learn how to wield top-down authority.

Then Japanese cars hit the market. They were better built, and they were built under a business philosophy called *kaizen,* continuous improvement.* Kaizen was about breaking down a company's vertical silos: instead of needing to seek approval for every action from on high, Japanese employees made many decisions together, in cross-functional teams. Western manufacturers took note of the approach,

and some (though by no means all) were eager to adopt it. Companies in that era were also expanding internationally, necessitating a new structure—"matrix management"—whereby a marketing director in France (for example) would report both to the country head in Paris and to the vice president of marketing in New York. These changes, amplified by a baby-boomer culture enamored of liberation and skeptical of authority, sparked a new concern for managers: How do I work with all these people who don't report to me?

Forum's clients started asking for training on the topic. After a few years of experiments, the firm launched a research study that identified 23 observable behaviors, or *practices,* correlated with influence and overall job effectiveness. Out of this research came, in 1982, a three-day seminar titled "Influence: Building, Using, Sustaining." Participants received a feedback report with colleagues' averaged ratings of how well they demonstrated the practices. Forum delivered this seminar in standard and customized form to thousands of employees of large companies over the next three decades. A second research study in the early 1990s yielded revised practices and an updated training program but confirmed the essential concepts.*

Forum's Influence program "defined a type of relationship previously unrecognized," says Christie Jacobs, who directed the original program's rollout. Mike Maginn, who led the development team, recalls:

> We realized there were some values here that were very different from the values of the hierarchical world: sharing power, building trust, support. At the core of Influence was a new way of thinking about how you relate to people in a work environment, or any environment. Having these values at the center was a revolution in the training world. Before, it was all behavioral: do these nineteen things. This was very different. The Influence model was about becoming part of a community, creating mutuality, and recognizing that you have to give in order to get.

Those values were the bedrock of the program, but there were also plenty of tools and tactics, which brought utility to the topic. When we add Eastern philosophy to the mix, the result is a body of knowledge both pragmatic and profound.

For this book I interviewed 24 influence experts, many of whom are Forum alumni (see Acknowledgments). Their insights appear

throughout and are highlighted in the “Influence in Brief” section that appears in each chapter. And each chapter begins with an anecdote from my time at Forum; together these anecdotes form a case study of an influence culture.

A Map for Influencers

In the 1990s, as working in teams became the norm, various group development models entered the corporate argot. The most popular of these models was, and still is, Bruce Tuckman’s *forming-storming-norming-performing.* Tuckman described how a new group’s members start out behaving independently as they get to know one another (forming). Then they go through a phase rife with conflict and doubts about one another’s motives (storming). Sometimes a group gets stuck in storming, but usually members work out their differences and come to adopt group goals as their own (norming). Finally group norms and roles are well established, and members, with a sense of common purpose, can succeed together at a high level (performing).[11]

Sociologists and psychologists tinkered with Tuckman’s model over the years and conducted more research studies to validate and enhance it. Some came up with different names for the stages; at Forum, we chose *membership-control-cohesion*. Tuckman himself later added a fifth stage, *adjourning.*[12] No matter the terminology, the purpose is the same: to tell us what to expect at each stage in the life of a team. What these models aren’t terribly clear about, however, is what we should *do* at each stage.

To help answer the “what to do” question, I’ve devised a Quiet Influence Map (see Figure 0.1). Along the bottom are the stages of group development; I’m using *membership-control-performance,* which I think best captures the issues that occupy groups as they evolve over time. On the left and flowing across the map (picture bands in a jar of colored sand) are the quiet influence core practices: 1) inviting participation, 2) sharing power, and 3) aiding progress.*

All three core practices are needed at each stage of group development, but to varying degrees. In the Membership stage, our main concern should be to invite participation. In the Control stage, which is where groups are most likely to get stuck, we need above all

to share power. And in the Performance stage, we should focus on aiding progress.

One important note: while we'd all like to increase our own feelings of participation, power, and progress, the best way to build influence is to ensure *others* feel these things. How did Borg make McEnroe feel when he spoke with him at the net? Probably as if he belonged, had power, and was on the right track. How did I make Joanne feel when I assigned her a useless project, hectored her on how to do it, and finally took it out of her hands? Probably as if she didn't matter, had no power, and was going nowhere. Borg changed McEnroe's outlook and earned his lasting respect; after Joanne left the company, I never heard from her again. It's clear who the better influencer was.

For this book's framework, including twelve specific influence practices and twelve typically Western mistakes, see Figure 0.2, "Quiet Influence Practices and Pitfalls," here. For tactics that support each practice, see Appendix A. And for answers to some questions you may have about the overall approach, see Appendix B.

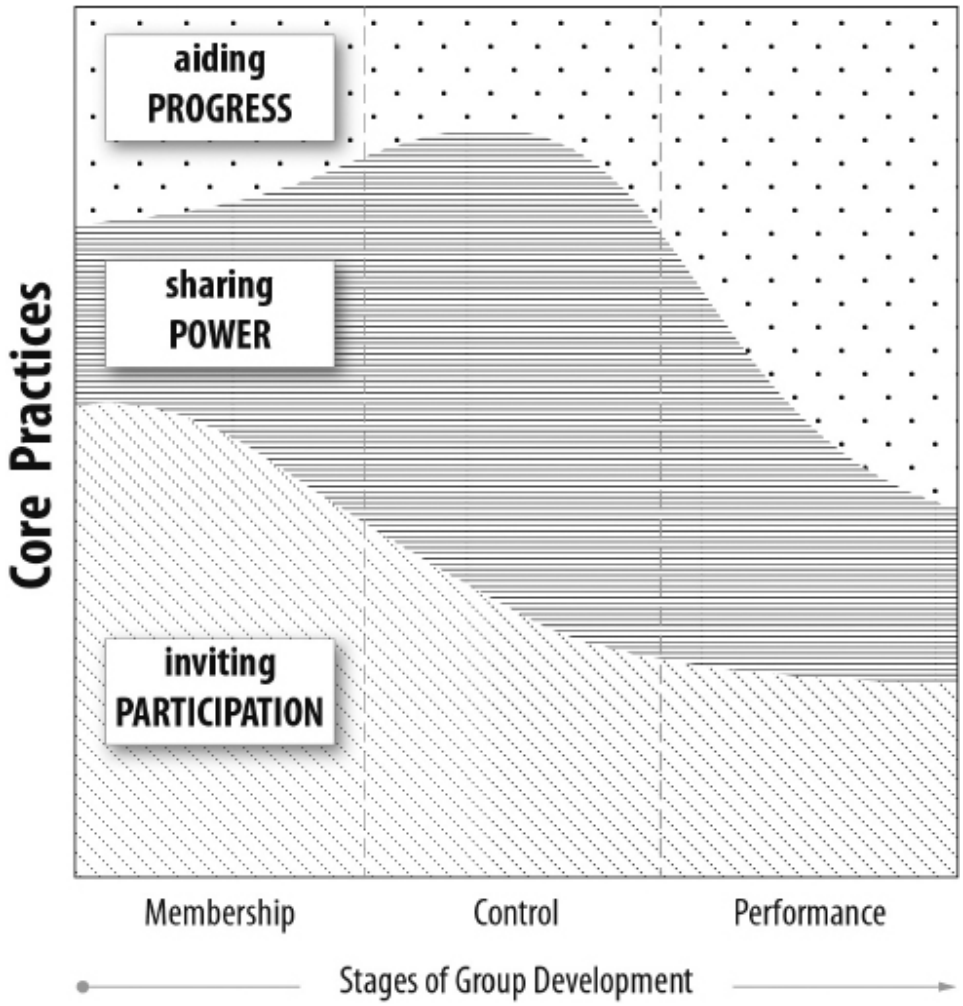


Figure 0.1: Quiet Influence Map

Bill the Answer Guy

Tracy Hulett is a business executive and consultant who taught Forum seminars in the 1980s. Much of her work was with a top manufacturer of cellular phones, and in one of the Influence classes she delivered at that company there was an engineer—let's call him "Bill"—who received horribly low scores from his associates on all the practices in his feedback report.

When Bill saw the feedback, he was floored. "But I'm the answer guy," he said. "Everyone comes to me because I'm the best at what I do." Tracy had been observing his behavior in the session, however, and while he was clearly intelligent, she could see he was also an arrogant jerk. He would set himself up to be the person people had to

ask, and when they did ask, he would humiliate them. During a group drawing activity, he actually grabbed the marker from another participant because he didn't like what she drew. Far from coming to him for help, the others in the class avoided him.

On the second afternoon, Tracy gave Bill some coaching in private. Referring to the marker incident, she said, "Do you see how people might react badly to that?"

Bill said, "I had no idea. I've always been the smart one. I thought that was enough."

"Smart is good," Tracy said, "but it is not enough."

Bill was somewhat quiet for the rest of the session.

A few years later, Tracy was asked to return to that same cell phone plant and teach the Influence seminar again. She found to her surprise that not only was Bill reattending the program, he was now the program sponsor and a leader of the plant's quality efforts. His whole way of operating had changed. His feedback scores, formerly in the single digits, were now in the 90s. His transformation was legend throughout the company.

"He was incredibly respected," says Tracy. "Everyone sought his advice."

CHAPTER	EASTERN SAGE	INFLUENCE PRACTICE	WESTERN PITFALL
~ Core Practice: INVITING PARTICIPATION ~			
1. Be Humane	Confucius *(Analects)*	Demonstrating care for colleagues	Relying on reciprocity
2. Applaud Anguish	the Yoga Vasiṣṭha	Encouraging others to express objections and doubts	Assuming causes instead of conditions
3. Create Delight	Zhuangzi	Exuding appreciation and good cheer	Expecting everyone to sing "Kumbaya"
4. Practice Patience	Rumi ("The Night Air")	Taking time to develop a shared outlook	Learning *about* rather than *from*
~ Core Practice: SHARING POWER ~			
5. Walk with the Devil	the Mahābhārata	Converting adversaries to allies by aligning interests	Seeing foes to be crushed instead of allie to be cultivated

6. Follow the Leaders	Sima Qian *(Records of the Grand Historian)*	Backing those who take the lead	Using rules and edicts to exert control
7. Fight Softly	Murasaki Shikibu *(The Tale of Genji)*	Finding ways to be effective in the face of aggressions	Collecting admirers
8. Rule Yourself	Mahātmā Gandhi *(Hind Swaraj)*	Managing your own emotions and behavior	Believing power is happiness
~ Core Practice: AIDING PROGRESS ~			
9. Establish Mindfulness	Gautama Buddha	Doing the daily work with persistence and focus	Regarding mindfulness as purely personal
10. Tend the Soil	Mencius	Attending to upstream factors more than downstream results	Obsessing about the short-term future
11. Be Present	Zen Master Dōgen (“Instructions for the Tenzo”)	Staying engaged when things get heated	Running from shame
12. Leave Well	Ibn Tufayl *(Hayy Ibn Yaqzān)*	Walking away when influence is no longer possible	EASTERN PITFALL: Going with the crowd

Figure 0.2: Quiet Influence Practices and Pitfalls

Few of us will ever receive the kind of wake-up call Bill the Answer Guy did. The truth is, most of us don’t need one. What we do need when it comes to influence are three things: first, encouragement to raise the tone and lift the game, in whatever role we occupy; second, theoretical and practical know-how to support our efforts; and third, assurance that our efforts will bear fruit. This book aims to provide all three necessities—encouragement, know-how, and assurance—for becoming a quiet influencer.

Prologue

Twelve Sages

They weren't the well-paid ministers who kept the people in line. They weren't the hard-boiled consultants, sought for their advice on realpolitik.

These twelve Eastern sages were mavericks.[1] Most were marginalized or simply ignored by the establishment of their time and rediscovered centuries later by seekers of a better way. Some presented an orthodox face to society. Some remain anonymous, known today only by their writings. But they were all, in some fashion, proponents and practitioners of quiet influence: strength without force, mindfulness in action. Allow me to introduce them.

It's the sixth century BCE. "Who are we?" "What is everything made of?" "How should we live?" "How should we lead?" "How can we deal with suffering?" These questions and more are emerging all over the world, fueling intellectual endeavors from the Hundred Schools of Thought in China to the philosophic discourses of Athens to the recording, in India, of the longest story ever told.

Our whirlwind tour (see "Sages at a Glance," here) begins with that Indian story. Ten times the length of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined, the Mahābhārata is a family saga (its name means "great tale of the Bhārata dynasty") interwoven with myths, legends, spiritual guidance, cosmic musings, and trippy fantasies. "Whatever is found here—on law, on profit, on pleasure, and on salvation—is found elsewhere," states the famous line, "but what is not here is nowhere else."[2] The Bhagavad Gītā, "Glorious Song" of the Lord Krishna, is one short

chapter in the epic. Traditionally attributed to the legendary sage Vyāsa but undoubtedly the work of many anonymous bards, the Mahābhārata begins to take shape orally in the ninth or eighth century BCE and begins to be transcribed sometime in the fifth century BCE.*

Now is also the time of the first Upaniṣads, Sanskrit texts commenting on the Vedas, which are the earliest scriptures of the religion that will eventually become known as Hinduism.† Their authors are expounding concepts such as *Brahman* (ultimate reality), *māyā* (perceived reality), *ātman* (the self or soul), and *mokṣa* (spiritual liberation). The Upaniṣads and the Mahābhārata together are fueling the rise of Hindu literary and religious culture. Political leaders are already wondering whether they should ban the books as subversive.

Meanwhile, China is experiencing a golden age of philosophy. The so-called Hundred Schools of Thought—Confucianism to Taoism, Legalism to Yin-Yang, and a host of other theories about politics, strategy, ethics, manners, and nature—arise in the sixth century BCE and go on to vie with one another for ages after. The school with the most enduring effects is Confucianism, whose father is China's first great teacher and moral thinker. Mencius, born a century after Confucius' death, is a pupil of Confucius' grandson; he synthesizes and develops his inspirer's ideas, earning himself a place in history as the best-known Confucian.

Another important school is Taoism, whose two main originators are the legendary sage Laozi ("Old Master," still known in the West by his romanized name, Lao Tzu) and the slightly better-documented but equally mysterious sage Zhuangzi ("Master Zhuang," also known as Chuang Tzu).

Chinese rulers of this era like to hire itinerant scholars to advise them on government, war, and diplomacy. The sages named above, however, have mixed success at that game. Confucius is invited to several kings' courts but in each case is soon asked to leave, Mencius teaches at a state academy but quits in disappointment at his failure to effect change, and any self-respecting Taoist prefers a hermit's life to a political career.

Living in India at roughly the same time as Confucius is a young man named Gautama (later to be revered as "the Buddha") with ideas that will become the platform for the world's fourth largest religion.*

He's a contemporary of the first Upaniṣad writers, but his sermons and discourses will not be committed to writing until at least a hundred years after his death. These earliest Buddhist scriptures, known as the Pāli Canon, recount Gautama's search for enlightenment and his dissatisfaction with the elaborate paths to *mokṣa* advocated by Hindu teachers, paths that typically involve intensive study and painful austerities: consuming only water, standing on one foot for a week, that sort of thing.* The brahmins are the Hindu priestly caste, the educated elite, who present themselves as holding the keys to salvation. Gautama declares, in contrast, that salvation's keys are available to anyone who will follow his teachings.

Despite their deep differences, Hinduism and Buddhism continue to flourish side by side in India for centuries to come. There are six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, all of which accept the Vedas as authoritative; among them are Yoga and Vedānta. Philosophies that reject the Vedas include Buddhism and Jainism. The two principal branches of Buddhism are Theravāda (literally, "school of the elder monks") and Mahāyāna (a more inclusive version, arising in southern India). Mahāyāna Buddhism spreads north to Nepal and Bangladesh and then to points east, eventually taking hold in China, Korea, Japan, and parts of Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile back in India, all these strands of thought go on stretching and clashing and combining, sometimes within one text, and the apotheosis of this process is the Yoga Vasiṣṭha, a vast compendium of stories and teachings presented by legendary sage Vasiṣṭha to the young prince Rāma in an effort to lift him out of existential despair. The Yoga Vasiṣṭha is said to be the third longest book ever written, behind only the epics Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana. Like the Mahābhārata, its precise dates are impossible to pin down, but it takes shape gradually between the ninth and thirteenth centuries CE, eventually displaying traces of all Indian philosophies tumbled together and glittering as in a cosmic kaleidoscope.

And now, 2,500 miles to the northwest, Islamic thought is in its heyday. Caliph al-Rashid of Baghdad launches the Islamic Golden Age with his House of Wisdom (eighth to thirteenth centuries CE), to which he summons the world's scholars in order to translate classical knowledge—particularly that of Ancient Greece—into Arabic. The

philosopher al-Kindi is explicit about the aim of the project: “first to record in complete quotations all that the Ancients have said on the subject; secondly to complete what the Ancients have not fully expressed.”[3] These scholars’ translations of and commentaries on the works of Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and other classical thinkers eventually find their way into the libraries of Muslim Spain (aka Andalusia), where they await rediscovery by Christian clergy who have followed the Crusaders to the cosmopolitan centers of Toledo, Lisbon, and Cordoba.[4]

The famous political theorists of Islam are al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroës, but our attention will go to two figures more spiritually inclined. The first is Ibn Tufayl, an Andalusian Muslim polymath who in the early twelfth century writes the philosophical novel *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*—which translates literally as *Alive Aware-son* but is usually rendered as *The Self-Taught Philosopher*. Often compared to *Robinson Crusoe,* it’s the story of a child alone on an island, growing up and learning about the world unaided by human society. The second thinker, Rumi, is a jurist and theologian from Persia, another center of Muslim culture. In midlife he meets an itinerant holy man named Shams, spends 40 days in his company, and consequently gives up everything to become an ascetic and write lyric poetry. Both Ibn Tufayl and Rumi are practitioners of Sufism, the mystical aspect of Islam.

Back to the Far East. All this time Buddhism has been spreading from India, over the steppes and mountain ranges of China, over the Korean Peninsula, and at last across the sea to Japan, where it mingles with Taoism and other Chinese influences. The Japanese Heian period (eighth to twelfth centuries) sees poetry and literature reaching their height, especially at Japan’s imperial court. Around 995, the empress invites a woman with a reputation as a fine writer to serve as lady-in-waiting there. Outwardly conventional but with a taste and aptitude for the Chinese classics (traditionally off-limits to females), Murasaki Shikibu continues her writing at court, eventually producing *The Tale of Genji*. Today’s critics debate whether *Genji* is the world’s first novel, the first modern novel, or the first psychological novel; there is no disagreement, however, on its status as a literary masterpiece.

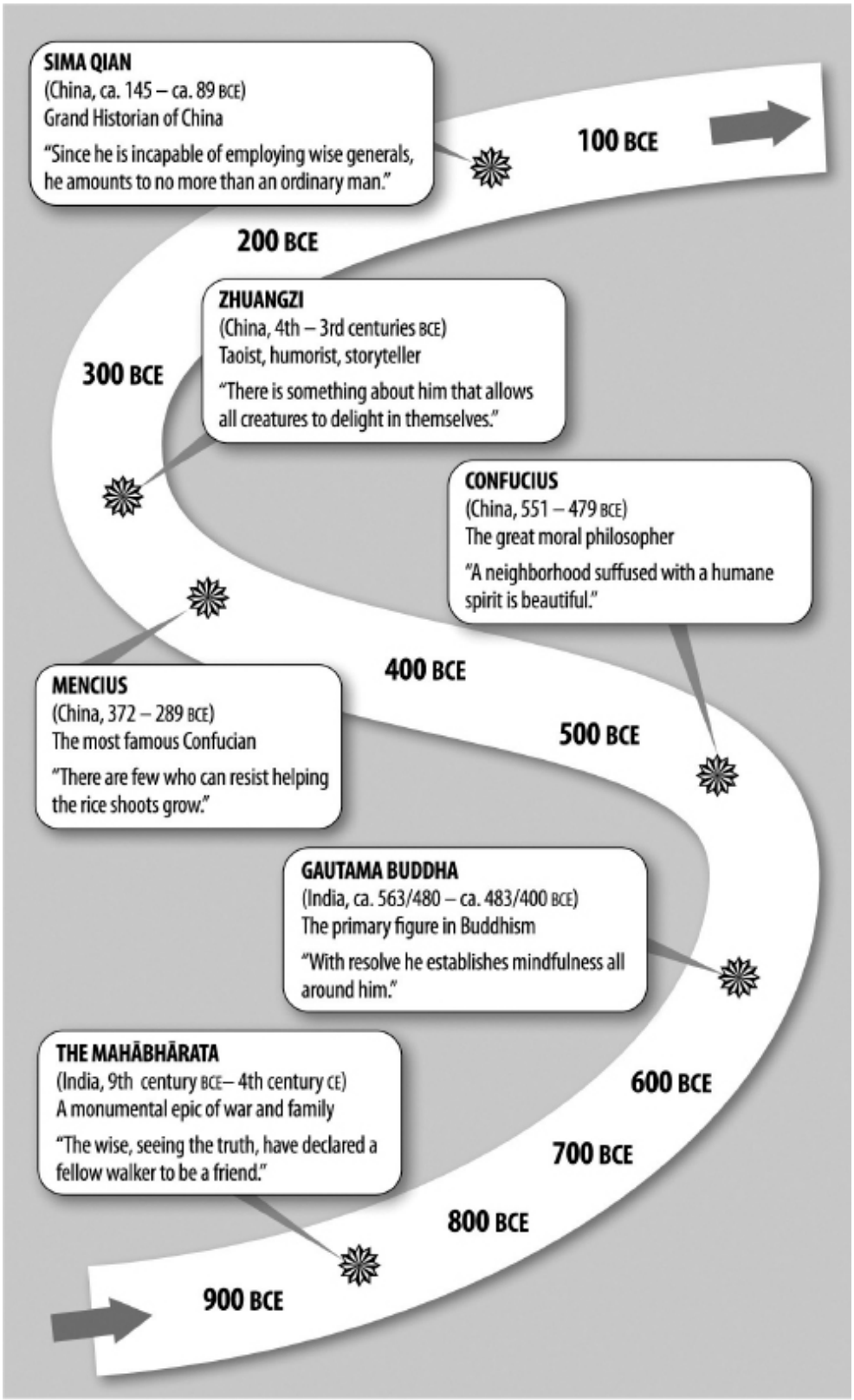
Dōgen, another original thinker of Japan, is born just after the end of the Heian period. Initially a monk at the headquarters of the powerful Buddhist Tendai School, at age 23 he grows disillusioned with the institution's internal politics and sets out to find a more authentic way. He travels through China training with various masters, and upon his return to Kyoto begins to promote the practice of *zazen:* sitting meditation. Later he breaks with the religious establishment altogether. Moving to the countryside, he founds a new monastery and a new Buddhist sect, the Sōtō school. Today, when people "meditate," they are following the path to enlightenment prescribed by Zen Master Dōgen.

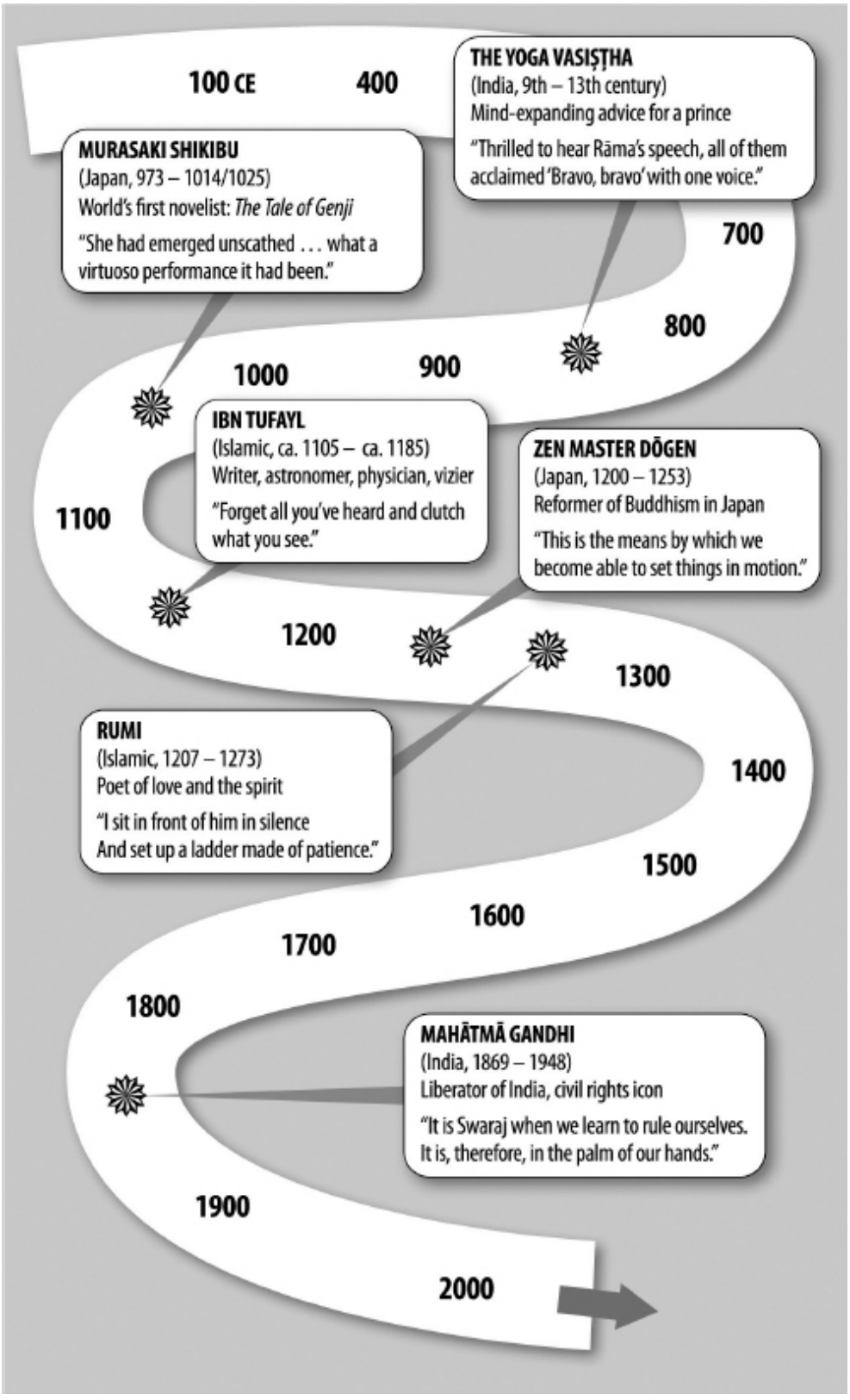
Two more sages are left to mention. One lived recently; he is Mohandas Gandhi, who led India's liberation from the British Raj in the 1940s. Known worldwide as *Mahātmā* ("great-souled"), he has retained his stature as a folk hero. Less appreciated is his stature as a political theorist: his book *Hind Swaraj,* or *Indian Home Rule,* lays out the principles of nonviolent resistance that have underpinned nearly every major civil-rights movement since the mid-twentieth century. Though no saint—like many great leaders, he held some bigoted views and exhibited some doubtful behavior in his personal life—Gandhi is certainly one of the most influential individuals of all time.

Our final sage lived in the distant past and, having been a biographer of the influential rather than a man of influence himself, is little known today. Sima Qian was a gentleman of ancient China who, as the son of a court scribe and astrologer, had a ringside seat on the political action of the era. Father and son together planned an ambitious project: a history of the entire world as the Chinese then knew it. Sima Qian took up the work upon his father's death, and some years later, after being convicted of a political offense and receiving a death sentence, he chose castration rather than suicide so that he might complete his 130-chapter *Shi Ji* ("Records"), including 12 accounts of the earliest emperors, 30 annals of noble families, and 70 biographies of individual rulers, ministers, rebels, and warlords. With his massive work, Sima Qian invented the genre of world history* and earned the moniker Grand Historian of China.

And that, as the Chinese say, is “to look at flowers from a galloping horse.” No doubt my five-minute history of Eastern thought has the Grand Historian rolling in his grave. The Buddha, as ever, wears a serene smile.

SAGES AT A GLANCE


SIMA QIAN
(China, ca. 145 – ca. 89 BCE)
Grand Historian of China
"Since he is incapable of employing wise generals, he amounts to no more than an ordinary man."
100 BCE
200 BCE
ZHUANGZI
(China, 4th – 3rd centuries BCE)
Taoist, humorist, storyteller
"There is something about him that allows all creatures to delight in themselves."
300 BCE
CONFUCIUS
(China, 551 – 479 BCE)
The great moral philosopher
"A neighborhood suffused with a humane spirit is beautiful."
400 BCE
MENCIUS
(China, 372 – 289 BCE)
The most famous Confucian
"There are few who can resist helping the rice shoots grow."
500 BCE
GAUTAMA BUDDHA
(India, ca. 563/480 – ca. 483/400 BCE)
The primary figure in Buddhism
"With resolve he establishes mindfulness all around him."
THE MAHĀBHĀRATA
(India, 9th century BCE– 4th century CE)
A monumental epic of war and family
"The wise, seeing the truth, have declared a fellow walker to be a friend."
600 BCE
700 BCE
800 BCE
900 BCE


100 CE
400
THE YOGA VASIṢṬHA
(India, 9th – 13th century)
Mind-expanding advice for a prince
"Thrilled to hear Rāma's speech, all of them acclaimed 'Bravo, bravo' with one voice."
MURASAKI SHIKIBU
(Japan, 973 – 1014/1025)
World's first novelist: The Tale of Genji
"She had emerged unscathed . . . what a virtuoso performance it had been."
700
800
900
1000
IBN TUFAYL
(Islamic, ca. 1105 – ca. 1185)
Writer, astronomer, physician, vizier
"Forget all you've heard and clutch what you see."
ZEN MASTER DŌGEN
(Japan, 1200 – 1253)
Reformer of Buddhism in Japan
"This is the means by which we become able to set things in motion."
1100
1200
1300
RUMI
(Islamic, 1207 – 1273)
Poet of love and the spirit
"I sit in front of him in silence
And set up a ladder made of patience."
1400
1500
1600
1700
1800
MAHĀTMĀ GANDHI
(India, 1869 – 1948)
Liberator of India, civil rights icon
"It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands."
1900
2000

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE[5]

Chinese

a	like the “a” in *father*
e	like the “oeu” in French *oeuf,* but . . .
	after a vowel: like the “e” in *egg*
i	like the “ee” in *see,* but . . .
	after u: like the “ay” in *way*
	after zh.ch.sh.z.c.s.r: a sound between
	the “u” in *suppose* and “er” in *her*
o	like the “aw” in *awful*
ü	like the “u” in *suit* or French “u” in *tu*
an	like the “un” in *fun,* but . . .
	after a vowel: like the “en” in *hen*
ang	with a long “a” as in *father*
en	like the “an” in *announce*
un	with a short “u” as in *sugar*
ai	like the “ai” in *aisle*
ao	like the “ow” in *how*
ei	like the “ei” in *weigh*
ou	like the “o” in *bowl*
c	like the “ts” in *tse-tse fly*
q	like the “ch” in *chin*
t	between English “t” and “d”
x	like the “sh” in *shin*
z	like “dz”
zh	like the “j” in *Dijon mustard*

Gaozu: gow-dzoo
Han Xin: hahn shin
Laozi: low-dzeuh
Qin: chin
Shun: shun (“u” as in *sugar*)

Sanskrit

a	like each “a” in *America*
ā	like the “a” in *father*[*]
i	like the “ea” in *heat*
ī	like the “ee” in *see*
u	like the “u” in *suit*
ū	like the “oo” in *pool*
ṛ	like the “er” in *river*
e	like the “ei” in *weigh*
ai	like the “ai” in *aisle*
o	like the “o” in *pole*
au	like the “ou” in *loud*
ś	like the “sh” in *shine* (tongue a bit back
ṣ	like the “sh” in *shut* (tongue a b forward)
t/ṭ	like the “t” in *top*
th/ṭh	like the “t” in *top*(same as above; n lisp)

Gautama: gow-tumma
Mahābhārata: ma-ha-BAH-rutta
Yoga Vasiṣṭha: yoga va-seesh-ta

Japanese

ō	like the “o” in *oboe*
o	like the “o” in *confused*

Dōgen: dogen (with a hard “g”)
Tenzo: tenzuh

Sima Qian: seuh-ma chyen

Taoism: dow-ism
Yü: yoo
Zhuangzi: jwahng-dzeuh

Arabic
Hayy Ibn Yaqzān: hi ibben yuck-zahn
Ibn Tufayl: ibben too-file
Rumi: roomy

PARTICIPATION

Have you ever heard of a hassle graph?

Maybe not. But you've probably been on a team that tried to move fast by skipping all the "getting to know you" stuff, only to stumble and struggle later on. Andre Alphonso, former managing director of Forum Australia and founder and CEO of Forum India, recalls:

> In Influence programs I would draw a graph: on the vertical axis was hassle, on the horizontal axis was time. Typically a project starts off very low on hassle, and hassle increases over time. When you really want stuff to be working, later in the project, that's when hassle gets high. You need to move some of the hassle up front, with discussion of roles and ground rules. You need to front-load the hassle so it goes down over time, instead of up. I called it the Hassle Graph.*

In Membership, the first stage of any group endeavor, we can begin to smooth out the hassle graph by *inviting participation* (see Figure I.1). Leadership development expert Maggie Walsh, who for several years headed Forum's leadership practice, echoes Andre when she says inviting participation is about "front-loading buy-in." The more time and effort we invest early on to create a real group—that is, one whose members feel welcomed and integral rather than overlooked and dispensable—the more time and effort we save later, when problems inevitably crop up and unity is tested. This is true whether the group consists of two people or two hundred.

The specific influence practices we'll explore in Part I are:

1) Demonstrating care for colleagues
2) Encouraging others to express objections and doubts
3) Exuding appreciation and good cheer
4) Taking time to develop a shared outlook

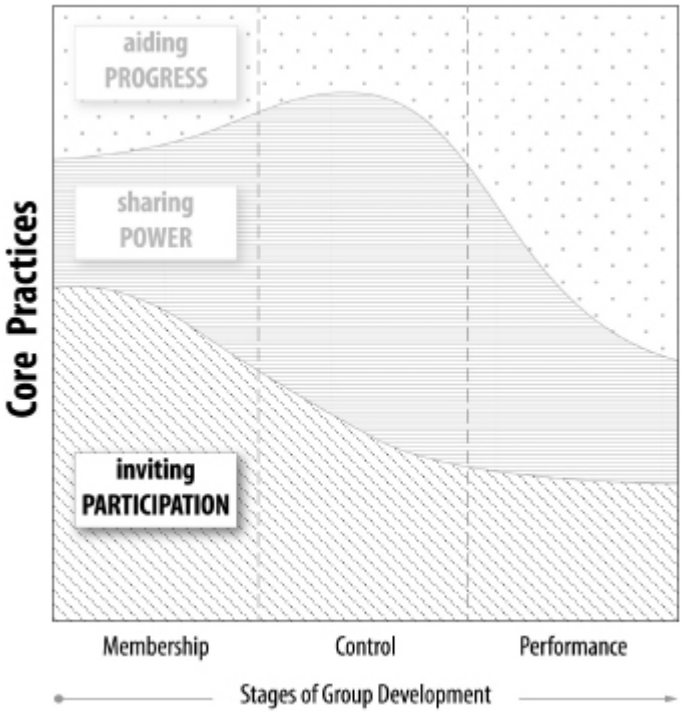


Figure I.1: Inviting Participation

Chapter 1

Be Humane ~ Confucius

Boston: October 1989. Since Monday, I'd been fantasizing about quitting. My employer of nearly one week was The Forum Corporation, a medium-sized corporate training company. My job was to copyedit and produce materials—workbooks, instructor guides, and other bits and pieces—for their sales and management seminars. I sat in a small cubicle farm with several other editors, all of us clicking away on IBM 286 desktops.

My two previous jobs had been at publishing houses, where most everyone had been a task-focused introvert like me. Here at Forum, the culture was different: People beamed and said, "Hey, how are you?" as they passed in the corridors; shouts of laughter came from New England Sales, the office adjacent to the Editing cubicles; meetings began with icebreakers. Moreover, the entire enterprise seemed questionable: teaching people how to sell and manage? Was that even a thing? I felt thoroughly out of place and had decided to stay only until I could find another job in the publishing industry. I already had a few applications out.

It was now 4:00 p.m. on Thursday and I was editing some handouts when my boss, Mona, appeared in my doorway toting an enormous rubber-banded roll of Mylar flip charts.

This was before PowerPoint. For visual aids the class instructors used large, preprinted pads of flip charts, which were produced as follows: an editor compiled the 50-plus charts needed for a workshop, printed them out on the laser printer, and sent the sheaf to a calligrapher; the calligrapher hand-scribed the words and graphics in black ink onto translucent plastic sheets the size of area rugs; a

great roll of these so-called Mylars came back for proofreading; assuming there were no errors, the Mylars were shipped off to the printer, whence would eventually emerge a bound set of flip charts for the instructor to use. The whole process took about two weeks, which from today's perspective seems insanely time-consuming. It had, however, a kind of artisanal charm.

Mona put the roll of Mylars on my desk. "Christine just sent these over," she said. "It's a rush. Can you proof them now?"

Our day ended at 5:30 p.m., and I've never been good at pivoting. I looked at the foot-thick log, then up at Mona. "I can't. I'm doing these handouts."

Mona said, "We really need to get the corrections back to her first thing tomorrow."

I had an inspiration. "Could I take them home and do them this evening?"

"Of course," said Mona. "Thanks." She turned to leave. Then she turned back: "Just one thing. Be careful when you take them home, because . . ."

The next few seconds changed everything. There are many reasons I stayed with Forum for 23 years, but had Mona not said what she said instead of what I expected her to say, I might not have stuck around long enough to give all those other reasons a chance.

What I expected her to say was: "Be careful . . . because those Mylars are expensive."

That's the sort of thing managers at my previous jobs would have said. Oh, they weren't mean people; they were perfectly pleasant, but as managers they were naturally concerned with costs to the firm. I assumed Mona had the same concerns. I was just about to assure her that yes, I'd be very careful not to damage the flip charts, when she finished her sentence:

". . . because those Mylars have sharp edges. It's easy to cut yourself."

In his "Everyday Leadership" TED Talk, Drew Dudley describes the time when, as a university orientation-week coordinator, he gave a lollipop and a friendly smile to a young woman standing in line to register for her first year. Unbeknown to him, she was terrified by the whole scene and had decided college wasn't for her. She was just

about to walk out the door when Dudley's small gesture changed her mind. She told him the story four years later, at her graduation; the odd thing, he says, is that he doesn't remember the "lollipop moment."

I bet Mona doesn't remember the flip-chart moment, either. To me, though, it made all the difference. It told me this was a place where the first order of business was *to care.*

The Humane Neighborhood

The Master said, "A neighborhood suffused with a humane spirit is beautiful. How can a man be considered wise when he has a choice and does not settle on humaneness?" (*Analects* 4.1)*

Caring is also the first order of business for China's greatest philosopher (see "The Sage: Confucius," below). In the compilation of his teachings known as the *Analects,* Confucius speaks of no quality with more approval than *ren,* which translates as "humaneness" or "benevolence." Ren isn't just about being nice; it's about treating people as ends rather than means, as beings worthy of our concern. The English phrase "neighborhood suffused with a humane spirit" is captured in the Chinese word *liren*. *Li* means neighborhood, but (says *Analects* translator Annping Chin) it could also refer metaphorically to the sphere one travels in, including one's profession and circle of friends.[1] Liren, then, is a sphere of humanity: a community, physical or virtual, where people care for one another.

Why is such a place so desirable? "A person who is not humane cannot remain for long either in hard or easy circumstances," says Confucius, whereas "a humane person feels at home in humaneness." (4.2) A humane community, in other words, has stability and resilience. When members of a group feel they belong, they're likely to stay put and lean in; when they feel out of place—as I did in my first few days at Forum—they spend their time and energy searching for an exit. Moreover, individuals who lack humanity also lack patience and resolve; always on the lookout for a better crowd or more useful contacts, they don't remain anywhere for long. An inhumane community is perpetually leaking humans.

The Sage: Confucius

Confucius, who lived in the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, remains China's most-revered moral teacher and one of the world's most-quoted thinkers. His sayings are drawn mainly from the *Analects,* a collection of anecdotes and sayings featuring "the Master" and his followers. Compiled by several generations of disciples, the *Analects* are a record of what Confucius said, not of what he wrote—just as Plato's dialogues are a record and interpretation of the words of his teacher, Socrates. During much of the first millennium CE, the *Analects* took a backseat to Buddhist texts that had arrived from India and been embraced by China, but by the thirteenth century Confucianism had returned to center stage and with it the *Analects*, which became one of four books young men had to know cold in order to pass the civil service examinations that were the ticket to the middle class. "These hopeful aspirants," says translator Annping Chin, "would memorize the text when they were very young and then return to it repeatedly almost as a daily exercise."[2] The Master would no doubt approve. "Is it not a pleasure to learn and, when it is timely, to practice what you have learned?" he says on the *Analects'* opening page.

The value of liren might therefore seem obvious, but in Confucius' day it wouldn't have been. People then had a place in society and would typically stay in that place: Farmer Po of North Village would remain Farmer Po of North Village whether the village was suffused with humanity or not. Today there's more recognition that individuals can pick up and go, hence more talk of employee retention schemes and Best Place to Work awards. Still, mobility can cut the other way, causing employers to see little point in building a sense of community among workers who are here today, gone tomorrow. In all eras, organizational leaders have been inclined to dismiss ren as either unnecessary ("Why bother? It's not as if these people have anywhere else to go") or futile ("Why bother? They're going to leave

anyway"). But Confucius saw the benefits of ren and made it the core of his teachings:

> The Master said, "Zeng Can, my way has a thread running through it." . . . After the Master left, the disciples asked, "What did he mean?"
>
> Zeng Can said, "The Master's way consists of doing one's best to fulfill one's humanity [*zhong*] and treating others with the awareness that they, too, are alive with humanity [*shu*]." (4.15)

The word *zhong* is formed from the Chinese characters for "center" and "heart," and may be translated as "doing one's best." *Shu* is formed from "knowledge" and "heart," and means "putting oneself in another's place."* So, humaneness has two aspects. Zhong is directed inward and consists in knowing and trying to live up to one's best self: "doing one's best to fulfill one's humanity." Shu is directed outward and consists in seeing the full personhood of others: "the awareness that they, too, are alive with humanity."

As we encounter more Eastern sages, we will find flowing through their works these same two principles: first, appreciate that you are human; second, appreciate that others are human. This is the moral double-helix analogous to the chemical double-helix that comprises our DNA: the twin silver threads spiraling through all our interactions, rendering them humane.

One more linguistic note: In classical Chinese, the written character for "heart" is the same as "mind." *Zhong,* therefore, could also be read as "center-mind" and *shu* as "knowledge-mind." The Chinese language doesn't make the distinction most Western languages make between emotion and reason, feeling and analysis. Heart-mind (*xin)* is simply the ability to think and act *with care:* that is, with a sense that the human world matters and that our response to it matters. For Confucius, humaneness requires—to use Western idioms—a warm heart and a cool head. Judgment, informed by tradition and honed by experience, tells us whether to approach a situation with passion, with detachment, or with equal amounts of both.

Confucius also explores what humaneness isn't. In Chapter 5 of the *Analects,* a disciple asks the Master what he thinks of three other

men in their circle:

Meng Wubo asked, “Is Zilu humane?” . . . The Master replied, “Zilu could be put in charge of military levies in a state of a thousand chariots, but I don’t know if he is humane.”

“What about Qiu?”

The Master replied, “Qiu could be made to assume the stewardship of a town with a thousand households or of a hereditary family with a hundred chariots, but I don’t know if he is humane.”

“And what about Chih?”

The Master replied, “Chih, standing in court with his sash fastened high and tight, could be asked to converse with the visitors and guests, but I don’t know if he is humane.” (5.8)

Zilu, Qiu, and Chih are talented men; their talents, however, are not on a par with humaneness. Zilu is a captain, a bold commander on the battlefield. Qiu is an administrator who could manage the affairs of a thousand households with efficiency. And Chih is a diplomat, navigating delicate negotiations at court with nary a slip of his sash. We know these types, and while they’re more admirable than the baron, the legalist, and the seducer—the three power chasers whom we’ll meet in Part II—they still fall short. Confucius is skeptical about their paths. “Sure, you can be a great captain, a great administrator, or a great diplomat,” he implies, “but don’t imagine you have reached the pinnacle of success. Above you on the mountain stands the real deal: the great human being.”

By this point we may be growing worried that humaneness is out of reach for us mere mortals. Confucius takes pains to assure us that ren consists not of grandiose acts of altruism but of something far more ordinary, something like the spirit present in a happy family. The following dialogue suggests how simple yet elusive that spirit is:

Zigong said, “If there is someone who is generous to his people and works to give relief to all those in need, what do you think of him? Can he be called humane?”

The Master said, “This is no longer a matter of humaneness . . . Even Yao and Shun found it difficult to accomplish what you’ve just described. A humane person wishes to steady himself, and so he helps others to steady themselves. Because he wishes to reach his goal, he helps others to reach theirs. The ability to make an analogy from what is close at hand is the method and the way of realizing humaneness.” (6.30)

Zigong's view of humaneness, in other words, is a little overwrought. Confucius notes that humaneness is both more difficult and more realizable than "working to give relief to all in need." Such all-encompassing benevolence is easy to talk about; putting it into action, however, was a stretch even for legendary sage emperors Yao and Shun. But if virtuous talk is not enough, and virtuous action so hard, what are we to do? For Confucius, humaneness requires only that we "make an analogy from what is close at hand"—that we take up the strands of the zhong-shu double helix and reflect as follows: "I'm a human being. I want security, prosperity, and respect. I want my work to go well. I want to see my children grow up happy and healthy. You're a human being, too, so you want those same things. If we acknowledge each other as human, and support each other in achieving our mutual goals, things will go better for us both."

Near the end of the *Analects,* there's this impressively concise summary of ren, its elements, and its value:

> Zizhang asked Confucius about humaneness. Confucius said . . . "Being respectful, large-minded, trustworthy, quick in response, and generous. If you are respectful, you will not be met with insult. If you are large-minded, you will win the hearts of the people. If you are trustworthy, people will have confidence in you. If you are quick in response, you will get things done. If you are generous to others, this will be enough to ask them to do things for you." (17.6)

I suspect when Zizhang "asked Confucius about humaneness," he wasn't asking, "What is it?" but rather, "Why be it?" Confucius' answer is: "Look what happens when you're humane. You win hearts. You earn trust. You get things done." In short: humane is influential.

Quiet Influence Practice 1: Demonstrating care for colleagues

First in our list of twelve influence practices is "Demonstrating care for colleagues." Some believe care is out of place in a business setting; after all, we're there to make money, not friends (or in a nonprofit, to serve the mission, not to socialize). The problem with this view is that humans are social animals—in fact pack animals, for whom acceptance by the collective means life and rejection by the

collective means death. “There is nothing in the whole world so painful as feeling that one is not liked,” says Sei Shōnagon, eleventh-century Japanese court lady and author of *The Pillow Book.* Our need to belong is hardwired. To think it can be ignored because we have donned a business suit and boarded a commuter train is the height of folly (see “Influence in Brief: Demonstrating Care,” here).

In this book I won’t explore the growing field of “neuro-leadership” (neuroscience research applied to the workplace), since other authors are doing a fine job of it. Moreover, I don’t believe we need such research to confirm what we already know based on our ability to make (as Confucius says) an analogy from what is close at hand. We all know what it’s like to be the new kid in school, to be last picked for the team, to have our true love leave us—or worse, not notice us in the first place. We all know what it’s like to struggle through the first week in a new job, confused by everything from the jargon in the meetings to the coffee system in the break room. Therefore, we all ought to understand how much humans crave care from their fellow humans.

A manager I once knew used to say, “All we owe our employees is a salary, a desk, and a laptop.” He may have been right about the “owe” part. In making it about owing, though, he was demonstrating an inability to look inward, to see his own need for kindness, and to make an analogy to the kindness his employees may not have been entitled to, but certainly needed. This same manager would occasionally lament, like Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny,* that his dog was the only one who liked him. I always wanted to point out that he was probably pretty nice to the dog; maybe he could try being nice to the humans, too.

Influence in Brief: Demonstrating Care

In order to have any influence, you have to start with trust, and the basis for trust is your relationships. In Asia there is the concept of *guanxi:* the web of relationships. What relationship of trust do I have with this person such that they will be willing to introduce me? If you trust Jiro, and Jiro says you should meet with me, you will honor your relationship with Jiro and meet with me. And if I come in and screw up, then Jiro’s off your list. It’s the web we weave: *guanxi*.

–Galina Jeffrey[*]

The stages of team development—membership, control, cohesion—still apply. Even when I'm with, say, the top 20 executives at a *Fortune* 500 company, I still go around the room and ask them to say what's going on in their world. Who am I? What do I do? Why am I here? People love it. Everyone likes to talk about themselves, and this kind of introduction is rarely done.

–Bruce Thomas

Influence is not a transactional, one-and-done effort. It is a loop of goodness, a contribution to the collective. Word gets around that you're a person to sit down with. People watch what you do, talk to each other; if they hear of your insight and see your generosity, they trust you and ask for ideas or introductions. We can tie it to the word *values* more than *currency.* If you can provide something to support what they value, it is contributing to the larger system.

–Molly McGinn

I think a culture of influence was the root of Forum's culture. I was way down at the bottom of the food chain, a customer service rep. But I was listened to.

–Elizabeth Griep

Keith Bronitt is a consultant and trainer who joined Forum in the firm's early years and taught countless Influence seminars. Here's how he thinks about influence:

I teach seniors in a retirees' driving program. The sponsor organization supplies the training materials, and often they can't get their act together. I say, 'I'm going on vacation; I need the materials by such and such a date.' I come home from vacation and I have four boxes of materials sitting on my porch, soaking wet. So I call one of the associates responsible for logistics. She's 19, I'm 77. She has people calling her all day long to complain, and many of them can be dictatorial: they're used to running large companies, and they have egos to match. Can I appreciate this woman's situation and make her feel good about what she does? Can I cause her to want to help me?

It's about building relationships. If you don't have a relationship with someone, you'll never have an influence relationship. Don't treat others the way *you* want to be treated; treat them the way *they* want to be treated. That's the real golden rule.

In the early 1990s, Keith was a senior instructor who also designed customized training programs for clients. A few months into my tenure I was assigned to be his editor. He was based in New York (I was in Boston) and had a reputation for being a stickler. I felt some trepidation. But we talked on the phone, he seemed organized, and the first project seemed to go fine, so I assumed the work would proceed much as usual.

A couple weeks later, Keith called and said he'd be in the Boston office the next day; would I have time to meet? "Sure," I said, figuring he'd breeze by, dump the latest set of materials on my desk, and leave. But something quite different happened.

He arrived, said hello, and asked if it was a good time to talk. "Um, OK," I said, fearing there was a problem. He sat down in the other chair in my cubicle and launched into a series of questions about editing. What did I do? What was the process? What were the lead times, and when did I need the handoffs? Who else was involved? And (most surprising), how did I like to work? What should he know about me in order to collaborate well? I started off hesitant, unsure why he was asking me all this stuff, but soon warmed to the conversation. He listened, taking notes on a yellow pad as I talked. The whole thing took about half an hour.

I was 26, a lowly editor. Keith was in his 50s, a senior manager and star instructor. Never had anyone taken such an interest in my work. Never had I felt so respected on the job.

What was Keith's payoff for showing that respect? From then on, I made him my No. 1 customer. If he called at 5:29 p.m., I would take off my coat and sit back down. If he made a mistake in some materials, I didn't shrug it off; I left him a voicemail about it. I'm a conscientious person as a rule, but with Keith, I went beyond the call of duty. Even more telling, though, was what started to happen fifteen years later, when I had risen to a senior manager role and Keith was an independent contractor. Now in a position to give him work and recommend him for client projects, I did both, often and enthusiastically. Some other people I'd worked with back in my editing days, talented though they were, had nothing like the same pull with me.

This story illustrates a key fact about influence: it works within but under the radar of the hierarchy, flowing around the boxes of the org chart. Keith was never my boss; he was, however, in a position to be generous to a colleague—as are we all. In any situation, work or personal, there is always someone, high or low, whom we could surprise with humane treatment. Care is not just something to hope for from our superiors. If we want to be influential, care is something to dispense freely, ourselves.

Where do we start? The impetus for humaneness will come from believing three things: first, we're all creatures of heart-mind, of emotion intertwined with reason; second, we're all creatures of choice, free to give our best or merely to skate by, depending on our inclinations; and third, we're all creatures of equal worth, no matter our role or title. But to give those beliefs muscle, we'll need to "just do it" by demonstrating care in our daily work. (For tips on how to do it, see Appendix A: Quiet Influence Tactics.)

Western Pitfall 1: Relying on reciprocity

We shouldn't stereotype Westerners (by which I mean people of European descent) as loud and pushy any more than we should stereotype Asians as quiet and subtle; nevertheless, there are characteristically Western habits and attitudes that can trip us up as we seek to build influence. The Western pitfall for this chapter is *relying on reciprocity.*

Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence,* first published in 1984, has shaped the Western business world's view of the topic. Central to the book is the concept of reciprocation bias, which, put simply, is the human urge to return a favor. Cialdini cites experiments showing that, for example, we are more likely to help out the generous guy who gives us five of his ten dollars than the stingy guy who gives us only two. It isn't surprising that people feel indebted to those who are generous—whether with money, job references, or party invitations—or that people feel a need to keep things even by reciprocating when they can. What is surprising (to me, at least) is the sweeping theory of influence-as-favor-trading that Cialdini and other researchers have spun from this one small aspect of human psychology.

It's a seductive idea, that influence is primarily economic. If it is, the whole matter is straightforward: we become more influential by assessing the "currencies" we have to offer, finding viable trading partners, and engaging in smart transactions. I pay you one job reference, and you pay me one introduction to a potential customer. I support your idea in today's meeting, you support mine on tomorrow's conference call. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. It's a view that goes down especially well in a commercial republic, that quintessentially Western form of society, wherein citizens see themselves as untethered individuals pursuing profitable transactions in a free marketplace.

The problem with this transactional view of influence? It fails to hold up in the real world, which is built more on relationships than on transactions. True, we do feel bound to reciprocate favors, and doling out favors does get us some short-term payback. According to Forum's research, though, influence over the long term depends much more on perceived trustworthiness, which in turn depends on three things: 1) Competence—do you deliver promised results? 2) Humility—do you admit what you don't know? 3) Cooperation—do you share decision-making? Scratching a back may get a back scratched in return, but being seen as competent, humble, and cooperative earns trust. And trusted people are influential.

Furthermore, we tend to trust the recipients of our own favors more than those who perform favors for us. In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin (who as a dispenser of wise and practical advice bears more than a passing resemblance to Confucius) tells how he finally won over a fierce critic, a man who had disliked him for years, by asking for the loan of a rare book. The man sent over the book immediately, and when the two next met, says Franklin, "He spoke to me (which he had never done before), and with great civility, and he ever after manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we became great friends."[3] Franklin saw the turnaround as evidence for the truth of an old maxim: "He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged."[4]

This oft-studied phenomenon has been dubbed the Ben Franklin Effect. Psychologists say it's a mechanism for reducing cognitive

dissonance: when we do something nice for a stranger or an adversary, our mind searches for a reason and lands on, “I must like this person.” Confucius would offer a different explanation. He would say that kindnesses we bestow on others increase our awareness of their humanity and our own, thereby enhancing our liren: our humane neighborhood. In showing care to others, we make them part of the family.

Confucius certainly isn’t blind to the power of reciprocity. “If you are generous to others,” he says, “this will be enough to ask them to do things for you.” (17.6) Individuals will, in general, want to return the favors you do them. But more important for Confucius, and for most Eastern philosophers, is the goodwill you build when you behave humanely: “If you are large-minded, you will win the hearts of the people. If you are trustworthy, people will have confidence in you.” (17.6) A network of trusting relationships is called *guanxi,* a central concept in Chinese culture. Guanxi is similar to *karma* in the Hindu tradition. While karma has metaphysical roots and guanxi is purely social, both are about sending good actions out into the world with the expectation that those actions will come back around to benefit you in unpredictable ways.

This kind of reciprocity is different from the Western version. To strain my metaphor from the Overview, suppose you own a pistachio ice cream shop and you’re looking for ways to grow profits. Confucian reciprocity is like churning more butterfat into the product in order to make it more delicious and thereby attract more customers. Western reciprocity is like adding a few more pistachios and marking up the price of a scoop by five cents per nut.

When you demonstrate ren, says Confucius, you don’t merely get repaid; people are drawn to you. They want to sign up for your projects, to collaborate with you, to be on your team. I call this phenomenon “the draw of the humane.” The humane neighborhood is powerful simply because more people want to be in it. As important, when a group is known for its humanity, the problematic people tend to stay away, because ren attracts the good and repels the bad (12.22). If such was the case in Ancient China, a relatively static society, it is even more the case today, when most of us have choices about which jobs to take and with whom to associate. If we

don’t work to create a humane neighborhood, we’ll find ourselves with few neighbors—or, worse, many bad ones.

Chapter 17 of the *Analects* opens with a story about Yang Hu, an ambitious swaggerer who for several years was a rising political figure in the state of Lu, a demagogue who sought to take down the governing elites and ride a wave of populism to power.[5] He wanted to recommend Confucius for a government position, thinking, no doubt, to get the renowned teacher on his side and in his debt. But Confucius refused to see him, so Yang Hu sent over a piglet as a gift, knowing that etiquette would require Confucius to make an in-person visit to convey his thanks. Confucius pulled the old trick of waiting until he was sure Yang Hu was out of the house before stopping by to pay his respects, but Yang Hu spotted him in the street and called out rudely, “Come here! I want to talk to you!” Yang Hu continued:

> “Would you call a man humane if he clutches a cherished jewel in his bosom while letting the country go lost and adrift? I would say not. Would you call a man wise if he is eager to take part in government while letting opportunity slip by again and again? I would say not. Days and months are rushing forward. Time is not on our side.” (17.1)

In other words: “You’re always babbling on about humaneness, Confucius, but your behavior is selfish. You’re hiding out instead of taking up power as you ought. I offered to help you. I gave you a piglet. Yet you’re ignoring me! What’s your problem?”

Yang Hu’s view of relationships was based on reciprocity. He must have been used to people accepting his favors, and he must have seen all life as a game in which those favors had racked up a lot of chips, chips he could cash in when he chose. Given his idea of influence as currency, he would naturally be baffled and angered by Confucius’ reluctance to join him in seizing opportunity: “This man has talents—jewels!—and he’s clutching them to his bosom. He’s hoarding his chips. He’s not playing the game.”

Yang Hu succeeded in throwing his weight around for a while, but his worldview was a cramped one, his attempts to topple the government failed, and his name today is obscure. Our influence will be equally limited if we rely on Western-style reciprocity, dispensing

currency and expecting payback. If, on the other hand, we strive to pay forward and outward—to build liren, the neighborhood with a humane spirit—we'll find our influence growing.

How did Confucius react to Yang Hu's hectoring? He said, "Right, I shall take up office," and left the scene.

And a few years later, the master did take up office, but not on behalf of the Yang Hu faction. He was appointed minister of justice, a job dedicated mostly to suppressing populist rebels. Yang Hu's piglet, it seems, had little effect.

The next quiet influence practice is *Encouraging others to express objections and doubts.*

Chapter 2

Applaud Anguish ~ The Yoga Vasiṣṭha

Boston: Spring 1991. I'd been on Forum's editing staff for about a year and a half. Mona (she of the flip-chart moment) had left the company some months back, as had another editor, and our current manager was on maternity leave. In this short-staffed state, I found myself in charge and needing to bring in freelancers to handle overflow.

Marketing was preparing to issue a raft of new brochures and other collateral, and one of their project managers, Barbara, asked me to find a freelance copyeditor who could start immediately and help them out full time for the next two weeks. I called the temp agency and asked if Debbie was available. Yes, they said. I'd worked with Debbie before and knew she was good, so I booked her with a sense of relief.

When she arrived Monday morning, I sent her to pick up her first batch of materials from the marketing director (who I assumed had been in communication with Barbara). Frantically busy, I told Debbie she needn't check in with me as the project proceeded; she could report to Marketing directly, and I'd sign her time sheets. I found her a cubicle and she settled in with a stack of documents.

Midafternoon, Debbie appeared in my doorway. She had her shoulder bag, so I thought she was done for the day and just wanted to touch base before leaving. But instead she sat down in my side chair and looked at me.

"What?" I said.

"She gave me my walking papers."

"What do you mean, walking papers? Who did?"

“The marketing director. I just now gave her the edited copy from today. She glanced through the stack and then she told me they weren’t going to make all those changes and they didn’t need an editor after all, so I could go. She fired me.”

I was livid, but there was nothing I could do in the moment. I apologized profusely to Debbie. She left, though not before pointing out that she had turned down another job because she had thought she was booked for two weeks.

I recorded a seething voicemail (this was before email) for Barbara, the project manager who had made the request in the first place. Ten minutes later, she showed up at my cubicle. “I got your message,” she said. “Thank you. Do you have time to talk about it?”

I won’t try to re-create the conversation that ensued; I’ll just describe how it felt.

I started out with arms crossed and voice clipped, decrying the rudeness, the unprofessionalism. Barbara at first simply listened, nodding along, but after a bit she started to ask short questions: “What then?” “How is Debbie feeling?” “Can you say more?” She hung on my every word, and I started to feel . . . disoriented. It was hard to stay mad at someone who seemed so keen to hear me talk. I found myself describing the pressure I was under, how shorthanded we were, how hard it was to find good freelancers. “That must be frustrating,” Barbara said. I started to feel . . . understood. Then she asked a few questions that were harder to answer, such as, “What effect do you think this will have on your work going forward?” and “What would you most like me to understand about all this?” I had to think about those, and as I talked on, I felt I was coming to understand the situation better. Finally, Barbara said: “So, what I’m hearing is that you’re concerned about your reputation out in the freelance community. You’re worried if word gets out that they can’t count on you, they may not want to work with you, and then the pressures on you here will be even greater, because you’re short-staffed and you really need those freelancers. Did I get that right?”

Yes, I said. Yes, that’s exactly right. I felt . . . strangely edified.

Barbara then asked what I thought we should do next, and I think we agreed she would determine which pieces of the marketing collateral required editing and would give those to me personally,

allowing plenty of lead time. But to be honest, I don't remember much about the problem-solving part of the conversation. What I do remember is the first part: how I gradually went from furious, to mollified, to engaged, to—there is no other word for it—enlightened.

I knew all about the 'handling objections' model, a method taught in Forum's sales training programs. Until then, though, I'd never had someone use it so brilliantly on me.

Applause for Teen Angst

Thrilled to hear Rāma's speech, all of them acclaimed "Bravo, bravo" with one voice and this joyous sound filled the air. To felicitate Rāma, there was a shower of flowers from heaven. Everyone assembled in the court cheered him. (Yoga Vasiṣṭha I:33)[1]

The Hindu scripture Yoga Vasiṣṭha (see "The Sage: Vasiṣṭha's Yoga," below) begins with a depressed teenager's tirade about the miseries of life. The rest of the book's thousand-plus pages contain the sage Vasiṣṭha's response to the teenager's concluding question: "Hence, pray tell me: what is that condition or state in which one does not experience any grief?"

Prince Rāma, heir to the Kosala kingdom, is not yet sixteen when he returns home with his brothers from a postgraduation grand tour of India, during which he has visited many cities and shrines and—one would think—had a wonderful time. Shortly after his arrival, however, he falls into a funk, growing thin and pale and showing no interest in any of his usual pursuits. His father the king seeks to discover the cause: "Beloved son, what is wrong with you?" the king asks. Rāma politely replies, "Nothing, father." (I:5)

The Sage: Vasiṣṭha's Yoga

The dates of the Yoga Vasiṣṭha (*Yoga Va-seesh-ta*) are debatable, but it was likely composed over a long period between the ninth and thirteenth centuries CE. The book may be seen as a gigantic sidebar or insert to the Indian epic Rāmāyana. Early in that epic, the sage Viśvāmitra arrives at court and asks that

Prince Rāma be allowed to join him on a warrior's quest. The king is on the point of refusing when his counselor Vasiṣṭha steps in to reassure him: "You need have no anxiety about Rāma's going." (Rāmāyana 20:19) The king summons Rāma, and the very next verse has him kissing his son on the head and sending him off on the quest "with a contented heart." The entire action of the Yoga Vasiṣṭha takes place between those two verses. In it, Vasiṣṭha offers a vast compendium of stories, fables, philosophy, and advice intended to help Rāma after he has expressed his despair at the pointlessness of existence. Much more than a theoretical exercise, however, the book dares "to bridge the gulf between the secular and the sacred, action and contemplation."[2] It is also an inspired guide for leaders of all levels, times, and cultures, ending with this exhortation from the sage: "Be free in nirvana and rule the kingdom justly."

Soon after, there arrives at the palace the renowned brahmin Viśvāmitra, who reports to the king the trouble he's having with a pair of demons desecrating his holy sites. He would like Rāma (who is known to have superhuman qualities) to help him deal with the invaders. The king is at first reluctant to comply, concerned that Rāma's youth makes him unqualified to wage war, but resident sage Vasiṣṭha urges him to honor a bargain he made with the gods upon his son's birth and permit the boy to go. The king asks Rāma's chamberlain about Rāma's state of mind; the chamberlain reiterates that, these days, the prince looks at everything with sad eyes. "He is bereft of hope, he is bereft of desire," says the chamberlain, "he is attached to nothing and he depends on nothing, he is not deluded or demented, and he is not enlightened either." (I:10) The king summons Rāma to the royal court.

When the boy arrives, the king again entreats him to explain what's wrong. "Holy sir," says Rāma, "I shall duly answer your question." And he duly does. For ten long and excruciating pages he elaborates on the "trend of thought" that has robbed him "of all hope in this world." Here's how he begins:

> My heart begins to question: what do people call happiness and can it be had in the ever-changing objects of the world? All beings in this world take birth but to die . . . I do not perceive any meaning in all these transient phenomena which are the roots of suffering and sin. Unrelated beings come together; and the mind conjures up a relationship between them . . . On examination, the mind itself appears to be unreal! But, we are bewitched by it. We seem to be running after a mirage in the desert to slake our thirst. (I:12)

Rāma goes on to expound the woes particular to childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. The body is a prison, he says; the mind equally so. Even the rich and mighty (especially the rich and mighty) are slaves to their cravings. Enjoyments, loves, ambitions—nothing but delusions. “All points of view in this world are tainted; all countries in the world are territories of evil . . . all actions are deceitful.” (I:27) And all one’s hopes are “consistently destroyed by Time . . . merciless, inexorable, cruel, greedy, and insatiable.” (I:23) Time devours everything, and what’s worse, nobody even knows what time is. “By reflecting on the pitiable fate of living beings thus fallen into the dreadful pit of sorrow, I am filled with grief,” Rāma says. “My mind is confused, I shudder, and at every step I am afraid.” (I:30) He concludes:

> Obviously there is a secret that enables one to remain unaffected by the grief and suffering in this world even as mercury is not affected when it is thrown into the fire. What is that secret? . . . Who are those heroes who have freed themselves from delusion? And what methods did they adopt to free themselves? If you consider that I am neither fit nor capable of understanding this, I shall fast unto death. (I:31)

Gathered to hear Rāma’s anguished oration are sages, ministers, royal family, servants, and citizens; palace dogs and cats, caged birds, and horses of the royal stable; and celestials, semi-divine beings who roam between heaven and earth. If such a lengthy and demotivating speech occurred in a film of today, the next thing we’d get would be a panning shot of those hundreds of courtiers and city folk, beasts and nymphs, all stunned into unhappy silence. The king would rise and tearfully embrace his son; servants would lead the boy away; a guru would step forward and deliver a discourse on resilience. Later, there might be scenes of Rāma with his therapist, the latter asking about his patient’s childhood and repeating, “It’s not

your fault," like the Robin Williams character in the movie *Good Will Hunting*.

In the book, however, that's not what happens. First we are told that those assembled "were highly inspired by the flaming words of Rāma's wisdom that is capable of dispelling the delusion of the mind . . . They drank the nectarine words of Rāma with great delight." (I:32) So rapt with attention are they, they appear to be painted figures rather than living beings. And then, when Rāma finally falls silent, here's their reaction:

> Thrilled to hear Rāma's speech, all of them acclaimed "Bravo, bravo" with one voice and this joyous sound filled the air. To felicitate Rāma, there was a shower of flowers from heaven. Everyone assembled in the court cheered him. Surely, no one but Rama who was full of dispassion could have uttered the words that he gave expression to . . . We were indeed extremely fortunate to have been able to listen to him. (I:33)

When I first read the Yoga Vasiṣṭha, I was baffled by this joyful ovation. Why applaud such a downer of a speech? Moreover, I couldn't understand why Rāma continues on as a character, raising an objection every other page—sometimes the same objection he raised ten pages ago. No sooner has Vasiṣṭha finished one of his intricately knotted fables or mind-stretching discourses about universal consciousness, but here comes Rāma, chiming in with yet another "I don't get it" or "But what about this?" or "I'm still depressed." Why not simply have Vasiṣṭha share his wisdom and let us drink it in, undistracted by the whiny prince's interruptions?

Eventually I saw why. The great lesson to be learned from the Yoga Vasiṣṭha comes not from the philosophy or the stories, wonderfully edifying though they are, but rather from watching someone spend three weeks (that's roughly the span of time the book covers) *fully engaging with another's anguish.* From the audience's initial cheers to his final words ("And thus have I told you all that is worth knowing"), Vasiṣṭha is open to Rāma's pain. Indeed, he is more than open; he honors it. Never does he show impatience. Never does he say, "That's enough worrying," or, "You already asked me that." Occasionally he notes the immaturity of a particular question and says he'll get to it later—which he does. By the end,

we've seen how a master handles not just *an* objection, but *the* objection: "Life sucks."

Quiet Influence Practice 2: Encouraging others to express objections and doubts

Handling objections has been a staple of sales and coaching classes since the 1970s. The method taught by Forum was: "encourage, question, confirm, provide, check." Variations on those five steps are ubiquitous in the training industry, from "acknowledge, ask, confirm, respond, check" to "listen, explore, help, follow up," and many more. My colleagues and I used to joke that there was only one thing anyone ever learned in a Forum class, and that was how to handle objections. There was some truth behind the quip, for the ability to respond well to another's frustration or disappointment sits at the heart of influence, whether in selling, coaching, teamwork, or personal relationships. In Forum's sales workshops, handling objections was one of the first skills covered, the theory being that objections can arise at any stage of the sales process, even right after you've said hello. As in sales, so in life: objections can crop up at any time, and in the most innocuous conversations.

Most of us want to know how to triumph over objections: how to nip them in the bud or, once they're out there, bat them away. Sales seminars teach various categories of objections—misconceptions, skepticism, and so on—and appropriate responses to each, such as, "If a misconception, use additional information to clarify." Our instinct when confronted with an objection is to hit it hard with the "right answer." The customer says, "I'm not sure this product is going to work for me"; we respond, "Oh, sure it will work, this is the latest version of the product, it's the best, I recommend it." Our team member says, "I'm having trouble keeping up with all these assignments"; we respond, "Let me show you the system I use—it'll help a lot." Our spouse says, "It's really tough for me when you get home so late"; we respond, "The meeting ran over! What was I supposed to do?"

There's an objection: quick, kill it.

Master influencers know this to be the wrong approach. They know it's better to do something counterintuitive, something that requires overcoming our natural reaction to an attack. Instead of slamming the door, they open it wider. Faced with an objection, they *encourage first.*

Encouraging means showing, in words, tone, and body language, that you want to hear more. It is not the same as analyzing the issue. It is not the same as agreeing with the other person. Its purpose, rather, is to let the other person feel they can talk to you; that they can share their thoughts and emotions freely.

We seldom recognize the anguish that lurks behind an objection: the fear of being disbelieved, the sense of powerlessness in a situation that seems out of control, the worry that one might make the wrong choice or already has made the wrong choice. When I lit into Barbara, the marketing project manager, I was annoyed—but more than that, I was embarrassed and afraid. I was embarrassed, because in Debbie's eyes (I thought) I looked like an idiot who hired freelancers without confirming that they were actually needed. And I was afraid, because what if my manager came back from maternity leave and the marketing team told her I'd screwed up? Neuroscience says that in such exchanges the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for fight-or-flight reactions, is flashing "Danger!"

When someone confronts us with an objection, then, our first job is to alleviate that sense of danger and make them feel it's all right to speak, that we *invite* them to speak (see "Influence in Brief: Encouraging Objections," below). But encouraging isn't easy. Confronted with an objection, our own amygdala goes on high alert, too. It's difficult to suppress our strike-back instincts and maintain an attitude of inviting participation; to say, in effect, "Lay it on me."

Influence in Brief: Encouraging Objections

[My assistant in Hong Kong] started out cautiously. She wondered if she came to me and said, "You messed up," was I going to say, "Well, I'm the boss" and beat her over the head. I had to draw her in. Before a client meeting, I would ask her, "Here's what I'm thinking about . . . Does that make sense, or am I going to walk into something bad?" She would say, "Yes, that's fine," or, "Well, the client might think this or that." It helped if I said, "Here's the outcome I want to achieve; is this

the path that will get me there?" If she saw what I was trying to achieve, she could comment on my approach.

–Galina Jeffrey

How do you follow up on low scores on a feedback report? If you go and ask a peer, they'll probably say, "You're doing fine." Not many managers are confident enough to have a meeting with their teams and solicit their honest feedback. If you're not sure how to ask, just make your action plan and take that plan to people and say, "This is my plan. How does it sound to you? Are there other things I could be doing?" That's much less threatening to everyone.

–Keith Bronitt

People go wrong when they make assumptions about what others think based on their own perspective. For example, if someone is quiet, you might assume this indicates agreement, when in fact they are weighing the pros and cons. When I coach people, I help them recognize that the assumptions they're making about the other person's thoughts often come from their own projections.

–Christie Jacobs

Kevin Higgins, a Forum regional vice president, was also an expert sales trainer. In his classes he would review the concept of handling objections, then have two people come to the front of the room to play a "customer" and a "salesperson." The latter would sit facing a flip chart with the steps written out: encourage, question, confirm, provide, check. The following scene would unfold.

"Remember, you're going to demonstrate this process," says Kevin to the salesperson.

"Got it," says the salesperson.

The customer, reading from a card, states the objection: "Compared to your competitors' prices, your product is more expensive."

And the salesperson jumps right to providing: "Sure, I can see how you might think that, but in fact if you look at the big picture you'll see we're more cost-effective overall . . ." Kevin, meanwhile, is banging the side of his hand on the Encouraging step on the flip chart. He keeps banging until the salesperson stops, confused.

"Encourage first," says Kevin.

“Oh, right,” says the salesperson. The customer repeats the objection, and this time the salesperson hesitates . . . and asks a question:

“Can you please explain what you mean by ‘more expensive’?”

Kevin bangs on the flip chart again. “What? I was encouraging!” says the salesperson. “No, you were questioning,” says Kevin. *“Encourage first.”*

It usually took three or four tries before the salesperson managed simply to say, “Uh huh,” wait, and *listen* while the customer elaborated on his or her objection. Often it turned out the real concern was quite different from what the salesperson had assumed. And a minute or two of simple listening improved the subsequent questions.

Forum also taught that objections are a sign of engagement: the customer who voices doubts is more open to your solution than the customer who says nothing. This is true in non-sales situations, too. The colleague who says, “It’s fine,” after you show her the prototype is the one who’ll be happy if it dies an early death, whereas the colleague who says, “I hate these three things,” cares about making it better. “Objections mean engagement” is the basic belief that can help us overcome our natural defensiveness. Thinking, “Oh, good, they want to play!” makes it easier to be open to the concerns.

“This all sounds like it will work in a pleasant conversation,” you might object, “but what about in a hostile exchange? Am I supposed to encourage people to attack me?”

Often, the answer is yes—because encouraging defuses hostility. We’ll explore this concept further in Chapter 7, but for now, I’ll just note that nothing disarms a social media troll more effectively than, “I appreciate your comment,” or, in response to vicious personal attacks, “You’re funny! Thanks for the laugh.” Physically dangerous situations are, of course, another matter, but even there, encouragement has its occasional uses. A wise girlfriend once shared with me her foolproof way of dealing with flashers in public spaces: point and applaud while shouting, “Hooray! Good show!” Causes instant wilting and flight, she said.

I wonder what Rāma thought when, after he’d delivered his devastating hour-long objection to life, the universe, and everything,

the audience burst into cheers and flowers rained from heaven. The Yoga Vasiṣṭha doesn't describe his reaction, but I imagine he felt a little disoriented—just as I did when Barbara thanked me for my angry voicemail. And although Vasiṣṭha's ensuing discourses are brilliant, I think 80 percent of his work was accomplished in that moment of celebration—just as 80 percent of Barbara's work was accomplished the moment she sat down, leaned forward, and said, "Tell me more."

Western Pitfall 2: Assuming causes instead of conditions

One of the Yoga Vasiṣṭha's recurring images is of a crow landing on the branch of a palm tree and a coconut falling to the ground. Here is the first instance:

> At the beginning of [each epoch of the universe], someone assumes the role of creator and thinks, "I am the new Creator"—this is pure coincidence, even as one sees a crow alighting on a palm tree and the coconut falling, though these two are independent of each other. (III:21)

The point of the anecdote is that the crow did *not* cause the coconut to fall; we just assume it did, using the linear "if A then B" kind of causal reasoning of which Western philosophers are so fond. Without painting West and East with too broad a brush, we may note that Aristotle's treatises on the physical world, written in the fourth century BCE, sparked an enthusiasm for causal analysis that has colored the Western world's approach to science and other intellectual pursuits ever since. This approach, in turn, has led to an impressive degree of control over our circumstances. Find the cause of a disease, and we can cure the illness; find the causes of economic growth, and everybody gets richer. Tempted by such control, Western thinkers acknowledge that causes are complex but strive to reduce that complexity to a long line of billiard balls: click, click, click . . . and the last ball drops into the pocket (or the coconut drops from the tree).

The East takes a different view. The Yoga Vasiṣṭha, for example, incorporates many South Asian schools of thought, all of which are skeptical or outright rejecting of linear causality. This doesn't mean

that Eastern thinkers regard the universe as a meaningless mess; rather, it means they see *webs of conditions* rather than *strings of causes.* Webs of conditions, while they can be examined and appreciated by those with keen perception and open mind, can never be reduced to “A then B.” Reams of data and years of study will never uncover *the reason* the coconut dropped, because myriad factors—from the genetic code of the tree that said “coconut here,” to the beetle that nibbled at the stem, to the wind that swayed the branch—comprise a web of nearly infinite conditions, of which the crow is just one, that together conspired to make the coconut fall right then, right there.

When we see the crow alight and see the coconut fall, however, we want to conclude that the two events are causally linked. “It’s obvious!” we cry. “Didn’t you see the crow? And that coconut barely missed my head!” The next step in such a chain of reasoning is to advocate for the extermination of all crows, dangerous dislodgers of coconuts.

Rāma says, “Unrelated beings come together, and the mind conjures up a relationship between them.” Or, as influence expert Helena Garlicki puts it, “We make up stories that aren’t true.” And here’s where we return to handling objections, for it is these just-so stories—wherein our ego usually takes a starring role—that convince us we know the essence of an objection and how to deal with it. If A has caused B, and we don’t want B, we can get rid of B by getting rid of A. Our favorite story is, “I Know What’s Wrong and How to Fix It.”

Here’s a personal example. Recently I arranged to have the stucco on our house redone. This was a two-week process replete with noise, mess, and stress. As I sat in my basement office on the morning of the fourth or fifth day, trying to work as I listened to men clambering up ladders and over the walls and roof, Spider-man–style, the internet went out.

It was obvious why. The men had accidently cut the main cable traversing the roof.

I stomped upstairs and out the kitchen door. “Be polite,” I thought. I spoke in slightly overloud tones to the knot of men standing in the driveway. “Someone cut the cable! I have no internet!” Much consternation ensued. The foreman went up the ladder and checked

the situation above. No, he insisted; nothing had been cut or detached.

I stomped back inside. How could they be so obtuse? They'd gone up on the roof, and the internet had stopped. A, then B. The cause was clear.

I figured I may as well call the cable company, since they'd have to come out and repair things in any case. I called, navigated the phone menu, and heard a robot voice say:

"A general outage has been reported in your area. Service will be restored by: Twelve. Twenty-two. Pee Em. We apologize for the inconvenience."

Oh.

I went outside again and told the men, sorry, it was Comcast. "Ah, Comcast!" they said, nodding and laughing. They were very nice about it.

The web of conditions surrounding any hitch in the proceedings—whether it's the internet stopping, a customer saying, "Too expensive," or your spouse complaining that you're late—is always more extensive and complex than our initial assumptions would have it. Maybe there's an area-wide outage. Maybe the customer is worried not about initial cost but about maintenance time and hassle. Maybe your spouse is getting a cold.

So, encouraging actually isn't the first step. The very first step in handling objections is to let go of the linear explanation we've strung together, the just-so story, and consider that maybe we've seen only a tiny piece of the puzzle. "It's more about self-awareness," says Christie Jacobs, leader of Forum's original Influence rollout. "Why did you make that determination? What are the facts, and what did you conclude from those facts? Are there additional facts you might have overlooked? It's about understanding your own thought biases and emotional needs." After that, it's time to talk to the other person. "But without that self-reflection," says Christie, "if you just jump in and start asking questions, whatever they say, you've got your predetermined assumption why they're saying it."

I *knew* the stucco guys had cut the cable. But what I *knew* to be true, wasn't. The crow hadn't made the coconut fall.

Galina Jeffrey, newly assigned to lead Forum's Hong Kong division in the mid-1990s, handed her assistant cab fare to get home after a late-evening office party. The next day, the assistant seemed miffed. Galina pressed her to say why. "I felt you were treating me like a kid," the assistant said. "That's not how we do things here." Galina started to explain that she just wanted her to get home safely —but stopped and took another tack: "I thanked her and told her I was going to make a lot of mistakes, so I needed her as a partner. I needed her to raise a flag whenever I was screwing up." It was a turning point in their relationship.

Galina's encouragement wasn't as grand a gesture as the standing ovation given to Rāma for his "I hate life" speech. As an example of handling objections, though, it was perfect.

The next quiet influence practice is *Exuding appreciation and good cheer.*

Chapter 3

Create Delight ~ Zhuangzi

Cambridge: October 1992. The winter-themed coffee mug I'd bought from Starbucks was only making me colder.

It was day one of my new job as a senior production editor for a small research and consulting firm serving the oil and gas industry. I had left Forum, after exactly three years there, in search of a place with a more intellectual vibe. Rather than sitting on the Boston side of the Charles River editing sales and leadership training materials, I would now be sitting on the Cambridge side editing *World Oil Watch.* The organization's founder was a renowned energy scholar and Pulitzer Prize winner. I think I expected to feel his aura while working on interesting articles about the Middle East.

Entering the building on that chilly fall day, however, all I felt was sad. My new boss and teammates were welcoming enough, but there were few smiles from those I passed in the hallways. When I was shown to my desk—one of just two in an office with a door, which was a step up from my cubicle at Forum—I found there was no computer on it, only a huge jar of pens and pencils and rulers, which, as I sat down still wearing my wool hat and scarf, gave me the impression that I'd filled a post recently vacated by Bob Cratchit. The general setup was no different from that of any other consultancy of the early 1990s: glass-fronted offices lining the perimeter, copy machines humming in the corners, abstract art on the walls. But the lighting seemed to me dim, the colors drab. The founder, they told me, kept to himself.

Among the things I learned that first morning was that everyone had to bring a mug for coffee or tea, so I went out on my lunch hour

to buy one. Walking back from Starbucks with new mug in plastic bag, I braced myself against the wind gusting around the office buildings and the misery welling up inside me.

Back at my desk, I gave myself a talking-to: “You wanted this job. It’s more money. It’s a more serious company. Anyway, it’s only the first day. It will get better.”

But the place just didn’t seem a happy one. Around Halloween our manager, who really did try, arranged a pumpkin-carving party for us editors. As we sat around a newspaper-covered table wielding our penknives and mini-pumpkins, one of the research associates wandered over. “Your team is so fun,” he said wistfully, and wandered away again. The miasma of tension and gloom was thickened by the two managing directors, whom I’ll call “Paul” and “Hamish” and who (so I heard) couldn’t stand each other. I got a taste of their mutual animosity one day when I faxed Paul, based in Paris, a review copy of a news alert that Hamish, based in Cambridge, had told me must go out next day. On the cover sheet I wrote, a bit tactlessly, “Paul: Please get back to me with your revisions by end of day, as Hamish would like this to go out tomorrow.” Paul called me minutes later to inform me through clenched teeth that it was he, *not* Hamish, who decided when alerts went out, and that he couldn’t get to this one for some time.

By February, I’d had enough. When Forum’s director of product development called to say she needed a project manager for a big new initiative and would I consider coming back—not to an actual job, mind you, just freelance—I jumped at the chance. It was as if I had been granted a reprieve from the gulag. I handed in my notice.

The research associate who had observed our pumpkin party stopped by to say he was sorry to hear I was going. “This happens all the time,” he said with a sigh. “People run screaming. It’s too bad.”

On my last afternoon I said goodbye to my teammates, packed up my Starbucks mug, and left the building. The Cambridge streets were icy. I felt warm all the way home.

Sometimes a Horse, Sometimes an Ox

Lao Dan said, “When a clear-sighted sovereign rules, his achievements cover all the world, but they seem not to come from himself. He transforms all things, and yet the people do not rely upon him. There is something un-nameable about him that allows all creatures to delight in themselves.” (*Zhuangzi* 7:4)[1]

The Taoist classic known as the *Zhuangzi* is, like the Yoga Vasiṣṭha, a book of unclassifiable genre, consisting of stories, jokes, songs, and conversations featuring sages, fools, cooks, demons, tigers, salamanders, and a thousand-mile-long fish named Kun who changes into an equally enormous bird named Peng and sails across the cosmos. Little is known about the work’s supposed author (see “The Sage: Zhuangzi,” here). It’s more poetry than philosophy, more perplexing guide than guide for the perplexed. It disorients, like a whack on the side of the head.*

The book’s seventh chapter, “Sovereign Responses for Ruling Powers,” is about leadership. The title’s ambiguity, says translator Brook Ziporyn, is intentional; the Chinese phrase could mean either “excellent responses for rulers to use” or “excellent responses to use with rulers.” That is, we can read the chapter either from the perspective of someone who leads or from the perspective of someone who must work with leaders. This either-or reinforces the book’s most prominent theme, which is that perspectives, even on essential issues such as one’s identity, shift in bewildering ways, and that the secret of life is to go (carefully) with the flow.*

The chapter opens with a direct hit at the Confucian concept of ren, which as you’ll recall means humaneness or humanity. We hear of a student named Nie Que, who is excited because a Confucian sage has taught him to say, “I don’t know,” in response to any question. He runs to report this foolproof technique to his teacher, Puyizi, who replies as follows:

“So now you finally *know* this? But the man of the Youyu clan is no match for the man of the Tai clan. A Youyu still harbors humanity *[ren]* in his breast, with which he tries to constrain other human beings. He may be able to win people over that way, but in doing so he never gets beyond criticizing people, considering them wrong. A Tai, on the other hand . . . Sometimes he thinks he’s a horse, sometimes he thinks he’s an ox. Such understanding is truly reliable, such virtuosity deeply genuine. For they never involve him in criticizing other human beings, in considering them wrong.” (7:1)

Harboring humanity is bad. Good leaders think they are animals. Genuine virtue means never criticizing. What on earth could all this mean?

Let's consider three things.

First, although his interpretation of ren may seem a little unfair, Zhuangzi has a point: trying to convince everyone around you to be a certain way, no matter how good that way may be, is a losing game. Such efforts remind me of culture changes kicked off with announcements from the C-suite that "Our culture is one of [fill in the blank]." Whether the culture is one of innovation, collaboration, humaneness, or anything else, telling people to "make it so" is ineffective. Okay, you might say, what if we set measurable goals for the culture change? Zhuangzi undercuts that notion by introducing another student, one who opines that "if a ruler can produce regulations, standards, judgments, and measures derived from the example of his own person . . . all will be reformed by him." This student's "crazy" teacher (for Zhuangzi, "crazy" is usually a compliment) replies: "That is sham virtuosity. To rule the world in this way is like trying to carve a river out of an ocean." (7:2)

The Sage: Zhuangzi

We have China's Grand Historian Sima Qian to thank for all our biographical knowledge of Zhuang Zhou, later called Zhuangzi or Chuang Tzu ("Master Zhuang"). Sima Qian's brief account in *Shi Ji* 63 presents Zhuangzi as a minor official living in a minor state in the fourth to third centuries BCE. The king of a larger state invited him to serve as prime minister, but Zhuangzi rejected the offer with a snappy anecdote about sacrificial oxen being adorned for slaughter and the remark, "Do not defile me! I'd rather enjoy myself wallowing in filth than let myself be controlled by some head of state." In this likely apocryphal story, says translator Ziporyn, we see "that convergence of apparently contradictory identities that make Zhuangzi so fascinating: acerbic mystic, subtle rustic, bottom dweller and high flyer, unassuming rebel, abstruse jester, frivolous sage."[2] The book traditionally attributed

to him is known as the *Zhuangzi.* Scholars debate whether its seven so-called inner chapters and two dozen outer and miscellaneous chapters are all by the same person. Whether it had one author or many, the *Zhuangzi*—along with the *Tao Te Ching,* by Laozi—is one of the two foundational texts of Taoism.

Here again is that watery worldview beloved by Eastern thinkers. Oceans are not susceptible to performance management systems, and a humane culture can't be mandated any more than a river can be carved from an ocean. Later in the chapter another sage tells yet another misguided student, "You use the Course [the Way] to browbeat the world, insisting that people believe in it. Because you try to control others, you have allowed yourself to be controlled." (7.7) I don't think Zhuangzi is anti-ren; he is, however, against attempts to achieve liren (the humane neighborhood) through bureaucratic means, if for no other reason than that we ourselves may be caught and straitjacketed by the bureaucracy we've built.

Second, the animal transformations: "Sometimes he thinks he's a horse, sometimes he thinks he's an ox." One way to see this odd sentence is as a metaphor for role flexibility. In my former job, for example, I was head of R&D—and sometimes, I was a member of a sales team trying to win a piece of business. Southwest Airlines founder and former CEO Herb Kelleher used to help load bags during Thanksgiving (the busiest time for travel in the United States); that week, he wasn't the CEO, but a baggage handler. Consider Paul, the director at the energy consultancy who said with a snarl, "*I* am the one who decides when alerts go out!" He could have said, "I am *usually* the one who decides, but maybe this case is different. What's going on?" It's a wise person who knows that sometimes a horse is needed and other times an ox, and an even wiser person who knows how to shift from horse to ox when circumstances demand.

But there is, I think, another reason for the horse-ox metaphor and indeed for all the animal imagery that colors the *Zhuangzi:* animals, although they have preferences and aversions, lack negativity. To a dog, for instance, no smell is bad; a certain smell may serve as a warning not to eat something, but that warning is good information.

The canine attitude toward humans is the same: a dog will firmly rebuff the UPS driver each time he knocks at the front door, but no dog stews over the UPS driver's repeated insults. Dogs, of course, are bred to be man's best friend and so are even less judgmental than other animals, but all animals (yes, even cats) are free of the petty resentments, complaints, and antipathies that roil the human world. Animals are naturally serene and hence imbue their surroundings with serenity. On the rare occasion that my husband and I raise our voices, our dog puts an immediate stop to it by running over and insisting we pat her. "No problem," says her wagging tail. "No problem."

This brings us to Puyizi's third strange statement: that genuine virtuosity means never criticizing. Confucius wouldn't have agreed; he was quite ready to criticize, or at least to reflect on better and worse ways we might behave. Shining from every page of the *Zhuangzi*, though, is an acceptance—nay, *appreciation*—of every single blessed thing, along with an absolute refusal to label anything "wrong." Animals are this attitude's exemplars, but certain humans have it, too. Take this anecdote about a man named Ziyu who was suddenly taken ill:

> [His] chin was tucked into his navel, his shoulders towered over the crown of his head, his ponytail pointed toward the sky, his five internal organs at the top of him, his thigh bones taking the place of his ribs, and his yin and yang energies in chaos. But his mind was relaxed and unbothered. He hobbled over to the well to get a look at his reflection. "Wow!" he said. "The Creator of Things has really gone and tangled me up!" Ziju said, "Do you dislike it?" Ziyu said, "Not at all. What is there to dislike?" (6:39)

Ziyu is one of several discombobulated sages in the *Zhuangzi* who love the mess they're in. Life is always in some sort of tangle, they imply, so we might as well enjoy the twists and turns. (Or, as Björn Borg once said: "Just relax. It's a great match.") This sort of radical appreciation is like the sun on a cold day: it warms the atmosphere, making everyone feel better. When the clear-sighted sovereign arrives on the scene, says Zhuangzi, "there is something un-nameable about him that allows all creatures to delight in themselves."

Quiet Influence Practice 3: Exuding appreciation and good cheer

In my previous books I have discussed *climate*, one of the most studied yet least understood business concepts. Climate is people's perceptions of the workplace, or what it feels like to work in a place. It is not the same as culture. Climate is malleable and can change quickly, while culture, which is the underlying values and unwritten rules of an organization, is durable and slow to change. Climate has been shown to affect motivation, performance, and financial results and is, in turn, affected most strongly by managers' daily actions rather than by anonymous forces such as organizational history, systems, and strategy. Everyone talks about company culture, but company climate is the more powerful tool for improving results.*

For decades, my fellow consultants and I have argued that workplace climate should be managed, and we've pointed to the six dimensions—clarity, standards, commitment, responsibility, support, and recognition—which, research says, allow us to manage it. Recently, however, my study of Eastern thinkers (and especially the Taoists) has led me to believe we've been mistaken about climate in two ways.

First, *managing* is the wrong word for what you do with climate. In the *Zhuangzi* we meet Tian Gen, who "roamed along the sunny slopes of Mt. Yin" (7.4) until he came upon a nameless man on the bank of a river. He asked the nameless man, "How is the world to be managed?" Came the reply: "Away with you, you boor! What a dreary question!"

Dreary, indeed. Talk of managing climate takes a simple, sunny topic and turns it into something complex and a bit grim. When we at Forum used to pitch our climate assessments, we'd use lots of charts and data to make the case for climate as a key performance indicator. The pitch never really worked. Clients knew climate was soft stuff, and it would have been better, I now think, to own its softness, its essential unmanageability, while emphasizing its near-magical power to energize an organization. The six climate dimensions are useful, no doubt, in that they help us see what a positive climate would look like: employees would be committed to

the mission, for example. But when it comes to influencing climate, few statements could be less inspiring than “I’m going to manage your commitment.” Nor does it help to turn the statement into a question: “Now, Kiran, how can I do a better job of managing your commitment?” Away with you, you boor! Hashtag eye-roll.

So, if we aren’t going to manage climate, how are we going to influence it? “Be the change you wish to see,” says the familiar adage, which applies as much to climate as to change. A climate creator sets an example of clarity, standards, commitment, responsibility, support, and recognition. Even this view, however, strikes me as too complicated, too caught up with ticking boxes and compiling reports. Zhuangzi would laugh at the six dimensions, at our efforts to organize the Way into file folders. He would recommend, instead, a far simpler practice: *Exude appreciation and good cheer.* Rather than trying to manage a climate into positivity, we should just be positive—about the work, our colleagues, ourselves, everything—and let climate follow, as it naturally will (see “Influence in Brief: A Delightful Climate,” below).

Influence in Brief: A Delightful Climate

In our leadership research, the practice with the highest correlation with effective leadership was, “Promoting the development of other people’s talents.” I think at Forum that happened. It was a place to learn and grow.

–Joan Bragar

You need to be proactive and driven. What does that look like? In the West, they emphasize speaking out. But in Eastern cultures, people care more about how others will receive the message. I can be a very tough boss and very forceful, but I can be very caring as well. I combine these two together to find the best solution for the company.

–Wesley Luo

One of the program activities was interactive drawing. I remember people saying, “Engineers will never do that; they don’t like to draw.” Well, they loved it. It was the kind of creative, nonverbal experience that was very powerful. They could debrief it in a lot of ways: how did it feel to put something out there and not have anyone build on it? Why did you draw flowers but no roof? People thought it would be too airy-fairy, but it wasn’t.

–Christie Jacobs

Some other training companies had the manager being very parental: make sure people know what they need to do, that they get in line, that they are committed. It felt more top-down. I think Influence helped set a different tone, with more respect for the individual.

–Elizabeth Griep

The second mistake of the climate consultants was to see *managers* as solely responsible for shaping climate. When Forum and other firms conducted climate research in the 1980s and for decades after, we were mainly concerned with comparing macro forces (such as company strategy and history) with the daily influence of managers. I don't think it occurred to us to look at the daily influence of *everyone*. In the management training industry there was a natural bias to look at what people in managerial roles did and to assume that managers of some stripe, whether in the C-suite or on the front lines, were responsible for most if not all workplace phenomena. We climate researchers were excited enough to discover that it was immediate supervisors, not distant executives or company founders, who had the greatest impact on workplace climate, and we set out to share the good news in our management training courses: "You can manage climate! Here's how!"

Were I to conduct climate research today, I would look instead at the impact of employees versus managers, followers versus leaders (for more on followership, see Chapter 6). I would also look at companies with flat or self-managed structures to see how climate evolves in those environments. Although I'd still expect to find that supervisors, with their hire-and-fire authority, have considerable power to affect the tone of a workplace, I'd also expect to find that individual contributors—no matter how lowly their role or fleeting their interactions with colleagues—can be climate creators. The following story will illustrate the point.

In May 2016 I went to London for a week to promote my latest book. I stayed at a hotel called the Montcalm at the Brewery. It lacked an in-house restaurant but served a full English breakfast in

the back room of a pub just down the street. Being a big fan of eggs, sausage, and mushrooms, I ate there every morning.

The breakfast room had a pleasant atmosphere: the floors and tables were clean, the food trays hot. The wait staff, an ethnically diverse group, were all young. They bustled about and had a polite "Good morning" for every guest. The first few days my tea and toast were brought by a young man named Cedric, who clearly knew the ropes. He worked the spacious room with calm efficiency. He had strawberry-blond hair and couldn't have been more than 22.

On the fourth morning there was a new waiter who looked to be a little older than the norm, perhaps late 20s, tall and bearded. The room was crowded that day, the staff more harried, and the new guy seemed flustered as he tried to keep up with tea and coffee and clearing of dishes. At one point he approached Cedric and asked a question I didn't quite catch. Cedric replied, "No, go fill up the orange juice." They both turned in opposite directions, getting on with a busy shift, but then Cedric turned back and said—not loudly or with any special emphasis, just in a friendly way—"You're doing a great job."

The new guy was standing right in front of my table, so in that split second I saw his reaction. His face, which had been tense, relaxed into a smile. His shoulders also relaxed. He stood a little taller. And off he went to fill up the orange juice, with (it seemed) a lighter heart. What's more, *I* felt lighthearted. The piped-in music had been annoying a moment ago; suddenly, it was enjoyable. I looked around the crowded room and found it a charming place, filled with interesting people. I thought, "It's going to be a good day."

I don't remember how long the feeling lasted; probably just a few minutes. But I do know this: I'm never going to forget Cedric, waiter at the Montcalm at the Brewery breakfast buffet. He was clearly not a supervisor. He was, equally clearly, a climate creator.

Western Pitfall 3: Expecting everyone to sing "Kumbaya"

Creating a positive climate doesn't mean signing up for a love-in.

Eastern culture seized the popular imagination of the West in the 1960s. From the chants of "Hare Krishna" in Broadway's *Hair* to the twang of George Harrison's sitar on the Beatles' *Revolver,* from the

Mao jackets on fashion runways to the batik prints on the singers in a Coca-Cola commercial, the Western version of Eastern thought was marked by a warm and fuzzy view of it all. Americans, especially, began looking eastward for antidotes to consumerism, militarism, and anything else that seemed unpleasant. Taste-makers took Eastern philosophies, mixed them with a little Rousseau and Heidegger, and introduced them into the great thought-juicer of American society. What came out the spout was “Kumbaya.”

The song, ironically, was entirely American. It originated among African Americans in the southern United States in the 1920s, but when white folksingers of the 1950s adopted it, the rumor went about that the title came from a West African language. In fact, it’s simply regional dialect for “come by here.”[3] Embraced by the counterculture and made a staple of antiwar rallies, “Kumbaya” came to symbolize the pseudo-Eastern (but really very Western) view that all interpersonal strife will disappear if we simply resolve to be *nice.* Sit around the campfire, break out the guitars, and nobody will be mean or nasty ever again. It’s a utopian vision, one whose influence on social justice and personal growth movements has been, in my view, unhelpful. Those movements’ intellectuals, in the process of rejecting manipulative, power-based concepts of human relations, have too often leaned to the other extreme and declared the love-in the solution to all ills—which, of course, it isn’t. Moreover, the self-appointed leaders of the love-in often have a touch of the charlatan, and their act often covers up a will to power all the more pernicious for being cloaked in “love and light.”

A case in point is “Gary” (not his real name). One of the masterminds behind Forum’s influence research in the 1970s, Gary was known for hanging out with Timothy Leary and wearing saffron robes to the office. To this day his former colleagues describe him as “having real substance,” “a free soul,” and “brilliant,” but also “weird,” “rude,” and “clearly not fit for an organization.” One Forum researcher attended a team retreat at his house in the mountains, where, she recalls, he sat in front of her, cross-legged in his saffron robes, sans underwear. Another employee, charged with updating the research years later, recalls him “yelling and screaming” that the practices were not to be touched. “He was a bit of a bear to work

with," says one designer of the first Influence program. "I wish I could say the spirit of influence descended upon us and graced us, but it didn't." One of the reasons it didn't, I suspect, was Gary's behavior.

Another difficulty with the "Kumbaya" version of influence is what to do when others fail to sing along. Dick Meyer, a longtime Forum facilitator, has this to say: "Influence took a very optimistic view: if everyone used those practices, things would be perfect. But if it turns into win-lose because the other person doesn't want to play—we had trouble answering that."

On a first reading of the *Zhuangzi,* you might overlook its fierceness and mistake it for an ancient precursor to "I'm OK, you're OK"—a tiptoe through the tulips. But look more closely and you'll notice passages such as this one:

> All things are like this. They begin nicely enough, but in the end it gets ugly. They start out simple but end up oversized and unwieldy. Words are like winds and waves, and actions are rooted in gain and loss . . . So the rage comes forth for no apparent reason, the cunning words fly off on a tangent, like the panicked cries of a dying animal with no time to choose. The breath and vital energy come to a boil, and with that everyone becomes bloody-minded. (4:15)

Those are not the words of a sap. Zhuangzi expects the world to be "bloody-minded," yet he doesn't label the bloody-mindedness "wrong" or try to smother it with a blanket of love and light. Recall the example of Ziyu, the man who ended up with his organs on the outside and his thighs where his ribs should be. Ziyu didn't complain. He didn't ignore the mess or wish it away. Instead, he looked at his messy self and thought, "Cool! I can work with this."

Tracy Hulett, the consultant we met in the Overview, describes an organization she works with: "They're great people. They all want to sing 'Kumbaya' together. But sometimes you need to make a decision in order to move forward. Influence does not mean being a wuss." She says:

> It takes a lot of smarts to influence well. You have to be three or four steps ahead of everyone. Before you even start a conversation, you have to understand what the other person wants to get out of it, what's their stake in it. You have to sit back and listen. You have to decide what information is needed and will move things forward, and what information will confuse things or slow things down. How open

do I need to be to build trust yet not come across as, “Oh, she’ll tell you anything”? It is difficult.

“Love conquers all, but it’s not endless feather pillows,” says yoga teacher Jillian Walker.[4] Building influence requires that we meet challenges with neither brickbats nor pillows, but with a sharp and glittering tool—a chef’s knife, perhaps. And that reminds me of Zhuangzi’s best-known story, “The Cook and the Ox.”

A cook was carving up an ox for a king. The king watched the cook as he worked, his knife whizzing through the flesh with a resonant *zing,* his hand smacking the huge carcass, his foot bracing it, his knee pressing it. It was like a dance, or a song. Each stroke of the knife rang out the perfect note. “Ah!” said the king. “It is wonderful that skill can reach such heights!” The cook put down his knife and explained:

> When I first started cutting up oxen, all I looked at for three years was oxen, and yet still I was unable to see all there was to see in an ox. But now I encounter it with the spirit rather than scrutinizing it with the eyes . . . I depend on Heaven’s natural perforations and strike the larger gaps, following along with the broader hollows. I go by how they already are, playing them as they lay. So my knife has never had to cut through the knotted nodes where the warp hits the weave, much less the gnarled joints of bone . . . For the joints have spaces within them, and the very edge of the blade has no thickness at all. When what has no thickness enters into an empty space, it is vast and open, with more than enough room for the play of the blade. (3:3–5)

The cook went on: “Whenever I come to a clustered tangle, realizing that it is difficult to do anything about it, I instead restrain myself as if terrified, until my seeing comes to a complete halt.” Then the blade moves ever so slightly, and all at once “I find the ox already dismembered at my feet . . . I retract the blade and gaze at my work with satisfaction.”

“Wonderful!” said the king. “From hearing the cook’s words I have learned how to nourish life.”

A positive climate is not something to be managed or imposed, inflicted or expected. Performance metrics can’t generate it, nor can campfire songs. It is nourished, rather, by those who ply their craft with sharp intellect, deep satisfaction, and steadfast good cheer.

These climate creators are unfazed by a raging boss, a surly customer, a nightmare of a project, or indeed by any aspect of the great sinewy ox carcass, ugly as sin and reeking of futility, that confronts them when they arrive at their place of work each morning.

“Not getting through me,” says the carcass. “Don’t even try.”

The master picks up her knife. She closes her eyes, visualizing . . . *feeling* the spaces within the joints. She takes a breath, opens her eyes, smiles. “Going in!” she says.

And before you know it: oxtail soup.

The next quiet influence practice is *Taking time to develop a shared outlook.*

Chapter 4

Practice Patience ~ Rumi

Boston: 1993–1995. I returned to Forum that February at the behest of a former colleague, Mimi Bennett. In the few months I'd been at the Cambridge energy consultancy, Forum had fallen on hard times; a former executive actually warned me not to go back because, he said, the firm might not survive. But the opportunity to be back in a reasonably cheerful setting was too appealing to pass up. Plus, I liked Mimi. Previously she had been in charge of client-tailored programs, and I'd been her editor on many projects. Now, she was director of product development. In fact, she *was* Product Development. Determined to keep up R&D despite the financial struggles, the executive team had commissioned a new research study on selling skills and charged Mimi with building a related training product; the recent round of layoffs, however, had made her a group of one. In need of an all-purpose helper, she called me.

For the next year and a half, I worked alongside Mimi as a full-time contractor. We developed the sales product (eventually titled Dynamic Selling) and several other programs as well. My skill set was editing, but, "I always think everyone can do everything," Mimi said, and she demonstrated that belief to me every day. She let me follow her to design team meetings, client meetings, vendor meetings, and numerous pilot tests in various cities. There were other contractors working on her projects, but they were more senior and expensive—and in a few cases, more of a pain to deal with—so she made me her Girl Friday. The whole time I was watching, listening, and learning.

But I wasn't relegated to taking notes and editing documents. I quickly discovered that whenever I said, "How about if I . . .?" Mimi's answer would be, "Go ahead." I offered to write a workbook; she said yes. I proposed a design idea for a program module that was giving us trouble; she loved it. I offered to fly around the country supervising video shoots; she was happy for me to take charge. I certainly wasn't qualified to do any of these things when I first started doing them, but Mimi seemed to have infinite patience with me as I learned and infinite faith that I *would* learn. After a year or so, when the powers on high finally noticed that I was working 50 hours a week and that therefore it would be cheaper to hire me back as an employee, she fought to get me a salary nearly twice what I'd been making before. "People can't make jumps like that," said the HR director. "I don't know what to tell you," said Mimi. "This person has."

In 1995, she decided to take a career break to spend time with her two young children. By then I was heading up an R&D project of my own, and in her final week, Mimi made sure to inform my incoming boss and everyone else within earshot that I had the project well in hand and should be trusted to get on with it.

At Mimi's going-away party, Forum co-founder and CEO John Humphrey made his way through the crowd of well-wishers. I heard him say, "Mimi, you're one of those people who have shaped our culture. I don't know how that happened. But you're one of them."

I wanted to tell him, "I know how it happened. Our culture is all about being the best place to learn and grow. Well, Mimi helps people learn and grow."

Flash forward to January 31, 2013: my last day at Forum after more than two decades there. I emailed a farewell message to a number of colleagues and ex-colleagues, reminiscing about old times. Mimi and I had been out of touch for years, but she replied to the email, saying it brought back fond memories. I thanked her for all her help in those early days.

"I learned so much from you," I said.

She wrote back: "The learning went both ways."

The Laziest Son

A man on his deathbed left instructions
for dividing up his goods among his three sons . . .
He told the town judge,
"Whichever of my sons is the laziest,
Give him *all* the inheritance." ("The Night Air")[1]

Rumi, born in the thirteenth-century Persian empire, is one of the most-read poets in the world today (see "The Sage: Rumi," here). While scholarly translations of his multivolume works can be opaque, the translations of Coleman Barks, begun in the 1990s, are far more accessible and have done much for the Sufi thinker's present-day popularity. Out of his hundreds of poems, I've chosen one to represent his ideas about quiet influence.

"The Night Air" tells the story of a dying man who leaves instructions with a judge for dividing his estate among his three sons. He tells the judge to give the inheritance, all of it, to whichever son is the laziest. The man dies, and the judge proceeds to ask the three sons to give an account of their laziness. "I need to understand *how* you are lazy," he says. (The poem's narrator interjects, "Mystics are experts in laziness. They rely on it, because they see God working all around them: the harvest keeps coming in, yet they never even did the plowing.") "Come on," says the judge. "Say something about the ways you are lazy."

Before the sons reply, we get the following brief meditation on speaking and listening:

Every spoken word is a covering for the inner self,
A little curtain-flick no wider than a slice
of roast meat can reveal hundreds of exploding suns.
Even if what is being said is trivial and wrong,
the listener hears the source. One breeze comes
from across a garden. Another from across the ash-heap . . .

Hearing someone is lifting the lid off the cooking pot.
You learn what's for supper. Though some people
can know just by the smell . . .

Speech is a covering, a curtain, a lid. It conceals the inner self; unless, that is, an adept listener pierces the covering, flicks the curtain, or lifts the lid to perceive what is beyond or behind or

underneath. Deep listening, Rumi suggests, involves all five senses. The listener “hears the source” but also puts an eye to a gap to see “hundreds of exploding suns” (a dazzling sight) and sniffs the air wafting from garden (nice) or ash heap (not so nice). In lifting a cover off a cooking pot, the senses of touch, sight, and taste are in play: we pick up the hot lid, lean over to see what’s within, give the contents a stir or two and raise the spoon to our lips. But some people, says the narrator, can know what’s for dinner just by the smell: a molasses-sweet stew or a vinegar-sour soup. And then it’s back to the sense of hearing: “A man taps a clay pot before he buys it to know by the sound if it has a crack.”

For Rumi, listening to the presented self is superficial. We must listen, rather, for the *real* self: the stew inside the pot, the crack in the ceramic. The latter sort of listening takes time and concentration and therefore doesn’t seem a bit lazy, but we might call it incredibly receptive. Moreover, Rumi suggests, one can become expert at receptivity—at taking things in rather than dealing them out, in observing the world rather than manipulating it. Receptivity is the mystic’s craft. The mystic knows how to sit back and let the harvest roll in. And indeed, it’s an uncommon ability: how many airline passengers ever *really* sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight? Perhaps the “laziest” son deserves all the inheritance because he’s the only one who can sit back, relax, and enjoy it.

The Sage: Rumi

Rumi (1207 – 1273) wasn’t known by that name until his teens, when his family moved from Afghanistan to Turkey; the name means “from Roman Anatolia.” He grew up to be a legal and religious scholar. At age 37 he met a wandering holy man named Shams who, legend has it, posed him a question: Who was greater, Muhammed or Bestami? (The latter was a Persian Sufi.) Rumi answered that Muhammed was greater because “Bestami had taken one gulp of the divine and stopped there, whereas for Muhammed the way was always unfolding.”[2] This answer, according to translator Barks, propelled Rumi and Shams “into a

region of pure conversation," where they remained for months until Shams, perhaps concerned that he was keeping Rumi from his students, left as suddenly as he had arrived. It was then that Rumi became a poet and, like his friend, a practitioner of the mystical discipline known as the Turn. Later, he tracked Shams to Damascus; upon their reunion, the two fell at each other's feet. Rumi persuaded Shams to return and live with him, but on the night of December 5, 1248, Shams was called to the back door, left the house, and was never seen again. Most likely, says Barks, he was murdered at the direction of Rumi's son. Rumi titled his vast collection of poems *The Works of Shams of Tabriz.*

"The Night Air" continues with the eldest brother giving an account of his laziness. He tells the judge, "I can know a man by his voice, and if he won't speak, I wait three days, and then I know him intuitively." A different translation has, "I can know a man in a moment by the movements of his mouth"[3]—which, read in light of the preceding lines, suggests that this brother listens with his eyes as well as his ears. I like that he seems fully prepared for someone *not* to speak and has a plan for what to do in that case: wait and observe, for days if necessary, and let intuition do the heavy lifting. The eldest brother sounds like one of those restful people with whom you can sit, working or reading or just watching the world go by, with neither of you feeling any need to talk. His attitude seems admirably lazy.

Then the second brother chimes in: "I know him when he speaks," he says, "and if he won't talk, I strike up a conversation." This brother won't permit a non-talker to waste his time for days on end; he'll take the initiative, striking up a conversation on the spot. A little impatient, we might think, and certainly not lazy. On the other hand, if you want to get to know someone who seems shy, isn't starting a conversation the natural thing to do? The eldest brother might be accused of treating the nontalker like a scientific specimen or zoo animal—an object to be observed and hypothesized about. The second brother, though perhaps a bit overeager, at least recognizes the non-talker as a person, someone with a point of view and things to say.

Each of the two brothers' responses, by itself, is inadequate. Combined, however, they generate our next influence practice: "Taking time to develop a shared outlook." The first brother exemplifies patience; the second, dialogue. Throughout any collaboration, but especially at the start, patience and dialogue are critical—and are too often shoved aside in our haste to get it done, whatever it is. "Enough chitchat," we say; "time's a-wastin'!" But time spent on developing a shared outlook is never time wasted. This sort of laziness pays off in the end.

The youngest brother will take the concepts of patience and dialogue one step further. But before we go there, let's spend some time with this influence practice.

Quiet Influence Practice 4: Taking time to develop a shared outlook

Many of us who worked on the Forum Influence seminar back in the day remember the "Martha Weld" case study. Facilitator Paul Garces recalls:

> There was a case I found very powerful: Martha Weld. As the story opens, the heroine has just taken over the information systems group at a large corporation. She has the blessing of the CEO to go look at all the computers being used throughout the company and do some sort of analysis. She sends out a memo to the IT managers: "Harrington wants this. Please take a look at your data needs and get back to me by end of month." She hears crickets.

"She comes across as authoritarian, trying to use power she doesn't really have," Paul continues. "The name-dropping accrues bad currency in her account." That was indeed one point of the case, but another important point is Martha's failure to take time up front to create shared understanding with her stakeholders.

When I went back and reread the case, I was mildly surprised to find that Martha isn't in fact the head of information systems; she's an internal consultant tasked with working across all the plants and subsidiaries, each with its own way of doing things. She reports to a vice president of finance who has given her "wide latitude" to seek ways to "consolidate MIS resources." Her initial idea is that all data-

transmission costs should be reviewed at the corporate level so that spending patterns can be identified. (The case is set in the early 1980s, when Management Information Systems was seen not as a hub of innovation but as a kind of souped-up clerical function.) “Dear MIS Managers,” Martha’s memo begins, “The president has authorized a modification in monitoring data transmission.” She goes on to explain the new usage-reporting policy, saying it will provide a foundation for wider network coordination and help “us” to consolidate “our” collective buying strength. She closes with, “In this way, all of our interests, both individually and collectively, will be served.”[4]

Martha is in a classic influence situation: she has zero authority over the group whose help she needs. Moreover, there *is* no group; there’s just a bunch of individuals, each with distinct, perhaps even competing, plans and perspectives.

We tend to underestimate the lack of cohesion that marks the start of most initiatives. We’re put in charge of a project that requires cooperation, and in our imagination a group magically coalesces. “These are my Black Diamonds,” I used to say, back when I was rolling out a new training product and had identified a set of people I thought could be the experts in selling and delivering it. (Despite not being a skier, I liked using ski-trail metaphors.) Truth was, I never put any effort into bringing the so-called Black Diamonds together as a team, so they were a team only in my mind. In the same way, although Martha Weld assumes there is an “us” to receive her message, the MIS managers are not an “us,” hence her talk of “our interests” is meaningless. Equally meaningless is her reference to individual interests, given that she has never met any of the memo recipients and has no idea what their individual interests are. The name-dropping is certainly off-putting (“the president has authorized . . .”); the bigger problem, however, is her belief that naming a group creates a group.

As the case unfolds, Martha receives some replies along the lines of “message received, happy to help.” But not one IT manager actually sends her a data-usage report. Months pass, and in the end, “reports from other corporate managers indicated that the

subsidiaries were busy . . . and the usual procedures for that time of year were being followed."[5] Cue the crickets.

So what do we do if, like Martha Weld, we've been authorized to lead a game and no one is playing? The two elder brothers of "The Night Air" know what to do: exercise patience, and engage in dialogue. Like them, we should take time—even at the risk of feeling we're wasting time—to develop a shared outlook. This process doesn't require any special facilitation skills; we don't need a counseling degree, and nobody has to open up about their childhood. (Remember, influence isn't about singing "Kumbaya.") We simply need to allow and encourage the discussions—some relevant to the project, some not—that take place naturally as people are finding their feet. In other words, we need to be a little lazy.

Some of my Forum colleagues had a mantra: "The conversation is the work." I used to scoff at that. "No, the work is the work," I'd say. But I have to admit they were right in one key respect: at the start of any group endeavor, when our main job is simply to help people feel like members of a group, conversation is the main vehicle for that job (see "Influence in Brief: Patience for the Dialogue," here).

The workplace of the early 1990s was all about teams. Western organizations were rushing to imitate Japanese kaizen (continuous improvement) and the team-based structures that were its backbone. Research on teamwork and team leadership flourished. At Forum an entire consulting practice, Customer-Focused Quality, grew out of our training for process improvement teams, and our efforts to behave more like a consulting firm as opposed to a training vendor resulted in a new project management process, dubbed the "Do-Si-Do" because it emphasized the handoffs back and forth between sales team and project team. All such endeavors were about developing a more rigorous body of knowledge around a type of relationship—call it influence, lateral leadership, or what you will—which in every sphere was fast overshadowing the traditional boss-subordinate relationship. And within that body of knowledge, the concept of greatest interest was team formation. Before, the only team anyone had had to form was a softball team at the annual company picnic. Suddenly it seemed a new team was needed every day, and you had to know how to create one.

Influence in Brief: Patience for the Dialogue

What I found again and again is that the issue of membership is not attended to. People are first and foremost task-focused. Talking about “Why are we all here?” never happens. There’s an assumption that we know why we are all here: it’s a one-hour meeting, we started late, let’s get going. There is no time spent on the front end just to have a conversation.

–Carol Kane

Once we were running an Influence seminar for a large manufacturer. On the last day of the session we got a call from the instructor at 11:00 a.m.; she had something wrong with her eye and couldn’t see. She gave the group an early lunch, and I came in for the last half day. I said, “OK, this team just shifted. We have to go through Membership again. What questions do you have for me?” I needed to honor the bond the group had established. And they appreciated the approach; it worked well.

–Galina Jeffrey

“Be patient while others are learning” is my favorite influence practice. It’s essential, because we often are not. We don’t get that it is part of our job. People’s thinking will change, but you have to be patient while they are becoming aware of their thinking. We underestimate the extent to which we are learning or teaching, all the time; if you want to get aligned with someone, you have to dig into their experience, understand where they are coming from. To be effective at influencing others, you need to pay attention to the evolution of their thinking.

–Joan Bragar

In Zen, one of the concepts for a master is always to have “beginner’s mind.” Who do you learn from? From the people all around you.

–Galina Jeffrey

Today, most people assume project teams will pop into existence when needed and dissolve when needed no longer. It’s not that project managers are lazy. Quite the opposite: they assume their job is to drive the bus, not laze around waiting for everyone to climb aboard. It was different for us late-twentieth-century workers; we had the advantage of taking nothing about the bus-boarding process for granted. Like Rumi’s judge who said, “Come, tell me *how* you are

lazy," we knew there was a "how" we had to master when it came to team formation. We knew it would take time and finesse.

Among the team-formation tools we learned to use back then were launch meetings, ground rules, mission statements, stakeholder maps, and role-definition charts. All were useful, and today a quick internet search will turn up detailed instructions and templates for them. With hindsight, however, I can see that these tools' real value lay in the structure and legitimacy they gave to upfront talk that otherwise would have been seen as idle. Team ground rules, for example, were always the same ("Listen to each other," "Be on time") and were rarely referred to after they'd been laid down, but here's the thing: we had gone around the room, each person had had a chance to speak, and each person's suggestion had been respectfully written on the flip chart. "Our Ground Rules," circulated later via interoffice memo, would mark us as a team.

Bruce Thomas, a former Forum account executive who sold and taught many Influence programs, describes how he still applies these team-building lessons today in his work with global technology companies:

I go into meetings: a roomful of IT experts and a program manager who's maybe 29. I'm the business development guy, 55 years old. The program manager starts going through the presentation for the customer. I just listen, and then in the middle I say, "Stop. Let's talk about what's going to happen with this client." Then I model the approach of having others talk, listening, and asking the quiet person what's going on for them. I'm not the team leader, but they appreciate it, because I include everyone. I demonstrate that leadership doesn't come from a title. I just model that skill of bringing a team together.

Western Pitfall 4: Learning *about* rather than *from*

So far, the judge in Rumi's "Night Air" has asked the three brothers to give an account of their laziness, which they've taken to mean their way of understanding someone—especially someone who refuses to talk. The first brother has said he waits three days and then intuits what the person is all about. The second brother has said he strikes up a conversation.

“But what if he [the quiet person] knows that trick?” says the judge. This, he says, reminds him of a parable. There was a mother who told her child, “When you’re walking through the graveyard at night, and you see a boogeyman,* run *at* it, and it will go away.” The child replies, “But what if the boogeyman’s mother has told it to do the same thing? Boogeymen have mothers, too, you know.”

If we regard other human beings as *things to manage,* our attempts at dialogue are no better than tricks. Striking up a conversation under these conditions is like running at a boogeyman to scare him away; it’s a method that probably works often enough, but it takes no account of the likelihood that boogeymen too have thoughts and feelings, strategies and plans, histories and families—including mothers who teach them how to deal with threatening strangers in lonely places. People (and boogeymen, presumably) are subjects, not objects. While we’re managing them, they’re managing us. While we’re running at them, they’re running back.*

The Western pitfall for this chapter, then, is “learning *about* rather than *from.*” Like the pitfall of Chapter 2 (“assuming causes instead of conditions”), it has its basis in Western science, which sees the world as a collection of objects to be dissected and examined. Eastern philosophies, in contrast, see fields of phenomena that partake of both subjectivity and objectivity. Objects can be learned *about;* subjects can be learned *about and from.* Human beings are subjects, so learning-about, no matter how thorough, is an incomplete approach. Learning-from, if we want truly to know and relate to another, is also necessary. A person can’t be figured out like a Rubik’s cube, yet Western metaphors, many mechanical or invasive, tend to encourage this delusion. “What makes her tick?” “I’m trying to get inside his head.” “We’ve done an X-ray on the client.” *Questioning* is the word we use for police interrogations of criminal suspects, and in the West, our let-me-understand-you conversations can all too easily become interrogations; moreover, we may fail to notice the other person shining their own interrogation lamp right back in our eyes.

Rumi the Mystic offers a different view. One of his oft-explored ideas, according to Barks, is “how presences flow, evolve, and create in tandem.”[6] *Presence* is a good word, I think, since it blurs the subject-

object line in a characteristically Eastern way. When I strive to be present with others and to let them be present for me, is there not more potential in such encounters than when I go tap-tap-tapping on the clay pot, listening for cracks?

The elder two brothers of “The Night Air” are clever at pot-tapping. They have patience and, like any effective salesperson, know how to pose good questions, listen well, and interpret the responses. But when the judge asks, “What if your colleague knows that strike-up-a-conversation trick?” neither has an answer. They’ve exhausted their methods.

So the judge turns to the youngest brother and asks again, “What if a man cannot be made to say anything? How do you learn his hidden nature?” Here is the brother’s beautiful reply:

“I sit in front of him in silence,
and set up a ladder made of patience,
and if in his presence a language from beyond joy
and beyond grief begins to pour from *my* chest,
I know that his soul is as deep and bright
as the star Canopus rising over Yemen.

And so when I start speaking a powerful right arm
of words sweeping down, I know *him* from what I say,
and how I say it, because there’s a window open
between us, mixing the night air of our beings.”

How do we really know another person? How do we know if they’re smart, or kind, or funny? Superficially, by what they say and do; more deeply, by their effect on *us.* The smartest person in the room is not the person with the best ideas, but rather the person who draws out everyone else’s best ideas. A truly kind person amplifies the kindness of others. The most delightful friends are not the ones who tell a lot of jokes, but the ones who take delight in our jokes. This isn’t just a matter of flattery; there’s a big difference between the smoke-blowers (“Dahling, you look mahvelous”) and the people in whose presence we speak, think, and behave better—whose presence causes us to *be* better. We know their greatness by the greatness they elicit from us. And the same is true for those in

whose presence we grow mean or bitter or afraid: we know their smallness by how small we become when we're with them.

If we want to be one of those presences that brings out the best in others—a "bright star Canopus rising over Yemen"—then we should balance our typical practice, which is to learn *about other people* and then try to get them to learn *from us,* with a complementary practice, namely to tell them *about ourselves* and then seek to learn *from them.* The first practice sounds like this: "Tell me about you! . . . How fascinating. OK, now that I know you, here's my advice for you." The second practice sounds like this: "Let me tell you a little about me and how I like to work . . . OK, now that you know what I'm about, what advice do you have for me?"

Achieving a balance, of course, is the key. It's no good to be one of those people who yammers on about me-me-me and never asks a question. It's almost as bad, however, to be one of those people who rigorously "explores needs" until he decides he's completed that chore and can move on to the "providing solutions" phase of the conversation. The latter approach can work all right in sales situations (although salespeople should realize that today's buyers are, like the boogeyman child, mostly wise to the consultative-selling bag of tricks). If we want to go beyond selling to create a genuine dialogue, and ultimately a shared outlook, we need to blend learning-about with learning-from. We need to be ready to take advice, not just dole it out.

Marian Thier, an expert in interpersonal communication, has researched listening habits and brain patterns. "I don't start with, 'What do *you* need to do differently?' " she says, describing how she coaches people to become better listeners. "I start with, 'What do you need others to know about you, so they can communicate better with you? And then, what are the questions you need to ask them about their communication styles, so you can work together?' "

This approach isn't just more respectful; it's also more effective, because it melds the wisdom of both parties (or should I say presences), enabling the co-creation of something new. Marian describes the goal of such a process in Buddhist terms: "It's about looking for shared meaning; looking at the gem you both hold before you."

Or, as Rumi would have it, it's about opening a window to let the night air flow.

At Mimi's going-away party in 1995, CEO John Humphrey said she had been a strong influence on Forum's culture. I thought it was because she'd done such a fine job of developing people. Mimi was a coach and mentor to me and many others: letting us loose on challenges, giving us good advice, and showing plenty of patience as we came together and developed a shared outlook. Working with her I felt myself stretch, and, "I learned so much from you," I told her in an email decades later.

But when I received her reply, I saw a deeper truth. The reason we all learned so much from Mimi is that, for her, the learning always went both ways.

The next quiet influence practice is *Converting adversaries to allies by aligning interests.*

POWER

I remember very clearly the origin of this Influence practice," says Mike Maginn, lead designer of the original Influence program. "John Humphrey had just come in from a post lunch walk. He was wearing his peacoat and black watch cap. He stood in my office door and said: 'Sharing power. Sharing power.' It's the hardest thing to do, and the most important thing to do."

In the Control stage of group development (see Figure II.1) it becomes especially easy for people to get caught up in power struggles. The early excitement and esprit de corps have waned; the work is proving more arduous than anyone expected; individuals are anxious to be recognized, to be heard, to get their way. By sharing power, the quiet influencer reduces anxiety and increases confidence—everyone's confidence—so the group becomes less inclined to internal squabbling and more inclined to forward motion.

Sharing power is hard because chasing power is tempting. In Part II, we'll meet three types of power chaser:

- The *baron* sees life as a perpetual battle with enemies on every side.
- The *legalist* is about exerting control through bureaucracy.
- The *seducer* uses charisma to win others over.

None of these types is all bad, for there are circumstances in which each may shine. Fighting fiercely for a noble cause (as the baron may), or keeping a complex system in order (legalist), or being smoothly diplomatic (seducer)—there are times and places for such abilities. Where we go wrong is when we follow one of these paths myopically, forsaking the path to real influence. We'll gain some power, yes, but it will be temporary, limited, and costly.

The specific influence practices we'll explore in these chapters are:

5) Converting adversaries to allies by aligning interests
6) Backing those who take the lead
7) Finding ways to be effective in the face of aggressions
8) Managing your own emotions and behavior

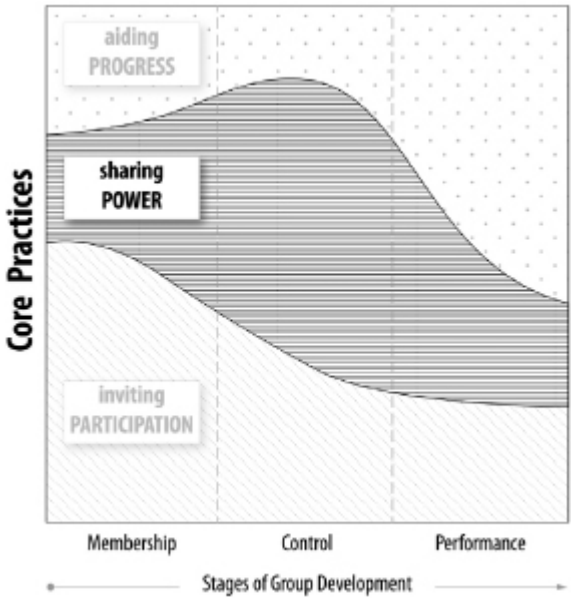


Figure II.1: Sharing Power

Chapter 5

Walk with the Devil ~ The Mahābhārata

Toronto: February 1997. Eight months pregnant, I waddled after Joe Wheeler into the clients' conference room.

The previous summer I had moved with my husband to Toronto and joined Forum's Canadian division as a consultant. Joe was the division's managing director and my boss; since early January, he and I had been traveling the country conducting focus groups with customers of a global professional services firm who had hired us to develop their new customer satisfaction survey. Being in my third trimester had not stopped me from lumbering on and off many planes and standing, feet planted in sensible shoes, at many flip charts, scribbling customer comments while Joe ran the focus groups.

Joe was (and is) a top-notch salesperson and relationship-builder. When it came to the art and science of creating customer loyalty, his skills were unmatched. He was also a stickler for treating clients with respect. I recall going on a sales call with him and Katherine, a colleague from the Toronto office, early in my time there. As the three of us walked along the harborfront to get to the client's office, Katherine and I started griping about the guy we were going to see, poking fun at some of his mannerisms. Joe shut us down. "Don't laugh at the customer," he said. "It's not OK."

By mid-February, we had completed the focus groups. I had analyzed the data and drafted the customer satisfaction questionnaire, which we were now to present to half a dozen partners of the client firm. Entering the conference room in my professional-gray maternity dress, I was confident my work reflected

the views of the customers with whom we'd spoken. Joe had approved the questionnaire draft, and we had rehearsed how we'd take the clients through the process, the findings, and the results. I didn't expect to get much input. After all, how could they argue with the focus groups? They hadn't been there. We had.

The partners sat in a U-shape, facing us and the overhead projector (this was just before the world went all in for PowerPoint). Joe summarized the project and handed off to me to take them through the customer research. Heads around the U nodded desultorily as I reviewed the raw data and our analysis. When I got to the actual questionnaire, interest perked; heads nodded more energetically as I explained each item and how we'd arrived at it. Wrapping up, I felt good. "Any feedback?" I asked, in my mind already ceding the floor to Joe so he could talk about our proposed rollout process. My back hurt and I wanted to sit down.

That's when the guy on the right corner—I don't remember his name, I'll call him Frank—spoke up. Frank had had a slight scowl on his face throughout my presentation, and now he was jabbing his pen on his copy of the questionnaire: "I. Do not. Agree. With this," he said, every other syllable marked by a jab. He proceeded to trash the entire thing.

I was dumbfounded by his vehemence, unable to tell what it was, exactly, that he disliked so much. I forgot all about handling objections *(encourage first)* and, when he paused for breath, tried to defend our findings. He interrupted me and railed on.

Joe had been standing back during my piece. Now, he stepped forward.

"Frank, this is great," he said. "What I hear you saying is, we need to add an item at the end that speaks to that issue. What was the wording you wanted? . . . Uh-huh . . . Yes . . . Got it." He wrote the new question on the transparency, and we all looked at it on the screen. "Yes, that's a big improvement. I'm glad you brought that up. What else do you have for us, Frank?"

But Frank had completely subsided. For the rest of the meeting, he smiled and nodded and agreed with everyone. We noted a few more tweaks, talked about next steps, and left.

In the cab, I sat silent and miffed. Why hadn't Joe backed me up? Frank had been obnoxious, not to mention wrong. The research didn't support the stuff he wanted to add.

Then, out of nowhere: "See how that worked?" Joe said. "All we had to do was go along with that guy on one thing, right away. As soon as he saw we were listening, he was fine."

I saw the light. Rather than an implacable enemy hating on me and my work, Frank had been just a temporary adversary, unsure whether he had our respect and how our interests aligned. By walking alongside him for a short space, Joe had turned him into an ally.

The Princess Who Allied with Death

Sāvitrī said:
The wise, seeing the truth, have declared a fellow walker to be a friend. Having invoked your friendship, anything I say, that you must hear. (Mahābhārata, 3 (42) 281.22)[1]

In Indian popular culture, Princess Sāvitrī—who, legend says, followed after the god of death and pleaded with him, successfully, to spare her husband's life—is a symbol of wifely devotion. During the Hindu festival named for her, married women pray for their husbands to enjoy long life. The cover of one contemporary book adaptation, *The Triumph of Love,* shows a doe-eyed Sāvitrī leaning down to kiss her dead husband's lips. She's also the heroine of several Bollywood romances. But the story as originally told in India's greatest epic (see "The Mahābhārata," below') is only incidentally about romantic love. In essence, it is about an alliance masterfully made.

The Mahābhārata

The core of the Mahābhārata, says Sanskrit scholar and translator J. A. B. van Buitenen, "takes its matter from the legitimacy of the succession to the kingdom of Kurukṣetra in northern India."[2] There is a king who falls in love with a fisherman's daughter, whose father drives a hard bargain in the

negotiations for her hand: he insists that the throne pass to her future offspring and not to the king's existing son. The king agrees, thereby putting in motion a series of family complications and rifts that culminate in a massive war between two branches of the dynasty several generations on. But this central story, in itself comparable to the *Iliad* in richness and complexity, doesn't even start until some two hundred pages in, and the side tales it sprouts along the way—of gods and goddesses, princes and princesses, snakes and demons and sages—would fill several *Odysseys.* Indeed, the entire saga is ten times the length of the two Homeric epics put together. The famous claim of the Mahābhārata is that it contains absolutely everything that can be said about life: "Whatever is here—on law, on profit, on pleasure, and on salvation—is found elsewhere. But what is not here is nowhere else." (1(6)56.35)

In the Mahābhārata, Sāvitrī is an unmarried princess bidden by her father to go forth and find a husband. She returns after months of searching and announces her choice: Prince Satyavat, the impoverished son of a blind, dethroned king. Satyavat's foretold future is even worse: exactly one year hence he will die, the manner unspecified. Sāvitrī marries him anyway. She leaves her home and joins Satyavat and his parents in the "forest of austerities," where they all live as hermits, praying and studying. She comports herself flawlessly. As the one-year mark approaches, having told no one what she knows of her husband's coming demise, she undertakes a difficult vow whereby she stands upright, alone and fasting, for three days and nights.*

At last the dreaded hour arrives. Sāvitrī accompanies Satyavat to chop wood in the forest, and when (as she has expected) he collapses, she rests his head in her lap and waits. Yama, the god of death, appears, "yellow-robed and turbaned, radiant like the sun, brilliantly black . . . terrifying." (3(42)281.8-9) He draws out Satyavat's soul, fetters it with a noose, and sets out along the road to the underworld. Sāvitrī, "the vow-perfected woman," follows step for step.

Yama says, “Return, go, Sāvitrī! Perform his funeral rites. You are acquitted of all debt to your husband; you have gone as far as you can.” But Sāvitrī refuses to turn back, saying:

> Where my husband goes, there I too must go; this is the ancient and eternal Law *[dharma]*. By my austerities, by my conduct toward my teachers, by my vow proceeding from love of my husband, and just as much by your grace, unobstructed is my course.
>
> The wise, seeing the truth, have declared a fellow walker to be a friend. Having invoked your friendship, anything I say, that you must hear.
>
> Not lacking in self-control, but practicing the Law and austerities in the forest . . . the virtuous say the Law comes first. By the Law of the one, with the approval of the virtuous, all are always following that path. (281.20-24)*

No pleading so far.

Yama replies: “I am pleased with your speech, which unites sound, word, meaning, and reason. Choose a boon now, excepting your husband’s life; let me grant you any boon, irreproachable woman.” Sāvitrī asks for her father-in-law to regain his sight, and Yama agrees. Again he tells her to turn back, lest she become fatigued. Again she says her course is fixed: she must follow her husband. “Furthermore,” she says, “listen to my words,” and she proceeds to deliver another short speech about the virtuous, this time praising their loyalty to spouses and the benefits of their companionship. Yama is impressed anew. “Pleasant and mind-expanding are the precepts you state, a trove of good advice,” he says, and offers to grant her a second boon—anything but Satyavat’s life. She asks for her father-in-law’s kingdom to be restored to him. Yama grants the favor.

Yama continues to lead Satyavat’s spirit along the road, the princess continues to follow a few steps behind, and the pattern repeats: Yama tells her to turn back lest she grow tired; she replies that she is not tired and will follow her husband as Law prescribes; she insists that Yama listen to her thoughts on Law and virtue; and finally, Yama expresses pleasure at her words and offers to grant her a boon, always excepting Satyavat’s life.

With the third cycle, Sāvitrī begins to preface each of her discourses with a bit of praise for Yama, implying that he, too, is a member of that admirable set known as the virtuous. “These creatures are restrained by you according to rule,” she says, “and having restrained them, you lead them, and not by whim. Therefore your greatness is celebrated.” It’s a wonderfully subtle way of aligning herself with the lord of death, who, we may imagine, must grow pretty sick of us humans weeping and wailing over his terrible capriciousness, when from his perspective he’s only doing his job executing (pun intended) the laws of nature. Sāvitrī is flattering him, but it’s not only that; she’s also placing the two of them in the same club, the League of the Virtuous. They, she implies, aren’t like *some* people, idling about and succumbing to the temptations of the moment. *They* are masters of their souls: impartial, disciplined, austere. “With restraint and Law are your people imbued,” she says. It goes without saying that she’s one of his people.

Yama is delighted to find such a friend. “Like as water to a thirsty man, so are these words you utter,” he says. This woman gets him! How different she is from other mortals, who fear his approach and do anything to escape him. Sāvitrī isn’t the least afraid; she actually seems to enjoy his company. And she isn’t begging for her husband’s life (so irritating when wives do that—as if he, a god, would be swayed by tears). She’s just conversing, and with such good sense. “From friendship for all creatures a trustworthy reputation is born,” she says; “therefore in the virtuous, especially, the world places trust.” Never has Yama heard the like.

For the third boon, Sāvitrī asks for her father to have a hundred sons. For the fourth, she asks that she herself give birth to a hundred sons—by Satyavat. We can see how the favors she asks, though still conforming to Yama’s exception, are driving ever nearer to her goal: to win Satyavat’s life back. Yama keeps telling her to turn around, and on the fifth cycle she doesn’t even bother to say no, instead launching right into this speech:

> The virtuous are always in an eternal state of law; the virtuous neither despair nor tremble. The meeting of the virtuous with the virtuous is never fruitless; from the virtuous, the virtuous find no danger.

Knowing this is the conduct practiced eternally by the noble, the virtuous act for the sake of another without looking for recompense. And no favor among the virtuous is fruitless; moreover, no purpose will be unsuccessful. Because this steadiness is eternal among the virtuous, they are the guardians. (281.46–49)

Overcome with admiration, Yama replies: “Since you speak united with the Law, pleasing to the mind, well-grounded, full of meaning, therefore my faith in you is supreme. Choose an incomparable boon, O Diligent Devotion!”

He fails to add, “Excepting Satyavat’s life.”

Sāvitrī pounces. “You make no exception to your favor—not a single one, as in the other boons, my sweet!” she says, triumph resounding through her words. “So the boon I choose is: *This Satyavat shall live!”*

Yama is caught. He must grant her request. Indeed, we might suspect him of wanting to grant it—not only because he is virtuous, but because this supremely virtuous woman sees and appreciates his virtue.[*] “So be it,” he says; and the King of the Law, loosening the noose, releases his prisoner to his new ally. The narrator says he does it “with a joyful heart.”

Contrary to how the story is often told today, Sāvitrī has engaged in not one moment of pleading. What propelled her along the road of death was her devotion to her husband. What won him back from the god of death was the alliance she forged so brilliantly.

Quiet Influence Practice 5: Converting adversaries to allies by aligning interests

Most of us tend to see our relationships as falling along a continuum from *friend* to *enemy*. If I get along well with someone—a colleague, say, who’s easy to work with and a pleasant lunch companion—I label him a friend, or perhaps a casual friend. But that other guy, the one who’s always so rude and difficult—if he’s not an enemy, well, he’s certainly no friend.

This view is inadequate. As Laurence Stybel and Maryanne Peabody write in their article for *MIT Sloan Management Review,* relationships should be arrayed along not one but two dimensions: whether the person is *with* us or *against* us, and whether that stance

is *conditional* or *unconditional*. Combined, these two dimensions give us four main relationship types: friends, foes, allies, and adversaries (see Figure 5.1).[3]

Friends are unconditionally with you, foes unconditionally against you. A friend is someone with whom you share a bond of love or duty; someone who will support you no matter what. A foe is someone who regards you with personal, deep-rooted antagonism; someone who will oppose you no matter what. Allies and adversaries, on the other hand, support or oppose you when and because it suits them: allies supporting you based on (currently) shared interests, adversaries opposing you based on (currently) conflicting interests. Allies and adversaries may convert, one to the other, depending on whether their interests come into or fall out of alignment with yours. In other words, the line between ally and adversary is permeable, while the line between friend and foe is impermeable.

Of course, this doesn't mean we can't lose friends. A friend might hurt or disappoint us, or we them, and we might part ways or even become foes as a result. There are also such things as frenemies: people entwined in love-hate relationships. The point is not that friendship is always pure and eternal, but rather that friends are attached by durable bonds while allies are attached by flexible links. There is good news here. True friendships are wonderful, but they're scarce and, let's be honest, take a lot of time and effort, while alliances, in contrast, are abundant in their potential, useful, and—though not maintenance-free—relatively easy to forge. We saw how Princess Sāvitrī made a most improbable ally during a brief walk in the woods.

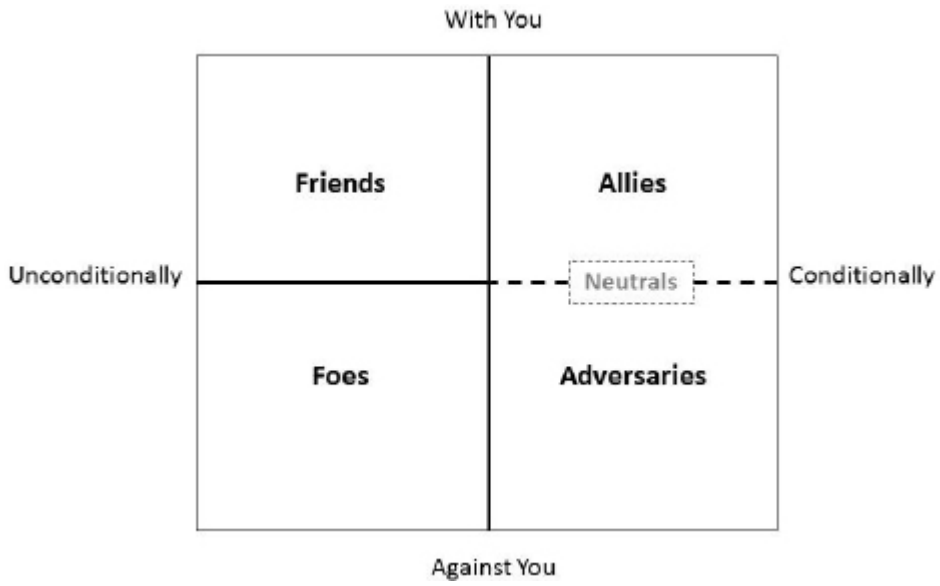


Figure 5.1: Relationship Types

So, the first step in cultivating fruitful alliances is to stop expecting our allies to be our friends. Imagine a colleague who supports you staunchly until there comes a day when supporting you means she risks losing her job. If she turns her back on you then, what will your reaction be? If you saw her as a friend you might blame her, but blaming an ally for not being a friend is painful and pointless. Instead, we should appreciate the part allies play in our life and strive, whenever possible, to keep our interests aligned with theirs.

More good news: Some, perhaps even most, of your supposed enemies are actually just adversaries, available for flipping. Show them how your interests align, and boom—you've got yourself a new ally. Even better, it's often the case that an adversary is making an unfounded assumption that puts the two of you at odds; dispel that assumption, and the hostility melts away. Consider Frank, the client who seemed so against me but, it turned out, was really just afraid I was going to reject his input. As soon as he saw we valued his perspective and wanted his advice, he got on board. And again, consider Sāvitrī: when Yama showed up, she might naturally have assumed he was (literally) a lethal enemy and attacked him with tears or curses. Instead, she overturned *his* assumption—that every mortal hates and fears him—by becoming a fellow walker and talker. If Sāvitrī could make alliance with the devil himself, surely we can do

the same with a difficult colleague or boss (see “Influence in Brief: Seeking Alliances,” here).

But our tendency in such cases is to think “Foe!” and leave it at that. “We get contented with things not working,” says Ken De Loreto, a top business coach and trainer, “so we just stop. We don’t imagine that maybe, just maybe, what I’ve been doing or saying is not the best version of me.” He adds, “People don’t see that the impasse is often partly due to their own actions or inactions. Once they realize a choice of theirs might change the whole scenario, they feel empowered to change it.”

In other words, we don’t have to be stuck in an adversarial dynamic. We can pause and wonder: What is this person about? What can I do more of, or less of, to become better aligned with them? Ken recalls the following situation:

> One of my coaching clients has a newly hired direct report. She’s a woman, he’s a man. They’re from different countries. They have different personalities. She told me they don’t get along, but, “He’s really smart, so I still think he’s a good hire.” I heard that, played it back to her, and asked her what’s missing. She said, “We don’t want to talk to each other.” I asked her, “What did he say when you brought this up?” She said, “I haven’t.” It never crossed her mind that she could have that conversation with him. She was content with the thought that “this is a pain, but the guy’s smart, so I guess he was a good hire.” It never occurred to her that she could put this problem in front of him and maybe they could work it out together.

There are hundreds of self-help books (mostly categorized as negotiation or sales skills) that provide tips on how to analyze another’s needs and interests and find common ground. In my experience, though, lack of skill usually isn’t the problem. The problem is that we encounter an apparent enemy and, as Ken says, “just stop.” We all know what’s required in order to build a better relationship with someone: talk with them, listen to them, share our point of view, seek to understand their point of view. None of this is rocket science. What’s hard—very hard—is the initial shift in perspective *from* “He’s a foe; I wonder how to squash or at least avoid him?” *to* “He and I are at odds; I wonder how we might become better aligned?”

Influence in Brief: Seeking Alliances

There are times when you just can't make progress. But the thought that it's never going to work ever again with someone—that is rarely true. If you lock in on that, you will miss those possibilities, those moments when you can make progress.

–Ken De Loreto

If you have an unenlightened manager, you have to enlighten them—with diplomatic suggestions, questions, tact—so they realize you might be useful to them. It's like a customer relationship: focus on your boss's needs and desires, earn the right to be heard and valued. You have to deliver what your boss is expecting; you can't neglect that just because you think you've got a bigger agenda.

–Dick Meyer

Is influence manipulation? I think you need to use positive terminology. Yes, in almost everything in life there is some manipulation, but this is not about getting someone to do what they don't want to do. It's about getting something done to your benefit, but in a way that doesn't create dissonance in the relationship. Win-win, not win-lose.

–Keith Bronitt

Sometimes my clients have allies they haven't cultivated. They don't think about how they might get together and use influence to get things done. One client was pulling her hair out about a problem; I asked her why she didn't join forces with some of her peers to make a united case to the board. If they speak as one, they will be heard. She ended up doing it, and it worked.

–Carin Gendell

What often blocks this shift in perspective is the satisfaction derived from having an enemy. Why satisfaction? For one thing, conflict is energizing. For another, deriding "foes" creates a sense of solidarity with "friends"—a phenomenon not confined to middle-school mean girls. Our prehistoric brains, wired to make friend-enemy distinctions, make us feel safe when we label a seemingly hostile creature as "other." And of course, a few people really are foes; it's unwise to cozy up to the truly toxic or abusive. In general, though, one of the big diluters of influence is the failure to see adversaries as allies-in-

waiting. This particular blindness is the mistake of the *baron,* first in a trio of power chasers we'll examine here and in the next two chapters.

Western Pitfall 5: Seeing foes to be crushed instead of allies to be cultivated

"Baron" is how some translators render the Sanskrit word *kṣatriya,* a concept much discussed in the Mahābhārata. Other translations include "warrior" and "ruler." Kṣatriyas are the fighting-and-ruling caste of ancient India, in legends forever running up against the brahmins, the priestly caste, who think society would be better off if *they* were in charge. Brahmins are highly educated, while barons are skilled in the arts of war. The Mahābhārata makes us wonder (among many other things) whether either caste has a solid claim on political leadership; neither a priestly education nor military prowess is enough, it seems, to make one a good leader.

Prince Duryodhana, principal villain of the Mahābhārata and one of my favorite literary characters, is a baron. One reason I find him so interesting is that his story, as it develops, reveals him to be more admirable than we might at first think: not only is he a warrior of great skill and valor, he's also a good talent-spotter and a fiercely loyal friend to anyone who signs on to his side. His flaw, some say, is his envious nature, but "envy" is too petty a word for what ails this mighty kṣatriya. Duryodhana's deeper problem, and the root of his envy, is his inability to grow his power by sharing it; his tendency, that is, to see his opponents as eternal foes to be crushed rather than potential allies to be cultivated.

The Mahābhārata (says Gurcharan Das in his excellent book on the epic, *The Difficulty of Being Good*) tells of "a futile and terrible war of annihilation between the children of two brothers of the Bhārata clan."[4] The two brothers are Pāndu and Dhṛtaraṣtra. The conflict begins when Dhṛtaraṣtra, the elder, is deemed unsuitable to rule because he is blind. Pāndu is named king but soon after crosses a brahmin sage and as a result is hit with a dire curse: if he has sex, he'll die. Undaunted, his two wives contrive to be impregnated by five different gods and give birth to five sons, henceforth known as

the Pāndavas. Pāndu, understandably dejected by the no-sex curse, renounces the throne to become a hermit, leaving his brother to rule, and when the Pāndavas come of age a rivalry develops over the succession: Prince Duryodhana, eldest of the one hundred sons of the blind king, disputes the right of the eldest Pāndava to inherit the throne. He attempts to assassinate his five cousins, who flee for their lives. From then on, the force driving much of the action is Duryodhana's attempts to crush his rivals.

When the Pāndavas eventually return home—having foiled Duryodhana's murder plot, married one wife between the five of them, and acquired a number of powerful allies—King Dhṛtaraṣtra, wanting to avoid further conflict, divides the realm between the two sides of the family. He gives his nephews the poorer half, retaining the richer half for his own son and heir. But by wise rule, bold conquests, and more alliance-making, the sons of Pāndu over a few years manage to grow their portion into a domain of vast wealth.

The stage for all-out war is set when Duryodhana goes to visit his cousins at their new palace. He and his brothers, along with nobles from neighboring realms, have been invited to a grand gathering to celebrate the consecration of the eldest Pāndava as king. The hall is filled with architectural wonders, and Duryodhana is befuddled. Coming upon a crystal slab and thinking it water, he raises his robe to wade across; then he sees an actual pond and, assuming it is crystal, falls in and soaks his clothing. Everyone, including the servants, laughs merrily. He tries to walk through a trompe l'oeil door and bangs his forehead; next, he shrinks from a real door. "This way, prince," says one of his cousins, smiling a little too graciously. Meanwhile, the opulent gala continues, with splendid tributes from the visiting nobles and lavish gifts from the hosts.

Duryodhana journeys home in a stew of resentment. Upon his return, his father advises him to stop envying his cousins' success. "You have everything you could possibly want," says Dhṛtaraṣtra; "why be so upset that they have a bit more?" Duryodhana's reply reveals the essence of his worldview:

> King, your wisdom is replete, you obey the Ancients, you have mastered your senses, yet you utterly confuse us, who are intent on our tasks. [The gods have said] the way of kings differs from the way of the world, and that therefore the king

should endeavor always to think of his own profit. The baron's way, great king, is to be devoted to victory: let it be Law or Unlaw, as long as it is *his* way! . . . To those who know the sword, the sword means the entire enemy-harassing enterprise, open and concealed, which reduces the enemy, not just the sword that cuts. (2 (27) 50.14–17)[5]

In Duryodhana's world, there is no win-win; it's "I win" or nothing. His father's advice to coexist makes no sense to him. If his cousins are up, he must be down, and down is obviously no place for a baron. He must reduce his foes, fairly or unfairly, it matters not. "Don't let the enemy's luck please you!" he says. "I shall get that fortune, or be killed on the battlefield: for why should I now care to live, if I do not equal them?" (50.25–29)

The Pāndavas are barons, too, of course. They too seek victory and aren't above cheating to get it. Eventually they win the war, but only by means of several deceptions. And in the end they make it to heaven, but only after many trials that seem designed by fate to take them down a peg and cause them to question the justness, or dharma, of their actions. Duryodhana, in contrast, dies on the battlefield as planned and goes directly to heaven, a reward for his valor. So the two sides end up equally happy, we might say.

But in terms of long-term influence, there is no contest. It is a Pāndava grandson who alone survives the war, inherits the kingdom, and relaunches the Bhārata dynasty. Then it is that grandson's son, King Janamejaya, for whom a venerable sage spins the whole tale, calling it "the edifying stories of ancient Lore that bear upon the Law, the past exploits of the kings of men and the great-spirited sages." (1(1)14) Duryodhana's side, he and all his brothers and friends, are wiped out and never heard from again, except as villains in the Bhāratas' story. The Pāndavas, with their notable willingness to share power, are the more effective, durable leaders.

Today's barons—and now I'm talking about the present-day power chasers who unwittingly take Duryodhana as their model—are similarly intent on beating their perceived enemies. Like Duryodhana, they constantly compare themselves to others, worried that someone else might be pulling ahead. Like him, they are obsessed with status. Like him, they can't bear to be laughed at. And like him, their worst fear is to lose whatever contest they imagine is

going on. Unlike legalists (see Chapter 6), barons are fine with subordinates being a bit unruly; unlike seducers (Chapter 7), they have little need to be liked. Respect is their essential demand.

Earlier I noted that no culture has a monopoly on power chasers. Western cultures, however, perhaps because of their strong emphasis on the individual, are more likely to regard life as a struggle in which one is either winner or loser. Robert Greene, in his book *The 48 Laws of Power,* illustrates this view with a parade of historical leaders who (he claims) successfully pursued absolute domination in their arena: political, diplomatic, or military.[6] Law 15, representative of the rest, is "Crush your enemy totally." The book presents a beguiling portrait of the baron's way, and many of Greene's characters certainly did occupy positions of great power—for a while. What he doesn't address is their influence over the long term.

And there's the rub. Winning the battle doesn't mean you've won the war, let alone made any lasting difference to the world. If you want a temporary advantage, then go ahead: conceal your intentions (Greene's Law No. 3), pose as a friend but work as a spy (No. 14), and discover each man's thumbscrew (No. 33). If you want lasting impact, however, you'll need a better approach. More than weakened enemies, you'll need strong allies.

Duryodhana may be right that only those who reach for the heights are the ultimate politicians. But only those who reach out to adversaries, aligning with them and winning them over, are the ultimate influencers. Princess Sāvitrī, walker with the devil, knows that.

The next quiet influence practice is *Backing those who take the lead.*

Chapter 6

Follow the Leaders ~ Sima Qian

Boston: Summer 2000. Negotiations to sell the company were underway, and we employees wondered if things would ever be the same. For 30 years The Forum Corporation had been buoyed by its influence culture, a culture buoyed in turn by values such as collaboration, innovation, and caring. This wasn't just HR jargon; for most of us, it was lived reality.

With the sale pending, the marketing team came up with a way to capture the firm's special character and, they hoped, preserve it. They collected stories from hundreds of associates around the world and compiled them in a book called *Forum Folklore.* The opening story comes from John Humphrey, who at that time was chairman. "1971 was a terrible year to start a business," he recalls. He goes on to say:

> We struggled to pay bills and make payroll in our first year. Management meetings were often held at kitchen tables. The trunks of our cars doubled as inventory warehouses. One of our first training programs nearly didn't happen because we tried to save money by shipping the materials in boxes borrowed from a grocery store. When we arrived at the hotel for our teach, the boxes couldn't be found. It turns out the shipping folks stored the boxes in the freezer because the boxes were marked "frozen foods."[1]

That sense of mutuality—of getting it done, together, with no need for fancy shipping boxes or fancy consultant airs—pervades the book's nearly two hundred anecdotes. There's also the sense that talent, wherever it lay, was appreciated and people were encouraged to apply their skills and propose solutions without regard to chain of

command. One person wrote about setting up a new feature of the company intranet:

In talking to the technical folks about this project, I had to say, “I don’t know how long it will take, or how complicated what I’m asking you to do will be. I can only describe the pieces to you and tell you what I need it to do.” They came back with a bunch of their own ideas and said, “What about this bell?” and “What about this whistle?” They really popped it up a few levels from what I had envisioned. And here’s the point—they could have very easily said, “We can do that,” and followed my guidelines. But instead they said, “We can make this even better.” That kind of interaction, I think, is ordinary here but extraordinary almost anywhere else.[2]

Incoming managers were sometimes put off by the irreverence they encountered:

A few years ago, we hired a new senior executive for a top position. He arrived in January, and in May the eastern division had its annual meeting . . . This senior executive was, for the first time, in front of about 70 Forum people. He got up, started to give a point of view, and one of our VPs stood up and said, “No, that’s not how we see it here.” The man looked stunned. I mean, I don’t think he had ever been challenged, let alone by somebody who would be considered his junior, in front of a large group like that. And then somebody in the audience said, “Welcome to Forum!”[3]

Yet the irreverence rarely escalated to backstabbing. Although the place had its share of office politics and outsized egos, people for the most part encouraged one another in their endeavors. As one employee put it:

You know what’s interesting about Forum? I feel as proud about someone else’s client work as I do about my own. Even if I didn’t touch it. I’ll tell someone else’s story the same way I’ll tell my own stories, whereas I think in many workplaces, people only feel proud of the things they personally do and control. I don’t know what you call it . . . We like to see each other succeed.[4]

All the *Forum Folklore* stories except Humphrey’s were published anonymously, but I recognize my own contribution, of course. Here it is:

Any time I have taken initiative, proposed a new approach, or taken on a new role, my efforts have been welcomed and applauded. Never once has someone said, “That’s not your job,” or “You shouldn’t worry about that,” or “You can’t do that.” . . .

This contrasts with some other companies I've worked for, where turf battles and bureaucracy often throw cold water on people's initiative and creativity.

At Forum, if someone says, "I'll own this," people say, "You go, girl! (or boy!)" And if the results are good, people are generous in giving credit where it's due.[5]

I wrote those words in early 2000. The previous summer, at the company officers' meeting, I'd been made a vice president. VP titles were largely honorific; my actual authority had not increased, I had no direct reports, and there were still several layers above me in the hierarchy. Nevertheless, I remember the cheers and applause that welcomed me as a new officer. I remember an open road before me, and the wind at my back.

The Bumpkin King

Han Xin commended the king, saying, "Yes, I too believe that you are inferior. But I once served Xiang Yu, and let me tell you . . . When Xiang Yu rages and bellows it is enough to make a thousand men fall down in terror. But since he is incapable of employing wise generals, all of it amounts to no more than the daring of an ordinary man." (*Shi Ji* 92)[6]

Sima Qian's account of the turbulent era that birthed China's Han Dynasty is filled with exceptional leaders, from far-seeing strategists to bold military men to adept problem-solvers (see "The Sage: Grand Historian Sima Qian," here). If we were given a version that omitted the story's outcome and asked to predict that outcome, which leader would we pick to come out on top? Perhaps Xiao He, the master of public relations who "caused the people to rejoice in Han and hate the alliance of Chu"[7]; or Chen Ping, the wily counselor whose "six curious strategies" were the means by which "the other nobles were brought into submission and became followers of the Han"[8]; or Qing Bu, the ruthless captain who "had so often with his small force overcome armies of superior number."[9] I doubt we would pick the oafish headman of an obscure village whose most-mentioned characteristics, in Sima Qian's several records *(shi ji)* of his life, are his liking for drink and his offensive manners. Yet it is this same country bumpkin who rises to become China's emperor in 206 BCE,

launching the Han dynasty and earning the moniker by which he became known to history: Gaozu, “Exalted Ancestor.” What does this seeming second-rater’s rise tell us about how to be influential in times of change? Two anecdotes about him will offer clues.

The Sage: Grand Historian Sima Qian

Sima Qian *(seuh-ma chyen)* is seen by scholars as no literary master.[10] One professor of Eastern religions, whom I visited while absorbed in the annals of the Qin Dynasty, asked me if I did not find him dry. Stylistically, to be sure, he doesn’t measure up to Confucius or the Taoists, but if you’re into tales of political intrigue liberally salted with violence, the Grand Historian is your man. His accounts of China’s legendary five emperors of the distant past followed by his records of the Qin (221 – 206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE – 220 CE) regimes are the original *Game of Thrones.* We may find the story of Empress Lü—who cut off her rival’s hands and feet, plucked out the woman’s eyes, burned her ears, and had her thrown into a cesspit and displayed as “the Human Pig”—horrifying. We cannot call it *dry.* Sima Qian was passionate about completing his great historical work, choosing castration instead of suicide after he roused the ire of his own emperor and was prosecuted for treason. “It was because I regretted that it had not been completed that I submitted to the extreme penalty without rancor,” he wrote to his friend from prison. “If it may be handed down to men who will appreciate it . . . then though I should suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret would I have?”[11]

The first anecdote appears in Sima Qian’s biography of Han Xin: marquis of a province and arguably the most impressive lord of the age. No one would have been surprised had it been Han Xin who ended up emperor, and indeed, he had plenty of chances to seize power. He declined his biggest opportunity, however, out of loyalty to Gaozu.

In the fourth year of the Han Dynasty, Gaozu, at this point king of the Han region but not yet emperor of all China, is making military

progress against his nemesis, Chu warlord Xiang Yu. Much of that progress is thanks to Han Xin, his general and adviser, who is enjoying a string of successes in the field. Xiang Yu, growing fearful, sends an envoy to persuade Han Xin to come back to the Chu side. Han Xin was originally a Xiang Yu retainer, and the envoy refers to that old alliance, along with the prospect of Han Xin's taking a share of the empire, in an attempt to get Han Xin to turn against Gaozu and make a deal with his former master. But Han Xin declines the offer with these words:

> When I served under Lord Xiang . . . my position was only that of a spear bearer. He did not listen to my counsels nor make use of my plans. Therefore I turned my back on Chu and gave my allegiance to Han. The king of Han presented me with the seals of a commanding general and granted me a force of 20,000 or 30,000 men. He doffed his own garments to clothe me, gave me food from his own plate, listened to my words, and used my counsels. Therefore I have been able to come this far. When a man has treated me with such deep kindness and faith, it would be ill-omened to betray him. Even in death I would not be disloyal.[12]

Notice how Han Xin describes the rewards he has received from the king of Han (that is, Gaozu). Not only has the king given him a high position and a large army, he has given him, literally, the clothes off his back and the food off his plate. Still more important, Han Xin says, the king has "listened to my words and used my counsels." Xiang Yu, in contrast, "did not listen to my counsels nor make use of my plans." Therefore, he says, "I gave my allegiance to Han."

Han Xin's speech paints a picture of two men at supper in a battlefield tent on a winter's night. The king leans forward, giving the soldier all his attention; he serves him another slice of meat from his own plate; he asks him whether he's cold and needs a coat. Months later, Han Xin's memory of this kingly treatment will outweigh a warlord's promise to split an empire.

The second anecdote also concerns Han Xin. After conquering Qi, a strategically important area lying on the border of Chu, he sends a request to his boss Gaozu that he be made permanent ruler of the region. Gaozu is displeased. Sima Qian includes the incident in no fewer than five biographies (*Shi Ji* 8, 55, 56, 92, and 94), each of which takes a slightly different angle on it. Here is the shortest version, taken from 55, "The Biography of Zhang Liang":

> In the fourth year of Han . . . Han Xin conquered Qi and announced that he wished to set himself up as king of Qi. The king of Han [Gaozu] was angry but, on the advice of Zhang Liang, sent Zhang to present Han Xin with the seals making him king of Qi.[13]

In another version, we read that Gaozu was so angry that he wanted to attack Han Xin but nevertheless listened to his minister's advice: "It is better to comply with his request and make him king, so he will guard the area in his own interest."[14]

Given Han Xin's less-than-tactful request, it's not surprising that Gaozu is peeved. What is surprising is the speed with which Gaozu accepts his minister's suggestion and grants the request. The about-face is similarly quick in all five versions of the anecdote: Gaozu wants to smack Han Xin down, is given counsel to the contrary, and changes his mind forthwith based on the counsel received. And in fact this pattern—adviser proposes plan, Gaozu immediately adopts plan—shows up dozens of times in Sima Qian's accounts. Here is a leader with no problem following another's lead.

An important difference between leading leaders (or generals) and leading individual contributors (or soldiers) is that with the former, you must show respect for their expertise. Saying, "Nice idea, I'll think about it," as if they were junior associates piping up at an all-company meeting, is a sure way to give offense. You need not always have your ministers in the throne room (so to speak), but if you do have them there and they give you candid advice, you must treat them as befits the position *you* have given them. You cannot hem and haw. You must say yes or no, and mostly you must say yes. This isn't just about being decisive, for Sima Qian shows us plenty of other lords—Xiang Yu, for one—who know how to take brisk action. The key is that Gaozu takes brisk action *on the advice* of his senior staff, thereby demonstrating not only command of the situation, but trust in his commanders.

And he goes to even greater lengths to demonstrate that trust. Not only does he take his ministers' advice, he allows them to step all over him—literally. Let's look at a third version of the scene in which he receives Han Xin's request to be made king of Qi:

> The following year Han Xin conquered Qi and set himself up as king of Qi, sending an envoy to the king of Han to have his title confirmed. The king of Han was furious and began to curse the envoy, but [his minister] Chen Ping restrained him by stepping on his foot as a hint, and when the king realized the pointlessness of such behavior, he received the envoy with generosity and eventually dispatched Zhang Liang to go and confirm Han Xin in his title as king of Qi.[15]

In yet another account, both Chen Ping *and* Zhang Liang step on Gaozu's foot and whisper a warning in his ear. "We are at a disadvantage at the moment," they say. "It would be better to go along with his request, make him acting king, and treat him well so he'll guard Qi for his own sake."[16] Gaozu then "realizes his error" and lets fly more curses before giving the order to install Han Xin as a full-fledged king, for, he says, "Why should I make him only 'acting king'?"

It's baffling: what sort of monarch (or CEO, for that matter) permits his counselors to signal their disapproval by stepping on his foot? Moreover, what sort of monarch reacts to such impudence not by beheading the impudent ones on the spot, but rather by saying, in effect, "Damn it, guys, I nearly screwed up again! Thanks for saving me!"

In this incident and many others, Gaozu both plays the buffoon and plays up to his ministers when they set him straight. Is he doing it on purpose? I think he is. His consummate cunning in many other affairs bespeaks a man in complete control of his actions. He's no doofus; therefore, he must be acting the part of a doofus, highlighting his "Doh!" moments rather than disguising them. If he wanted to cultivate a reputation for wisdom, he'd discourage his advisers from correcting him so blatantly. Far from discouraging Chen Ping and Zhang Liang, however, he bends to their will, acknowledging his error and taking their suggestion even further: "Why should I make him only 'acting king'?"

Most leaders need to be impressive. Gaozu does not. He lets his employees be the impressive ones—the smartest, the bravest, the most sophisticated—while he plays the bumbling bumpkin who'd be lost without his team. "I am inferior to Xiang Yu," he says to Han Xin on another occasion. "Yes," Han Xin replies, "but *you* know how to employ wise generals. That makes you extraordinary."

Quiet Influence Practice 6: Backing those who take the lead

"The notion of the 'perfect' leader is a relatively recent phenomenon," writes Robert Kelley in *The Power of Followership*, the first business book to be concerned entirely with what it means to be a good follower. "The Greek god Zeus," he reminds us, "was slovenly, argumentative, and petty. Winston Churchill, the brilliant orator in Britain's time of need, was socially obnoxious, insulting hosts and guests alike."[17] He might have cited Gaozu as another less-than-perfect type who nevertheless ended up in a top spot. Kelley's view is that the myth of the "great leader" is just that, a myth, and moreover that good followers are not sheep to be herded but rather the driving force behind most group endeavors. "Without his armies, after all, Napoleon was just a man with grandiose ambitions."[18]

I agree. The good follower—that is, the person who effectively supports the plans of others—is an unsung hero. These days there is much talk about everyone's leadership potential: "Leaders at all levels," we say. But I suspect Kelley was right to point, instead, to the followers.

You've seen very young children playing soccer, aka magnet-ball. They all rush for the ball, each kid struggling to kick it, and the result is a pileup. The first lesson in real soccer is to stop trying to be a leader and, instead, learn to be a follower: to step back and support your teammates so the ball can be moved downfield and goals can be scored. The same is true in business situations. "Everyone's a leader" sounds nice, but it can mean the metaphorical ball gets stuck in a metaphorical scrum of flailing feet. In order to move endeavors forward, we need most of the team to be good followers most of the time. "I have worked several years to become more of a follower," says Joan Bragar, the Harvard EdD who steered Forum's influence research in the early 1990s. "If someone says something that sounds reasonably right, I say, yes, let's do that. There is power in following, because that's where the motion comes from. The followers create the motion" (see "Influence in Brief: Leading from Behind," here).

Influence in Brief: Leading from Behind

The higher you go, the more humble you need to be to avoid biased decisions. You need a gentle, all-considering heart.

–Wesley Luo

The prevailing attitude at the time was to hold on to information. You would see people holding on to every decision they could: “If you have a question, you call me and I’ll answer it.” When people used to say that in my Influence workshops, I would talk about the time it takes; for example, basic technical training would take weeks, because *they* had to be the one rolling it out.

–Carol Kane

We overvalue intelligence, especially here in India, which has a brahminic heritage: the highest group in society wasn’t landowners or warriors but people of learning. We have a bias for thought, but in business, you need more of a bias for action. Attitude matters a lot more.

–Gurcharan Das

My mother would play the dunce. Once she was talking to an auto mechanic who said she needed a brake job. She kept asking him “dumb” questions, and eventually he saw she didn’t need a brake job after all. She said to me, “See? Your mom’s not so dumb.” But most people have learned to be the kid in class who knows all the answers.

–Ken De Loreto

We must manage our need to be smart.

–John Humphrey

“Backing those who take the lead” is an influence practice underused in Western workplaces. Western men have always been conditioned to try to be the smartest (and loudest) in the room; now Western women, too, are being told to speak up and take charge. Supporting others from the sidelines can feel unleaderly. “The notion of the leader in the background is still a challenge for us,” says Carol Kane, an educational consultant and Forum alumna:

In total quality management, the highest level of team performance is when the team leader is outside the circle; not abdicating, but no longer *in* the circle, taking

part in decisions and work. In my workshops, someone would say, “We’re a high-performing team,” and I would ask, “Where does the leader sit?” And they would mostly say, “In the circle”—which is not a high-performing team. There is a big control factor for many leaders: “I need to be in charge. I’m the one who maintains the good relationships. I’m the one who has the answers.”

It can be taboo to admit wanting to follow rather than lead. In his book, Kelley tells of a successful corporate banker who had been interviewed by dozens of researchers about his opinions on leadership but had never before acknowledged something hidden in his heart: a preference for following. “Followership speaks to me because it’s who I am,” he says. “I’ve always been a solid contributor, but others made me feel like that wasn’t enough. They always told me to take on more leadership. I never saw the value in it.”[19]

In the summer of 1993, I took a trip to Pittsburgh with my manager, Mimi (see Chapter 4), to see Robert Kelley. He was then a youngish professor at Carnegie Mellon University’s Tepper School of Business. His followership book had come out the previous year, along with his *Harvard Business Review* article called “In Praise of Followers,” which went on to become one of *HBR*’s top-selling reprints. Our purpose in visiting him was to look at the materials for a training program he’d created for a large telecom company based on research he had conducted on the behaviors of star performers. (That research later fed into his book *How to Be a Star at Work*.) Mimi, as Forum’s head of product development, was thinking about licensing the program to sell to our clients. Kelley wouldn’t mail us a set of materials, asking instead that we come and review them in person.

He had invited us for noon that day. Upon our arrival, he ushered us into a sunny conference room with the course binders laid out on a long table. He proceeded to give us an overview of his research, a major point of which, as I recall, was that he had compared star performers to average performers in the telecom’s software development group and had found that the No. 1 quality differentiating the stars was *initiative.* For example, he said, an average performer upon discovering a bug in someone’s code would alert the original coder to the bug; a star performer, in contrast,

would just go ahead and fix the bug. There were other differentiators, but initiative figured most heavily in the program he had developed.

I was Mimi's assistant, basically, and it wasn't my place to comment. Nevertheless, I remember listening to Kelley's example and thinking that if I had written some buggy code, I wouldn't want the finder of the bug to barge ahead and fix it. I would want to be alerted to the bug so *I* could fix it. The myth of the charismatic leader does deserve to be overturned, but I wondered then—and still wonder—whether Kelley, rather than overturning that myth, was simply encouraging more people to buy into it. Stars, he seemed to be saying, are those who (like Bill the Answer Guy from the Overview) don't let a lack of formal authority stop them from grabbing the marker from their colleagues' hands and scribbling away. Even the term he used, *star,* reinforced the notion that being influential means being in the spotlight.

No doubt that's a little unfair. Kelley deserves credit, I think, for being the first to analyze and emphasize followers' contributions to organizations. In studying the armies rather than the Napoleons, he was ahead of his time.

Still, there was one thing about his behavior at that meeting in Pittsburgh that hinted at mistrust in his own theory and a need to play the Napoleon, just a little, with his own guests—whether out of a desire to maintain the upper hand or mere social cluelessness, I don't know. Having read through the binders under his watchful eye, Mimi and I exited the building at 2:30 p.m. We stood on the front steps and Mimi said, "You'd think he could have thrown us a little morsel."

I nodded, faint with hunger. Kelley had given us no lunch.

A few days later, we decided not to make him an offer for his program.

Western Pitfall 6: Using rules and edicts to exert control

The second type of power chaser is the *legalist.*

Legalists are control freaks. If a baron's nightmare is losing contests, a legalist's nightmare is subordinates disobeying the rules he or she has laid down. "Jocelyn, you have an unfortunate tendency

to behave as if the rules don't apply to you," my uber-manager wrote in January 2013, in the formal reprimand heralding the end of my 23-year run as a Forum employee (more on this incident in Chapter 12). He never had bought my contention that as an executive I ought to be permitted to use my judgment in interpreting and executing the rules. But then he was a legalist, and for a legalist, rule-breaking of any kind, by anyone, leads to no good.

Although "Using rules and edicts to exert control" is perhaps the most typically Western of all the influence pitfalls, history's best example of a legalist is a Chinese emperor. He was Qin Shi Huang, founder of the Qin Dynasty, which preceded the Han Dynasty. The Qin family came to power in 221 BCE, and the First Emperor—as he dubbed himself and is still known today—was welcomed initially as a ruler who would put an end to the violent chaos of the Warring States period, which had begun with the collapse of another dynasty 35 years earlier. We learn from Sima Qian that the First Emperor had grand visions for his legacy: "Successive generations of rulers shall be numbered consecutively, Second, Third, and so on for 1,000 or 10,000 generations," he wrote in one of his first edicts, "the succession passing down without end."[20]

He was over-optimistic. When he died in 210 his son became Second Emperor; that son committed suicide two years later and the throne passed to an ineffectual nephew who hung on for 46 days until the regime collapsed under pressure of internal strife and popular uprisings (one of them led by Xiang Yu, Gaozu's old rival). The dynasty lasted barely fifteen years.

The First Emperor and his ministers were the architects of legalism, a ruling philosophy that seeks to bring order to a disordered world by means of detailed laws, strict enforcement of those laws, and harsh punishments for lawbreakers. We can see this philosophy articulated clearly in an inscription carved on one of the dozens of stone tablets the emperor had erected in the four corners of his realm:

> The August Emperor mounted the throne, issuing edicts, clarifying laws, which his subjects observe and obey.

In the twenty-sixth year of his rule he first united the world; there were none who did not come to him in submission . . .

The way of good government is implemented, the various occupations obtain what is needful, all is gauged by law and pattern.

His great principles are noble and preeminent, to be bestowed on future generations, who will receive and honor them without change . . .

His admonitions circulate, his proclamations spread abroad, so that near and far alike are properly ordered, and all bow to the will of the sage.[21]

It took 26 years for the great legalist to put down the rebellions and subdue the interregional rivalries that marked the Warring States era. Unlike a baron, status was not his primary aim. When he finally brought all the states under his rule, he "rejoiced": not that he was at last number one, but that the world was at last "in profound order." He went on to abolish the old feudal system of lords and local patronage and put in its place a centrally managed bureaucracy of 36 provinces, each with its own governor, commandant, and superintendent. The hierarchy was rigid, the laws explicit. Systems, from weights and measures to railway gauges to writing, were standardized. Punishments for infractions large and small were codified. And borders all around were tightened; fittingly, the Great Wall of China was a project of the Qin.

The First Emperor also burned books. He had, he said, "united all under heaven . . . establishing a single source of authority," and yet, he noted with dismay, there were still all these scholars running around disputing things. A law would be handed down, and, "at court they disapprove in their hearts; outside they debate it in the streets." Unacceptable! He therefore proclaimed that all historical records, literary works, and philosophical treatises—anything except practical books, such as those on medicine, divination, and agriculture—should be delivered to each provincial governor for burning. Furthermore, he said, "anyone who ventures to discuss the *Odes* or *Documents* shall be executed in the marketplace. Anyone who uses antiquity to criticize the present shall be executed along with his family."[22] He followed through on these threats, putting hundreds of

scholars to death in an effort to reduce the Hundred Schools of Thought to one school: his.

Here is where we might start tut-tutting at the tyrants who, with their crowns and corner offices and penchant for bullying, make history interesting and our own work lives difficult. But even people without much formal authority—even, that is, we ordinary folk—are prone to the "rules and edicts" trap. Remember the authority myth, whereby we imagine that power, or the ability to make things happen, increases in direct correlation with the authority we possess; that any sort of badge (project manager, committee head, team leader, meeting chair) automatically gives us control over others. In fact, the correlation between badges and power is weakly positive at best, negative at worst. Often, a higher position means *less* control. One reason is that most humans are far too independent-minded to submit, doglike, to dominance displays. Take me: when I received the managerial reprimand mentioned above, my reaction was neither to cower nor to salute, but to pack up and leave.

Few are as eager to crack the whip as a newly made supervisor. Over time, as that supervisor climbs the ladder to the C-suite or starts her own business, she learns that a whip, if not used sparingly, ends up having all the force of a wet noodle. For real power, she learns to rely on quiet influence. But some never learn that lesson.

The First Emperor "cracked his long whip and drove the universe before him," says Confucian scholar Jia Yi in a famous essay titled *The Faults of the Qin,* quoted in Sima Qian's annals. And his approach worked—for a few years. The nation bowed before his authority, and under his son, the Second Emperor, the memory of that authority continued to awe the population. But, Jia Yi says, these emperors' obsession with law and order bred resentment and, ultimately, rebellion:

> Qin, beginning with an insignificant amount of territory, reached the power of a great kingdom . . . Yet, after it had become master of the six directions and established its palaces within the passes, a single commoner opposed it . . . its ruler died by the hands of men, and it became the laughing stock of the world. Why? Because it failed to rule with humanity and righteousness, and did not realize that the power to attack, and the power to retain what one has thereby won, are not the same.

The “single commoner” was a day laborer and garrison conscript named Chen She. He stepped forth from the ranks to lead a band of some hundred soldiers in revolt against the Qin. According to Jia Yi, “They cut down trees to make their weapons and raised their flags on garden poles, and the whole world gathered like a cloud, answered like an echo to a sound, brought them provisions, and followed after them as shadows follow a form.”[23] Those shadows and echoes swept away the whips and walls of the legalists.

More than two thousand years later, an American CEO—John Humphrey—would travel to Tokyo to lecture on the topic of influence. There was a simultaneous translator, and, says John, “he told me there was no Japanese word for ‘influence’ as we were using it. He asked me to describe the concept.”

After some discussion, the translator decided on the appropriate Japanese term:

Shadow-echo.

The next quiet influence practice is *Finding ways to be effective in the face of aggressions.*

Chapter 7

Fight Softly ~ Murasaki Shikibu

Sometime in the 1990s. Paul Garces, one of Forum's top facilitators, is teaching an Influence program in a high-rise hotel in the heart of Mexico City. For the class's culmination he has chosen an exercise, "Subarctic Survival," that he's used often before. It involves small groups imagining themselves stranded in the Canadian wilderness and having to prioritize, first as individuals and then as a group, a list of some fifteen items: blankets, water-purification tablets, flashlight, matches, and so on. The purpose of the activity is for each team to reach consensus under time pressure on a rank order for the list. Paul is videotaping the discussions.

One of the teams consists of five men and a woman. The men launch into the discussion with confidence. "The water-purification tablets are essential," one guy says. "Without water, we'll all die in a few days." Male heads nod in agreement.

The lone woman says in a soft voice, "I don't know; I think the water up there is likely to be pretty pure." The men talk over her and the debate continues.

Soon the woman pipes up again: "Actually, I think the matches are going to be very important. I'd put them at the top of the list." Again, the men ignore her.

After a quarter of an hour and a few more tries at "Matches," the woman gets up, leaves the group, and stands at the window eating a brownie and looking out at the cityscape. She has filled out her individual ranking sheet. As time winds down, she makes one last try, returning to her table and saying, "I really think the matches

should be considered number one." But by then the men have already completed their group form, and it's too late to change it.

Paul calls time and hands out the expert ranking, to which the teams now compare their answers.

The five men, in their group response, are as wrong as a team has ever been. The woman, on her individual ranking, has a perfect score—exactly aligned with the experts.

Now everyone gets to watch their videotaped discussions, and the men see how their female teammate kept offering suggestions, only to be ignored. Paul asks, "Did you go around the group at the start and take an inventory of everyone's relevant experience and knowledge?" No, they did not. So they do it now. The men all say they were in the military or have done a lot of wilderness camping.

When it's the woman's turn, she says, "I was an Outward Bound mountaineering instructor in the Alaskan Chugach Range for seven years."

The men are stunned. "Why didn't you tell us?" they fume. The woman, equally angry, says, "I *tried* to tell you."

Paul points back to the video, evidence that she did indeed try to speak and was indeed shouted down. The men are chagrined; they own that they failed to listen and that it cost them their metaphorical survival as a team.

Then Paul asks the woman what she might have done differently in order to be heard. "I guess I could have sounded more confident," she says. "I could have said at the start, 'Hey, guys, we're in luck: this was my job for seven years, literally doing survival training in Alaska, so I can help with the answers.' Instead, I kept on being polite."

The men agree. They would have paid more attention, they say, had she presented her opinions forthrightly, basing them on facts and experience, rather than murmuring, "I don't know; maybe we need the matches." So the class concludes with good lessons all round.

Good lessons, but it's not quite that simple. For women, and indeed for anyone perceived as occupying a subordinate or minority position, there is a tightrope to walk when working with those in a dominant or majority position. Too meek, and you're a doormat. Too forceful, and you're a bitch (or, to keep things gender-neutral, an asshole). The woman in the subarctic survival exercise would have had to walk that tightrope even in speaking about her obviously relevant experience. She was too quiet, so the men tuned her out as weak and ignorant; too loud, though, and they would have tuned her out as self-centered and arrogant.

Western feminists have been calling attention to the doormat-bitch tightrope since the mid-twentieth century.* But it was an ancient Eastern sage, the lone woman among our twelve, who explored the issue first and best.

Virtuosos behind the Blinds

. . . [S]he had made it clear to everyone that she had had no say in the matter, and then made it equally clear that her acceptance of his suit was for her a new departure, and so she had emerged unscathed. Genji saw more than ever what a virtuoso performance it had been. (*The Tale of Genji,* Ch. 35)[1]

The Tale of Genji, Japan's most famous classic novel, is the tale of a Prince Charming who is also a sociopath.

Scholars of medieval Japanese literature will immediately protest. "All books are of their time and culture," they'll declare, "and in that time and culture, Genji's behavior—for instance, his kidnapping of a prepubescent girl, adopting her as his daughter, and a few years later sleeping with her and making her his chief concubine—would have been regarded as totally normal."

I don't doubt that it would. But the question isn't whether readers of the era would have thought Genji's behavior normal. The question is whether the author (see "The Sage: Lady Murasaki," below) thought it normal and what she wanted to say about it.

The Sage: Lady Murasaki

“Little is known with certainty about *The Tale of Genji,”* says Edward Seidensticker, creator of one of the book’s four major English translations, “except that it has existed and been held in high esteem for a millennium.”[2] It was authored by a court lady known as Murasaki Shikibu (according to the customs of the time, her real name would have been considered impolite to use) who had a reputation as a fine writer and who, in the year 1005, was invited by Japan’s empress to serve as lady-in-waiting at the imperial court. There she finished her great work, often called the world’s first novel or the first psychological novel, delving as it does into the minds and motivations of a host of realistic characters portrayed in everyday situations. In the Heian period (eighth to twelfth centuries) the arts of all kinds—poetry, painting, music, dress, and even the “art” of courtship—reached their height. Murasaki showcases the hyper-refined social rituals typical of the day. But she also undercuts those rituals, saying little directly but much indirectly to imply a blistering critique of a deeply misogynistic culture: a culture in which women nevertheless find myriad ways to exert influence.

In *The Tale of Genji* there is a stark contrast between how the main character is described and what his actions and words reveal him to be. Murasaki *tells* us constantly that Genji is a “paragon” of surpassing beauty, talent, and accomplishment; what she *shows* us, however, is a callous, preening cad, obsessed with sexual conquest and his public image, careless of the emotional wreckage he creates, thoughtful of others when it suits him but at bottom without conscience or capacity to love. (One Amazon reviewer put it more succinctly: “Genji is a ho.”) It is impossible that an author of Murasaki’s genius did not intend this contrast. Indeed, it screams from every page. I conclude, therefore, that she meant her character’s sobriquet, “the shining Genji,” to be taken in two ways: *shining* in the sense of brilliant or luminous, and *shining* in the sense of dazzling, glaring, a light in your eyes that blinds you to the ugliness behind it.

Genji is the son of an emperor and a “lady not of the first rank whom the emperor loved more than any of the others.”[3] Denied a royal title due to his mother’s low birth, he rises on his own merit and eventually becomes lord chancellor, the highest office available to a commoner. He is married at age twelve and soon thereafter begins his career as a seducer. His major liaisons (wives, consorts, and mistresses) number fifteen or so, but we are given to understand he has dozens of lesser flings. Japanese high society at the time was as sexually free as Western society is today; although women had many more strictures than men, women and men alike were expected to have love affairs, and those affairs—assuming they met the meticulous standards of good taste for which Heian culture is renowned—went largely unpunished.

Women, however, faced many predicaments. Although *Genji* is named for its male protagonist, much of the book is concerned with the struggles, psychological and practical, of the women in the case.[*] Well-born Japanese ladies of the time were screened, literally, from public view: hidden by bamboo blinds or silk curtains 24 hours a day, indoors or out. A woman who “allowed herself to be seen” by any man other than her husband or an immediate relative was thought to have invited whatever sexual insult happened next; to have “asked for it,” so to speak. Female servants and companions attended these women around the clock and in theory kept them safe from male invasion, since it was thought extremely poor form for a man to attempt seduction while anyone looked on; in practice, however, maids could be bribed, either with money or simply with the chance of a little excitement to spice up a dull life, and not infrequently would betray their mistress by becoming co-conspirator to a hopeful lover.

To repeat, the era’s sexual mores were relaxed and a liaison not necessarily a catastrophe. Even if she belonged to the emperor, a straying woman would likely just lose her position, not her head. Still, women had little control over their sexual fate. Once a man set his sights on a potential wife, mistress, or hookup—and assuming he could get access to her—his target would be hard pressed to turn him away. Rape was deemed crude, but Genji and his friends go right up to the line, finding numerous inventive ways to get their prey at a disadvantage: a midnight abduction to a lonely cottage, for

example, followed by stunningly refined versions of “Please baby, please baby, please.” Or a man might take a more open route, bringing his request to the girl’s family and winning their approval for a marriage or other arrangement. No matter the method of pursuit, escape was difficult. A woman dead set on rejecting a suitor and lacking powerful friends had, typically, only one option: to become a nun.

So, the women of *Genji* become adept at psychological jujutsu. In its physical form, jujutsu is an ancient Japanese martial art with many modern derivatives, including judo, aikido, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. *Ju* means “to give way,” “yield,” or “blend,” while *jutsu* means technique or art. *Jujutsu*, then, is “the soft technique,” whose hallmark is the use of the opponent’s force against himself. In physical combat, jujutsu allows the powerless to use the strength of the powerful, not by wresting it away, but by dispersing, redirecting, or neutralizing it. An example: One’s natural reaction when attacked frontally is to step backward or, if one is of a fighting mind, to throw a punch. The mistress of jujutsu, in contrast, will lean forward into the attacker’s body and hook her ankle around his, causing his own momentum to sweep his leg up and out, toppling him backward to the ground. Thus, she co-opts his power.

The best example of psychological jujutsu in *Genji* is the story of Tamakazura.[*] A teenager when we first meet her, Tamakazura is the long-lost child of Genji’s best friend, who abandoned her and her mother when she was born. Genji discovers her whereabouts and, titillated by the idea of such an addition to his household, adopts her as foster daughter without telling his friend of her identity. He promises he will treat her with utmost respect. A few months later, he’s trying to seduce her. (It’s the second time he has played this game with an adopted girl.) As Tamakazura’s foster father, he’s allowed to be alone with her at any time, and he takes full advantage of these privileges, pressing her night after night to give way. But she resists, using all means at her disposal: tears, appeals to his sense of honor, distractions of flowers and fireflies—even dashes around pillars, like a 1960s secretary being chased around a desk by her boss. Eventually Genji tires of the pursuit.

But Tamakazura isn't safe yet: a neighboring nobleman, Higekuro, takes a fancy to her and bribes one of her serving women to be his agent. After sending a number of courtship poems, all of which are ignored by Tamakazura, Higekuro gains access to her chamber and "forces himself into her presence." While the exact nature of his attack is left ambiguous, the aggressiveness of his actions and Tamakazura's dangerously compromised position are not in doubt.

The next thing we know, the two are married. "Poor woman!" we might think—abandoned as a child, defenseless against her abusers, married off to one of them. But then we get this passage:

> [Genji] thought of Tamakazura. She had grown up in straitened circumstances with no one really capable of defending her interests. She was quick and shrewd, however, and an adroit manipulator. Genji had made the world think he was her father and had caused her problems which a real father would not have. She had turned them smoothly away, and when Higekuro had found an accomplice in one of her serving women and forced his way into her presence, she had made it clear to everyone that she had had no say in the matter, and then made it equally clear that her acceptance of his suit was for her a new departure, and so she had emerged unscathed. Genji saw more than ever what a virtuoso performance it had been.[4]

This "poor woman" throws society's pity right back in its face as she makes her move and rises strong. The next time we see her she is the mistress of a great household—possessed of noble status, an unimpeachable reputation, and the admiration of all.

Quiet Influence Practice 7: Finding ways to be effective in the face of aggressions

Tamakazura's "virtuoso performance" was described by Murasaki a thousand years before the #metoo movement, in a time when women harassed by powerful men had few resources to fight back, and as for platforms from which to speak about their experiences, none at all. Yet her disadvantaged position is precisely why we can learn from this virtuoso behind the blinds.

Today, we debate whether rape-prevention efforts should focus on teaching women how to avoid rape or teaching men not to rape. The former approach is called victim-blaming by some, while the latter

approach is called naïve by others. But it's a false dichotomy. In between victim-blaming and offender-shaming is the understanding that even the most progressive society is filled with power imbalances major and minor, aggressions macro and micro, and tightropes of various widths, all of which must be navigated. Yes, a better world may arrive if we dream it and work for it. Utopia, however, isn't arriving anytime soon, no matter how hard we work or fervently we dream.

So, we must be prudent. Even while we educate (or pressure) the big and strong to respect the rights of the small and meek, we must educate the small and meek—who of course are not just women, but might be any of us when faced with someone bigger and stronger—in the art of fighting softly (see "Influence in Brief: The Soft Technique," here). This art, as I said above, is about co-opting the power of one's adversaries and using their strength to advance one's own goals. Psychologically it is an attitude as much as a technique, and by studying Tamakazura's story, we may notice that the attitude has two components.

First, the jujutsu expert *accepts intractable power imbalances and the rules that go with them.* Tamakazura, living in a world where men have much authority and women nearly none, knows that any energy spent railing against the sexual-social rules of the day will be energy wasted and therefore does not even consider complaining about her treatment. Instead, she turns her wits to finding a path away from her odious foster father and into a situation—albeit a marriage with her assailant—where she can gain status and control as the lady of a noble house. It is an impressive jujutsu move. Today, thankfully, the constraints on women in general and sexual assault victims in particular are less draconian. Nevertheless, constraints of other kinds still abound, especially in hierarchical workplaces. The boss is the boss, with the power to hire and fire; the culture is the culture, usually set in stone from the company's early days. Most lone struggles against the System are like the struggles of a lone fish in a net, serving only to entangle and exhaust us. If we're bent on bringing about systemic change, we must find a lot of other fish to ally with. If there are none, we must cease the struggle and seek a way out of the net (see Chapter 12).

Second, jujutsu experts *act to serve their interests, not their ego.* Recall Quiet Influence Practice 5: Converting adversaries to allies by aligning interests. Tamakazura (something like Sāvitrī) has a devil to deal with and knows her only hope lies in an alliance with him. Given that Higekuro wants to marry her and she wants to escape Genji, she knows she will have no difficulty aligning their two sets of interests and seizes her opportunity to do so. Would we sympathize with her had she protested Higekuro's assault? Of course we would. But the fixed power structures of the time mean that such a protest would be an ego-driven exercise, a howl accomplishing nothing. Realizing this, Tamakazura sets ego aside and, with cool calculation, makes the choice that serves her best—while letting everybody know she had no other choice. A virtuoso performance, indeed.*

Facilitator Carin Gendell, who defines influence as "giving stakeholders a chance to convince themselves," has extensive experience teaching leadership in agencies of the US government. Here's how she talks about the jujutsu required in that environment:

> In the federal government, I hear the phrase "leading from behind" a lot. You have middle managers trying to remove obstacles and make things happen almost in spite of the senior managers. It's not just about keeping a manager informed and bought-in; it's more about doing some great new things so they can convince a manager to take a new approach. Instead of asking for direction, they're finding ways to make things happen and then convincing the senior leaders it was all their idea.

And yet, says Carin, "people are still uncomfortable when they lack positional authority, so when they are assigned a role without positional authority, they seek it out." They'll go to senior management and ask for decision rights over a particular area, or the right to control who is on the team, or a larger budget ("I can't do the project unless you give me X"). On these efforts they can spend a lot of energy—which, like the fish's struggles in the net, is mostly energy wasted. "Stop arguing for your positional authority," Carin says, "and start trying to make things happen on your team. When your team performs, you're more likely to win the authority."

Influence in Brief: The Soft Technique

Participants had to figure out how these practices were or should be demonstrated within their organization. It was about guiding them to develop their own answers, not telling them the answers. As the facilitator, you had to model influence yourself.

–Carin Gendell

Position is not the only driver of influence. Every person has influence within them, which comes when they get rid of self-limiting beliefs. You have the ability to influence in many different forms; it can come from power of knowledge, of attitude, of giving. When more and more people experience that power, they can be influencers.

–Shibani Belwalkar

Our R&D manager was interested in Ayurvedic medicine, and he had discovered that all the ingredients in Vicks VapoRub were Ayurvedic. He said, “Why don’t we register the product as Ayurvedic?” Those products weren’t price controlled [as non-Ayurvedic products were]. We went to the government, and they saw right through us—but they had to approve it, due to their own rules. So we avoided the price controls, and we also got an advantage in distribution because we weren’t limited to the chemist shops: we could sell it in every corner shop along with non-drug products. We became a potential competitor to Unilever and all the companies that sell soap.

–Gurcharan Das

Arguing for authority you don’t have is like arguing to be let off the tightrope. As the woman in the subarctic survival exercise likely knew (and members of minority groups have long known), that’s a losing game. Awareness efforts can mitigate the doormat-or-bitch perception somewhat; most men, if pressed, will acknowledge the bind in which women find themselves. Alas, this knowledge will not stop them from making snap judgments when under pressure and faced with a woman whom they see as “too quiet” or “too aggressive.” The unenlightened parts of the human brain are, unfortunately, the parts that take over in stressful situations.

So, in addition to calling attention to the tightrope, we must learn to dance on it. In their book *What Works for Women at Work,* Joan Williams and Rachel Dempsey report on a research study that looked at four different speaking styles women may adopt:

- *High-task:* rapid with few hesitations and a neutral facial expression
- *Dominant:* loud, angry, with a stern facial expression and backward lean
- *Social:* friendly and animated, with a pleasant expression and forward lean
- *Submissive:* soft, shaky, and slow, with hesitations and stumbles

What works best for women, it turns out, is the social style. "Social behaviors," the study concludes, "enhance influence when combined with competence," while the other three styles interfere with a woman's influence no matter how competent she is.[5] Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and author of *Lean In,* has described the social style as "relentlessly pleasant."

I take this to mean that anyone subject to the doormat-bitch (or-asshole) dilemma should do psychologically what the jujutsu masters do physically: Lean in. Align with your opponent's strength. Hook a figurative foot around a figurative ankle to throw them off balance. And smile as you do it.*

Carin cites another question that comes up frequently in her influence classes: "Why do I have to be nice? Why do I have to change to suit these people?" In other words: "As long as I know I'm right, why can't I just throw punches at my aggressors?" In response, she says, "I help them see they aren't changing who they are, but rather learning to deliver their message in a way people can receive and respond to it."

Perhaps you've heard it said: You can be right or you can be effective, and ultimately you must choose one or the other. Adepts of the soft technique choose effective.

Western Pitfall 7: Collecting admirers

We've met the baron and the legalist, and now we meet the third kind of power chaser: the *seducer.* Seducers don't want to beat enemies or control subordinates. What they want is to be loved; or, more precisely, to be admired.

Genji is one of literature's best examples of a seducer. He isn't driven by lust as much as by his need to have lots and lots of people—women mostly, but men, too—giving him their undivided attention and thinking he is too wonderful for words. Every character in the story marvels at Genji's beauty and talent, on occasion even wondering if he might be the Buddha reincarnate; we get the sense, however, that it is Genji who marvels most. He is forever striking poses and checking out of the corner of his eye to see who is watching. The first time we encounter him as an adult (in the "Broom Tree" chapter) he is engaged in a long conversation with two friends about various types of women and their respective merits. I say "engaged," but in fact Genji says little in comparison with the others, and when after a while they look to him for a comment, they are irked to find him asleep. Genji is interested in women, to be sure, but not as a topic for discussion. The only discussion he welcomes is one centering on him.

Seducers want to be admired not only as *being* the best but also as *having* the best. Hence they are great collectors: of art, houses, clothes, transportation (cars, carriages, or horses, depending on the era), sidekicks, and lovers. Upon his retirement, Genji builds his Rokujō compound—the "most tasteful of houses"[6]—to be a showplace in every sense. The compound has four quarters, each designed by Genji for one of four specially selected women and intended to suit that woman's particular qualities. From a bird's-eye view the house would look like a jewelry box with four compartments, each displaying a different jewel. In retirement, the narrator says, "[Genji] needed more room for the leisurely life that was now his. He wanted to have everyone near him."[7] It's not that he doesn't care for people. But he cares for them as the star of a show cares for the chorus and the audience: the former enhances his stardom while the latter watches and applauds.

Barons and legalists usually have to be members of the dominant social group, with both the resources and the appetite for direct conflict. But seducers can be anyone, so there are always quite a few of them around. Here's the true story of a present-day seducer.

Sometime around the turn of the millennium, Forum hired a new account director for one of the firm's East Coast regions. "Georgina"

(as I'll call her) was smart, personable, and attractive. She quickly won fans. I was back in product development at the time, working remotely from Santa Fe, New Mexico, after my sojourn in Toronto, and my colleagues and I were in the process of creating a new set of sales training workshops. We were having trouble lining up beta tests: the seasoned account directors, who normally would help us arrange tests of new products with their clients, weren't coming through. We reached out to Georgina, and bam—she lined up a pilot at one of her customers, a major beverage company. "The great Georgina!" I said on our next team call. "Yeah, she's amazing!" said my boss.

The pilot fell through. But that wasn't unusual, and we managed to find others. Georgina was apologetic: "Some shake-ups at the client," she said. "Not your fault," we reassured her. As the months went by, she continued to impress with her eagerness to help and her industry insights. She was the first AD we'd ask to join a product advisory group, the first we'd invite to a brainstorming session. She was never too busy to oblige. Meanwhile, we heard, she was exceeding her sales targets and bringing in large accounts.

One week I flew back to Toronto to conduct some training for the sales force on the new workshops we were rolling out. Georgina hadn't been able to join the session for her own region, so she came to the Toronto one. Icebreakers were de rigeur at Forum meetings, and I opened the day with an activity that had participants sort themselves into groups based on a mini-survey of their preferences and write a group motto. Most of the mottos were unsurprising: "Customer Focused" or "Working Together." But I vividly recall Georgina, in a sharp navy-blue skirt suit, standing and presenting her group's motto.

"We Like the Finer Things," she said, and gave a few examples: "Courvoisier. Lexus. Chanel." She smoothed her long blonde hair as we all laughed and clapped.

About 18 months after she had arrived at Forum, Georgina left. At the time, all any of us knew was that she had taken a sales job with another Boston-based company. We were sorry to see her go. But several years afterward, a shocking news article began to circulate

through the Forum offices: Georgina—yes, *that* Georgina—had been convicted of white-collar fraud.

She had, it transpired, barely sold a thing while she was at Forum. She had instead fabricated hefty contracts out of thin air, in each case inventing client names, forging signatures, and later, after cashing her commission check, claiming that a muddle on the client's end had caused the project to "fall through." Eventually her bosses realized something was amiss, and she was asked to leave. But at the new company she upped her game, setting up phony email addresses and telephone lines for her imaginary accounts. And here's the kicker: when her sales manager became suspicious and began asking to join conference calls with the "hot prospects," Georgina *purchased a voice-distortion device and faked the calls,* pretending to be the client and carrying on a conversation with herself as her manager listened.

We were all agog. "So much work! Wouldn't just selling stuff have been easier?"

Subsequently, the news article said, Georgina had moved to California, where she began moonlighting for yet another company, again receiving commissions on fictitious contracts. Neither employer knew she was working for the other. In 2003 her schemes were discovered and she was turned over to the courts for prosecution. She was convicted of embezzlement, fined $71,000, and sentenced to five years' probation, the first three months to be served in home confinement. The CEO of the second company, a Forum alumna, went to her trial. "I felt I had to go," she told some of us later. "Georgina almost destroyed my company."

Seducers such as the shining Genji and the great Georgina are unconcerned with the destruction they leave in their wake. They are equally unconcerned with the amount of work required to collect their scads of admirers. We were mystified by the bizarre lengths to which Georgina went in order to perpetrate her frauds when it would have been so much simpler to make actual sales calls, but it makes sense when you realize that a seducer will do anything, no matter how arduous, in order to keep up the illusion that he or she is a paragon. Genji, likewise, is tireless in burnishing his image. Many of his accomplishments are real enough: he is an excellent musician, poet,

and calligrapher, all the result of genuine effort. He's devastatingly handsome. But he relies, at bottom, on smoke and mirrors. At one point we learn that he has in his mansion a troupe of baby maidservants, beautifully dressed little girls whose main function is to go out into the garden on winter evenings and build snowmen while he and his guests admire the charming scene. What can be said of such a man but that he is a fatuous fake?

Like influence-by-conquest and influence-by-edict, influence-by-seduction tends to be fleeting. Although seducers, like barons and legalists, may gain power in the short term, their power rarely endures. The great Georgina was convicted and sentenced for her frauds; I don't know what happened to her after she served her time, but I can't imagine her professional stature will ever be what it was. The hero of *The Tale of Genji* ends his life drifting aimlessly around his compound, dreaming of the past, treated by his few remaining ladies with the same kindly disdain one might show a decrepit old tomcat. His death passes without remark: there is merely (in some manuscripts) a blank chapter entitled "Vanished into the Clouds," and on we go to the next generation of characters. The shining Genji was just a flash in the pan.

The next quiet influence practice is *Managing your own emotions and behavior.*

Chapter 8

Rule Yourself ~ Mahātmā Gandhi

New York: January 2002. "This conference reminds me of that *Sesame Street* song," Aly said. She sang the first line: "One of these things is not like the others . . ."

". . . One of these things just doesn't belong," I sang back. She had, I felt, hit the nail on the head. For another minute we stayed at our deserted lunch table, eating our oatmeal-raisin cookies. Then we headed back to the main event.

Aly Brandt was head of sales for Forum's US Northeast region. That week she and I were representing Forum at a conference in New York hosted by our new corporate parent, the publishing and education giant Pearson PLC. In the hotel's largest ballroom were gathered delegates from all the business units of the Pearson empire: Addison-Wesley, Penguin Books, *The Financial Times,* Prentice Hall, and many other well-known brands.

At lunchtime on day two, Aly and I strove to engage another delegate in conversation. A sales rep from one of the textbook publishers, he spent most of the meal explaining their technology plays: how they were moving their books to e-platforms and adding assessment capabilities. When he politely asked what we did and we began to talk about our research, clients, and learning programs, he developed a half-confused-half-bored look, as if we were listing the principal exports and imports of an exotic but dull country. Soon he checked his watch and beat a retreat, leaving us to our cookies.

Forum was the lone consulting firm in the Pearson stable—or at least, "consulting firm" is what we still called ourselves. Pearson would have called us a content provider. Six months ago they had

bought us mainly for our library of training courses, courses my team and I were now busily working to convert to an e-learning format in order to fulfill a promise on which the sale had hinged. We had been placed in a group called FTK: FT for *Financial Times,* K for Knowledge. FTK was Pearson's toe in the waters of corporate education. Forum was the smallest company in the group, and since the sale I had been sensing that we'd been taken over by—not a dark force, because the new owners seemed nice enough—but a force that saw us as a means to profit, period. Once we had been an independent nation. Now, we were a colony.

Many employees adapted just fine to colonization. I was not one of them.

Part of the problem was that I had a new boss who annoyed me. "Leo" (as I'll call him) had been brought in as head of learning technology around the time of the Pearson takeover. One of his jobs was to oversee my e-learning conversion project, and I resented what I saw as his micromanaging ways. In hindsight, he wasn't a bad leader at all; on the contrary, he was supportive, rational, and (crucially, though I didn't grasp it at the time) good at sheltering his team from the whims of the Pearson overlords. But . . . he wanted frequent status reports. He insisted on email rather than voicemail. His manner was corporate-brusque rather than Forum-cheerful. Most annoying of all, he would sometimes tell me, "No, you can't do that."

On the first evening of the Pearson conference, Leo sent me an email that set me right off. So, I got on a phone in the hotel lobby (still plenty of public phones in 2002) and left a voicemail for Joe—that same Joe who'd been head of Forum Canada. He had moved to a staff position and was now Leo's boss.

"I can't stand working for this guy!" I ranted. "You have to do something!"

Joe, alarmed, left a return voicemail asking me to fly to Boston next day so the three of us could meet and try to work things out. But by then I was no longer enraged, just sulky. I apologized for my outburst and said there was no need to have a meeting.

I didn't want to work things out. I didn't want to do anything that might require self-reflection or self-control. I just wanted Leo, and the rest of the colonialists, gone.

Home Rule or Self-Rule?

. . . [I]f we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. (*Hind Swaraj,* Ch. XIV)[1]

In the preceding three chapters, we met characters historical and fictional who put ego aside in order to build influence. Princess Sāvitrī, Emperor Gaozu, and Tamakazura increased their power not by seizing it, but by sharing and amplifying it. Whether you call it shrewd alliance-making, good followership, or the soft technique, the underlying strategy is the same: instead of battling your adversaries for a piece of an existing pie, you bake a new and bigger pie and invite them to the table.

Sounds simple. But in order to pull off such a feat, we must first realize that our toughest influence challenge is usually—us.

"Lead yourself first" has become a consultant's cliché, but it wasn't a cliché in November 1909, when Mohandas K. Gandhi, a young barrister and political organizer, wrote his treatise *Hind Swaraj (Indian Home Rule)* while on a sea voyage returning from London, where he had been lobbying for Indian interests (see "The Sage: Mahātmā Gandhi," here). India at the time was a British colony, and Indian voices for liberation were growing steadily louder and more violent. Gandhi himself had already been imprisoned three times for provoking civil disobedience against anti-Indian racial legislation, causing the British to see him as just another agitator. His London lobbying trip was a failure. But onboard the *Kildonan Castle* he had an epiphany, and a flood of words describing a new approach poured out onto ship's stationery. "The writing went on at such a furious pace," says historian Anthony J. Parel, "that when the right hand got tired, Gandhi continued with the left."[2] Of the book's 275 handwritten pages, Parel reports, only sixteen lines were later scratched out and revised.

Gandhi is best known today for his theory of passive resistance, the idea that inspired suffragettes to chain themselves to fences, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to call for bus boycotts in the segregated US South, and generations of activists to fight for their cause by staging sit-ins and letting police haul them limply off to jail. *Hind Swaraj,*

however, is not primarily about passive resistance (although *satyāgraha*, literally “truth-firmness,” is the topic of one chapter). It is, rather, about home rule or self-rule. Gandhi plays on those two similar-but-not-quite-the-same meanings of *swaraj* as he constructs a dialogue between an imaginary “Reader,” a young firebrand who assumes home rule means driving the British out of India and wants advice on how to do it, and an “Editor,” an older and wiser man who wants the Reader to grasp the difficult truth that a British exit, unless accompanied by a transformation in how the Indians see themselves, will result only in the exchange of one tyranny for another and that, conversely, the adoption of true self-rule will make it irrelevant whether the British stay or go.

The Sage: Mahātmā Gandhi

In his introduction to Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings,* editor Parel lists six reasons why Gandhi wrote his seminal work of political theory: First, out of an urgent need to communicate ideas that had possessed him; second, to clarify the meaning of *swaraj* and the distinction between its two connotations, home rule and self-rule; third, as a rebuke to the young revolutionaries whose violence, he felt, would only make things worse for their country; fourth, to argue that Western civilization posed a greater threat to India than colonialism, and hence that the adoption of Western customs and practices was no way to oust the British; fifth, to help bring about a reconciliation between India and England; and sixth, “to give Indians a practical philosophy, an updated conception of dharma that would fit them for life in the modern world.”[3] To that last point, in India’s ancient past, *dharma* meant the duties specific to one’s place in society—priest, warrior, merchant, or serf. In expanding the definition to apply (at least in theory) to equal members of a free nation, Gandhi envisioned a new, more humanistic type of social justice. Our eleven other sages would no doubt approve.

“Why do we want to drive away the English?” asks the Editor. The Reader replies, “They take away our money . . . The most important posts are reserved for themselves. We are kept in a state of slavery. They behave insolently towards us, and disregard our feelings.” (I had a similar opinion of Forum’s corporate colonizers.)

The Editor then asks, “If they do not take our money away, become gentle, and give us responsible posts, would you still consider their presence to be harmful?” The Reader replies, “Such a question is a sheer waste of time. When a tiger changes his nature, Englishmen will change theirs.” The Editor presses the point, asking whether it will be satisfactory if India gets self-government like the Canadians have; will that be good enough? Again the Reader rejects the idea, saying, “We may get it when we have arms and ammunition even as they have. But when we have the same powers, we shall hoist our own flag . . . we must have our own splendour, and then will India’s voice ring through the world.”[4] The Editor replies:

> You have well drawn the picture. In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger’s nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English, and, when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. That is not the Swaraj that I want.[5]

The Reader, seemingly taken aback by this twist in the argument, notes that English institutions (parliament, the education system, and so on) are pretty impressive; after all, they have allowed Britain, a small nation, to maintain independence and achieve great power in the world. So why wouldn’t India want to import those institutions? The Editor advises patience, for he is now going to explain why “what you call Swaraj is not truly Swaraj.”

Over the next several chapters, the Editor delivers a devastating indictment not only of England, but of Western civilization as a whole. In Western societies, he says, rulers and citizens alike are obsessed with wealth and power. Opinions swing like a pendulum, the people following any clever orator who promises them money and a good time. It used to be that a few wise men wrote valuable, edifying books; today, he says, anybody can write drivel and poison thousands of minds (this, a century before social media). Bodily welfare is made the object of life. Fine clothes, fast travel, service at

the push of a button, hospitals to cure diseases that never existed before, lawyers to sue anyone who crosses us—these are called the height of civilization. In reality, says the Editor, they are evidence of rot at the core.

The Reader seems convinced. But then he wonders: If this type of civilization is so rotten, and the British are so weakened by it, why have they been able to take and retain India? It's the question the Editor (aka Gandhi) has been waiting for, and he answers thus:

"The English have not taken India; we have given it to them."[6]

Quiet Influence Practice 8: Managing your own emotions and behavior

It's always easy to place blame on others: on our boss, colleagues, subordinates, anybody who seems to be doing us wrong. And when a teacher makes it clear—as Gandhi does for his "Reader"—that *we* are the ones to whom a lesson is directed, the lesson can be hard to absorb.

Coach and consultant Marian Thier tells this anecdote from her time in the 1980s and '90s teaching Forum's Leadership Now program at General Motors:

> We attended a session W. Edwards Deming [TQM guru and architect of Japan's postwar economic turnaround] was giving for GM executives. Roger Smith was CEO, and he was onstage talking about quality; it was the time of the Chrysler K cars, which were just crap. Then Dr. Deming came onstage—he was about 80 years old, all bent over—and Smith introduced him and began to walk off.
>
> Deming followed him and asked, "Where are you going?" Smith said, "I have another meeting. I'm leaving these people in your good hands."
>
> Deming continued to follow the CEO and said, "If you leave, I'm leaving too. If *you* don't care enough to hear what I have to say, you're wasting your money."
>
> You could have heard a pin drop. Someone came running out with a chair, and Smith sat there at the side of the podium, poker faced. This was when Michael Moore was making *Roger and Me,* and it was shocking to GM. Here were people from outside saying, "You have to change."

Marian reports that during Forum's time there, some GM employees were equally resistant and clueless. At the big graduation ceremony at the end of the program, each team was required to do something—anything they wanted—to portray what they had learned and would take forward. One team invited everyone to the proving grounds where new designs were tested. They had purchased a new-to-market, small Japanese car. During the night they had brought in heavy equipment and dug a hole. In front of their classmates, they proceeded to bury the car.

"We were dumbfounded," says Marian. "Their message was, 'We're going to bury the Japanese, because the world wants our cars, not theirs.' They had completely missed the point."

And no wonder. The message "Beat the Japanese" was being blasted at those employees hundreds of times a day, not just from the mouth of the CEO but during meetings and on posters and in every official communique. Whispers of "Actually, we ought to take a look at ourselves" had no chance of being heard through the noise. What if the team that buried the car had, for their graduation skit, sat in a circle and given a demonstration of collaborative dialogue? The audience, primed to applaud chest-thumping theatricals, would have yawned.

Today we're in the same predicament, only worse. When we all have a device in our pocket that summons us minute by minute into a flood of stimuli designed intentionally to inflame cravings of every kind, how do we focus? When the pace of business seems to increase daily, the result of demands from our boss, our customers, and the fifteen managers of our fifteen projects, how do we ground ourselves? When the world is a ceaseless din, where do we find quiet? (See "Influence in Brief: Influencing Yourself.")

Influence in Brief: Influencing Yourself

When an individual I'm coaching says, "I can't do these things because my boss won't let me," I retort with, "Tell me how your boss has responded that makes you think that. What is the evidence?" Is it fair to lay the blame at somebody else's feet?

–Marian Thier

I really believe people respond in kind to what they see and encounter. If I'm pleasant to work with, if I'm willing to take a step back and say, "Let's reflect on this," others will go along. People sometimes come into my office and sit down and say, "I just need to be in here where it's calm."

–Tracy Hulett

The concept of *turiya* [fourth-level consciousness] means you have different states as an individual: dreamer, sleeper, waker. But there is one entity that is persisting through each of these states, and that is *you*—your consciousness. There is more to you than your job, or your thoughts, or where you are today. How can you bring that awareness, your consciousness, your higher self to everything you do?

–Shibani Belwalkar

Eighty percent of influence is managing your own reactions to other people. You have to influence yourself. If you can hang in while the storms rage, that is a form of influence. They'll say, "That person has an even keel. The wind blows harder, but they keep going. I want to be like that."

–Court Chilton

It's the attachment to the thought that causes pain. The thought is just the thought.

–Helena Garlicki

It's time now to talk about mindfulness. In the Overview, I defined mindfulness as "being present in the moment and able to observe our thoughts and emotions without letting them rattle us." In their book *The Mind of the Leader,* Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter define it as "paying attention, in the present moment, with a calm, focused, and clear mind."[7] The Buddha (see Chapter 9) was the first to talk about mindfulness as a life-path; Dōgen Zenji (see Chapter 11) came up with *zazen,* "sitting meditation," as a method to develop mindfulness. Dōgen's zazen instructions are supremely simple—"just sit"—and present-day gurus' instructions aren't much more complex: they'll tell you to sit for five or ten minutes focusing on your breath, and when your thoughts wander, as they inevitably do, to observe them neutrally, watching them come and go as you bring your attention gently back to the breath. But an online search will

turn up many resources that teach meditation techniques.* Here, instead, I want to explore the deep insight that underlies the techniques: *You are not your mind.*

Although calmness may be a result of zazen, it is not zazen's aim. Sitting and telling yourself to "be calm" (like that houseguest who yelled "Jesus, relax!" at my dog) is a recipe for more angst, not less. Zazen's aim, rather, is to adopt *an observer's perspective* on your own mental phenomena. With mindfulness training, Hougaard and Carter say, "You start to observe your thoughts as fleeting events that have no real substance or importance. They're just like the clouds in the sky: they come and go."[8] But mindfulness is more than the realization that thoughts are fleeting; it is also the realization that you can detach from your thoughts and emotions, watching them as you might watch a movie and thereby freeing yourself from their sway. Anyone who suffers from anxiety knows that the best coping technique isn't to "try to relax" but instead to give the physical sensations—pounding heart, tingling skin—one's full attention with no attempt to stop them, just as a scientist in a lab observes an experiment without trying to change its results. Such attention doesn't make unpleasant sensations less unpleasant; what it does is to make "This is unpleasant" just another thought in the great stream of thoughts, just another somersault performed by the monkey-mind. And then, one's reaction may change from "No!" or "Help!" into "Interesting" or "Wow."

"But if I am not my mind," you might ask, "then who or what is doing the observing?"

That's an excellent question, one which Hindus and Buddhists answer differently. In most Hindu* schools of thought, the fact that we can witness our own thought processes is taken as evidence that such a witness *exists:* separate from mind and body and unmoved by either. This unmoved witness is called *ātman,* a Sanskrit word often translated as "soul" but better translated as "essential self." And since the essential nature of ātman is to witness—that is, to be conscious—therefore all the little ātmans, although seemingly separate here in the world, are in truth one with Big Ātman, which is universal consciousness (or *Brahman*). To be enlightened is to become aware of our essential oneness with that ultimate reality.

A Buddhist, in contrast, will say there is no observer, no essential "I" that persists over and above the stream of mental phenomena, for reality is a network of constantly shifting, flowing, interdependent processes, and each so-called person is just a tiny and equally fluid part of that vast matrix. That doesn't mean you don't exist; it simply means "you" are not the fixed entity you imagine yourself to be. You are, rather, a flame within the great fire of Being.

Which view, Hindu or Buddhist, do you find more compelling? For me, the Hindus have the edge. Either philosophy, however, will serve the practitioner of mindfulness well. In Chapter 9, we'll look at what the Buddha himself had to say about it all.

Western Pitfall 8: Believing power is happiness

We've seen how a major downfall for power chasers is the fragile and temporary nature of their potency. Duryodhana, the First Emperor of the Qin, Genji—they were influential for a while, but before too long their influence was erased by shadow-echoes: by the Pāndava brothers and their loyal allies, by Chen She and his ragtag army, and by Genji's gentle ladies, who in Murasaki's novel shine from behind their bamboo screens more memorably than the "shining" title character. In our own time and universe there was Georgina, who enjoyed the finer things and faked her sales calls and whose fall was as swift as her rise. "The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night," say the opening lines of the medieval Japanese epic *The Tale of the Heike;* "the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind."[9] We would all do well to keep those lines in mind as we scramble up our little ladders of success.

But the deeper flaw in the plans of the power chasers—and perhaps the most treacherous Western pitfall of the twelve—isn't their failure to grasp power's impermanence. It's their belief that power, understood as "me dominating everyone else," is the key to happiness.

This belief is the shaky foundation on which rests the whole argument of *The 48 Laws of Power,* the book by Robert Greene I mentioned in Chapter 5. Quite unlike *The Tale of the Heike,* Greene's book opens thus: "The feeling of having no power over

people and events is generally unbearable to us—when we feel helpless we feel miserable. No one wants less power; everyone wants more."[10] If we rush past that statement without thinking about it, we might go on to find the rest of the book—with its panoply of "laws" that promise to help us scale "the heights of power"—horribly compelling. If we stop and reflect, however, the fault in the premise is clear. It may be that when we feel powerless we feel unhappy; it does not follow that happiness comes from the possession of power.

I don't dispute that powerful feels better than powerless. But Greene and his ilk conflate two different meanings of powerful. In one sense, *powerful* means that I, an individual apart from other individuals, can force or manipulate those others to do what I want: make them serve my interests, which are necessarily in competition with theirs, and bend to my will, which is naturally opposed to theirs. Western cultures, with their focus on individual rights and freedoms, tend to look at power that way. But in a more Eastern sense, *powerful* means that I, an integral member of a group that supplies a large part of my identity and my happiness, have the ability to work with that group to accomplish great things. Under this second view, having power means succeeding together. General Motors spent many years digging themselves a hole as they strove to bury their Japanese competitors. Their resurgence began only when their aim shifted from burying their opponents to learning from them and, eventually, to partnering with them.

Note that the second definition of powerful isn't more "moral" than the first. Greene says those who reject his concept of the world as a palace full of back-stabbing courtiers are really the most deviously immoral courtiers of all. But he misunderstands the critique. It's not about which view of power is more moral; it's about which view is more true to what human beings want and need and are. We can leave for another day the question of whether dominating our fellow humans is right or wrong.[*] The question for now is whether dominating our fellow humans will make us happier and stronger—or sadder and weaker.

Molly McGinn is an educator and consultant with extensive experience teaching in the Far East. When she was 25, as she relates, she was the first woman allowed to enter a 900-year-old

Korean Buddhist monastery for a three-month silent meditation period. She says notions of influence "depend on notions of the self. In the West, I'm me, period. In the East, I am somebody's mother, wife, sister, boss, team member. *I* really means *we.*" Eastern cultures, she adds, know that "influence is not a transactional thing. It's a karmic thing, a contribution to the collective. Word gets around that you're cool, or not."

To which Greene and company will reply: "Yes, and so you must manipulate your image so everyone thinks you're cool." But serious students of Eastern philosophy (or of Western philosophy, for that matter) will counter that cynical view with something like this:

"Unless you are genuinely cool—both a valued asset to group endeavors and an even keel in turbulent seas—you won't be fooling anybody, not even yourself. Like Duryodhana stumbling and splashing his way around the Pāndavas' hall of trompe l'oeil wonders, you'll keep trying to play it cool; as cool as a bold baron, a ruthless legalist, or a suave seducer. But also like Duryodhana, the cooler you try to play it, the more you'll make it blindingly obvious, to everyone, what a shmuck you are."

Mahātmā Gandhi advises us to stop trying to master other people and, instead, master ourselves. Stop fighting our perceived oppressors and, instead, fight to free ourselves from our oppressive monkey-mind. "If we become free, India is free," says the Editor in reply to the Reader's calls for liberation. "And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves."[11]

Therefore, he goes on to say, swaraj is "in the palm of our hands"—by which I think he means two things. First, all we need do in order to achieve self-rule is to see the incalculable strength we already hold within ourselves and close our hand around it, as if gripping the hilt of a sword that was ever in the scabbard at our side. Second, and equally important, we must sometimes *open* our hand and release the sword. In his chapter on passive resistance, Gandhi speaks of a truly brave man: "If he is an embodiment of [fearlessness], the sword will drop from his hand that very moment. He does not need its support. One who is free from hatred requires no sword." Then he tells another story: A man who liked to brag

about his courage was out walking, when suddenly he came face to face with a lion. He instinctively raised his stick in self-defense. “The man then saw that he had only prated about fearlessness when there was none in him. That moment he dropped the stick, and found himself free from all fear.”[12]

What if, instead of getting all up in arms about Pearson and Leo, I had dropped my stick and simply set an example of leadership?

To be fair, I did—sometimes. But I also spent too much time, then and later, scheming to drive out the colonialists. It was understandable that I wanted power in the form of home rule; I wish, however, that I had been better at self-rule. I wish I had held more firmly to these words of the Buddha: “Better than victory in battle over a thousand-thousand men is victory over one person: yourself.”

The next quiet influence practice is *Doing the daily work with persistence and focus.*

PROGRESS

Finally we come to the Performance stage, when the power struggles have subsided and things are beginning to hum. Here, our focus should be *aiding progress* (see Figure III.1).

The typical mistake at this stage is either to dust off one's hands and move on to the next project, because "the troops can take it from here," or to start micromanaging, because "things aren't moving fast enough." The quiet influencer is tempted to neither error. He or she remains involved, but gracefully: with an encouraging word here, a barrier knocked down there, and always a sense of calm persistence that says, "Yes, we can."

Wesley Luo, vice president for Honeywell Technology Solutions globally and general manager for Honeywell Technology Solutions China, says, "It's not what you talk about that makes the difference; it's what you accomplish." In that effort, "trust is the most vital asset. If people don't trust you, they won't move with you. If you don't care about your people's success, they're not going to listen to you. Maybe with their ears—but not with their heart."

You may wonder why there isn't more in this book about trust. Clearly, trust is linked to influence: when trust is absent, people won't move with you. Trust, however, is an outcome, not an input. Like respect, it is something we earn with our words and actions and cannot be demanded or coerced. Apply the twelve influence practices discussed here, and as an outcome you will receive

respect; show genuine care for people's success, and as an outcome they will trust you. But if you set out to "get them to trust me so I can influence them," you won't go far. Obtaining trust is the aim of the seducer. The master, you'll recall, aims only to lift our game.

The influence practices covered in Part III are:

9) Doing the daily work with persistence and focus
10) Attending to upstream factors more than downstream results
11) Staying engaged when things get heated
12) Walking away when influence is no longer possible

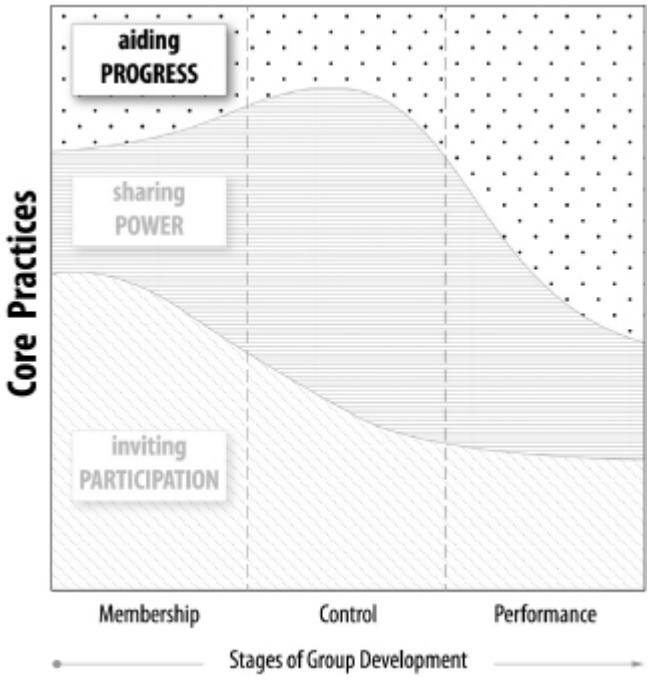


Figure III.1: Aiding Progress

Chapter 9

Establish Mindfulness ~ Gautama Buddha

Around Forum: 2003–2011. Aly was right: one of these things really wasn't like the others, and soon Pearson had had enough of us misfits. In mid-2002 they assigned us a temporary CEO whose job it was to find us a buyer, and find one he did. Some nine months later we were sold to IIR, a group of conference and training companies headed by multimillionaire Scotsman, yachtsman, and former House of Lords member Irvine Laidlaw.

One happy result of the shift in ownership was the appointment of a longtime Forum employee as our new CEO. Ed Boswell had started as an account director in 1989 and over time had risen to executive positions. He was promoted to the top spot in the spring of 2003. The president of another IIR company had also thrown his hat in the ring (more on him shortly), but Ed was chosen because IIR management felt that in a time of change it was important to put a veteran at the helm. That decision, it turned out, was a wise one; the next eight years under Ed's leadership were an era of progress and productivity for us all.

As I sit here today working up energy to answer emails *and* go to the store, I'm amazed at what I was able to accomplish back then. My small team and I developed ten new learning products, revamped ten more, ran multiple rollouts and train-the-trainers, conducted several major research studies, converted a chunk of the library to virtual instructor-led format, and assisted on countless sales efforts and client projects. In 2008, I was promoted to the global leadership team, where I wrote white papers, created a product-knowledge curriculum, coached my team through ups and

downs, and presided over an all-company conference. In my spare time I co-wrote a book (*Strategic Speed),* got it published by Harvard Business Press, and traveled around giving talks to promote it. Meanwhile, there was all the administrative stuff: executive team meetings, my team meetings, performance reviews, capital expense requests, budgets, forecasts, and so on. And all this time I was working remotely from Santa Fe, taking business trips at least once a month, with a husband and a young daughter at home.

Frankly, I don't know how I did it. I say that, however, not to marvel at my own feats but to marvel at the difference a good leader at the top makes.

Ed was a quiet person, devoid of bluster or brag. His PhD in psychology and earlier inclination for a counseling career showed in his listening skills and his way of seeming fully present in conversations. He liked to be out in the field, meeting with clients. Account directors clamored for his help. When his temper flared, which was hardly ever, he would apologize forthwith. He left Forum in January 2011 and became a partner in one of the big professional services firms, where in his first week, he later told me, one of his colleagues said he would never survive in their culture unless he stopped being "so nice." But nice, quiet Ed was the orchestrator of Forum's success during that period. I know this because when he left—and we came under the supervision of that same executive who had vied for his job in 2003 and who was now in charge of our group of businesses—things changed.

A no-nonsense operations guy, our new CEO arrived bent on bringing discipline and efficiency to an enterprise which, he insisted, was a training company, *not* a consulting firm. He told us our first priority was to deliver profit to Informa (our new owners; they had merged with IIR a few years back). That, he implied, was all the mission we'd ever need.

With this new driver, the bus slowed. Not right away: sales momentum from previous years carried us along for a while, and most of us were happy to give his rigorous approaches a try. After all, Forum's longtime tagline was "Where learning means business." By early 2012, however, it was obvious we were heading into the

rough. Morale was declining. Results were disappointing. Cuts were necessary. For some miles, it would be a bumpy ride.

The Wheel-turning Monarch

A *bhikkhu* . . . sits down cross-legged and folds his legs, makes his body erect, and with resolve he establishes mindfulness all around him. ("The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness")[1]

In Chapter 8 we saw how mindfulness, defined as the ability to observe one's own thoughts and emotions with detachment, results in a stronger self (see "The Sage: Gautama Buddha," here). The link between mindfulness and personal growth is clear enough; what might not be so clear is the Buddha's first statement about what it looks like to live mindfully. In "The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness," he says that the *bhikkhu,* or monk, sits down cross-legged, makes his body erect, and "with resolve establishes mindfulness all around him."

Establishes mindfulness all around him? How does that work? Surely no matter how erect I sit or how great my resolve, the only one touched by my mindfulness is me. And indeed, except for that one hint that mindfulness is spreadable, this discourse focuses on individual enlightenment. Reading on, however, we come to another discourse, one that begins by reiterating the foundations of mindfulness but soon takes up the story of a good king, a bad king, and the effects of their mindfulness (or lack thereof) on an entire population. It's called "The Lion's Roar on the Wheel-turning Monarch."

Once upon a time, the story begins, there was a good king who had conquered his domain without violence and who ruled with righteousness. He was the caretaker of seven great gems, including one called "the Wheel-gem," which (it was said) would disappear when the nation's leader had not much longer to live.* One day the king's servant informed him that the Wheel-gem was retreating, falling away from its place. The king thanked the servant, announced his retirement, and summoned his eldest son to assume the throne, after which he took up a hermit's life in the forest. A few days later,

the Wheel-gem had vanished. The new king was distressed, so he went to his father to inquire what to do. The father said:

> My son, do not be distressed that the sacred Wheel-gem has disappeared . . . The sacred Wheel-gem is not a paternal inheritance. Come now, you should carry out the duties of a noble wheel-turning monarch! It is possible that by carrying out the duties of a noble wheel-turning monarch . . . the sacred Wheel-gem will appear with its thousand spokes, rim, hub, and complete in all its functions.[2]

The Sage: Gautama Buddha

Mindfulness as a concept was first presented in the Pāli Canon, the earliest set of Buddhist scriptures. Gautama Buddha himself wrote nothing down; like Socrates and Jesus, he left it to his disciples to record his teachings, a process not begun until at least 100 years after his death. The entire canon fills 50-plus volumes, notes John J. Holder in his translation of 20 of the discourses, one of which is "The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness." In it we learn of the "one path for the purification of beings, for passing beyond grief and lamentation, for the extinction of suffering and despair, for the attainment of knowledge . . . namely, these four foundations for mindfulness."[3] The four foundations are observing the body as body, feeling as feeling, mind as mind, and mental phenomena as mental phenomena, in each case "self-possessed and mindful, having eliminated both the desire for and the despair over the world."[4] Like all core Buddhist doctrines, mindfulness is offered as part of a cure for life's pains. The Buddha is often compared to a diagnosing physician: one who perceives the source of our troubles and prescribes a treatment plan that involves no pills—only exercises.

The son asked his father about the duties of a noble wheel-turning monarch. The father explained: such a monarch provides protection and security to the realm, gives money to those in poverty, and—most important—seeks advice from wise, moderate people about what is wholesome and unwholesome, what should and should not

be practiced. The son found this advice a little anticlimactic, but he went back to the palace and diligently carried out the duties as described. And behold! After an unspecified amount of time, the Wheel-gem reappeared, with spokes, rim, and hub, complete in all its functions.

The new king said, “Now I must be a wheel-turning monarch!” and rising from his seat he sprinkled the Wheel-gem with water. Then the Wheel-gem rolled to the East, and although the king followed it with his army, it turned out the army wasn’t needed, for the hostile kings in the region approached and said, “Welcome, Great King! This territory is yours! Rule over us, Great King!” The same thing happened in the West, North, and South.* Finally the king followed the Wheel-gem back to the capital city, and for thousands of years he ruled the realm well.

Generations went by, and six more kings continued the tradition of good leadership. But the seventh was a proud young man; after his coronation he hid his distress at the Wheel-gem’s departure and refused to ask his father what to do. Instead he ruled by whim, hoping he would hit upon a means of bringing the Wheel-gem back. Seeing the people weren’t thriving as before, the ministers came to the king and offered to explain his royal duties. The king listened politely and followed up by putting measures in place to protect and guard the realm, but he did not provide for the poverty-stricken—and this seemingly minor failure launched a downward spiral.

First, a very poor man committed theft. When he was brought before the king and said he had no means of living, the king felt sorry for him and gave him money. This happened again with a second poor man, and word rapidly got around that the king was handing out cash to anyone arrested for theft. So theft rose. The king, realizing he was being played, decided to change tack: the next man who stole had his head cut off. This harsh new example worked for a while, but soon all the would-be thieves figured they’d better kill their victims so as to not be turned in. So violence rose. Then, if they were caught, the killers would lie about their crimes, so lying rose. Then people tried to get a jump on their neighbors by informing on them first, so malicious speech infected human relations.

Down and down the spiral went, through jealousy, adultery, idleness, covetousness, hatred, greed, rape, incest, patricide, and matricide. Each generation's beauty declined and so did the natural lifespan, from eighty thousand years down to a mere ten years, until finally the short-lived and very ugly populace found themselves trapped in a brutal, bestial state of war, brother against brother, husband against wife, even parent against child. No leader could halt the downfall—and all because that seventh king had ruled by whim, anxious for the Wheel-gem, rather than simply turning the wheel as his elders had advised.

Quiet Influence Practice 9: Doing the daily work with persistence and focus

One can imagine (though the story doesn't say) that the kings after No. 7 tried hard to reverse the decline. They must have called in strategy consultants and change-management experts. They must have done engagement surveys and sought ways to build commitment. They undoubtedly held off-site meetings. But none of it helped.

Like so many leaders, these kings wanted the *thing*—today it would be the training program, technology platform, brand message, or company strategy—that they could roll out east, west, north, and south, leaping every hurdle and crushing every problem. They kept searching for the Wheel-gem, forgetting what the first king knew: that a wheel-gem is only a sign or emblem of leadership duties patiently performed. It is the jewel in the crown, not the deeds that earn the crown; a gold star on the homework, not the homework itself. Having heard the legend of the first king's bloodless conquest of the neighboring states, these kings must have assumed it was the sight of the mighty Wheel-gem that had made those citizens lay down their arms. If they could just get the Wheel-gem back, they reasoned, they too could ride with it into hostile territory and be greeted with shouts of "Welcome, Great King!"

In his classic book *Good to Great,* leadership guru Jim Collins asks us to picture another kind of wheel: a flywheel, "a massive metal disk mounted horizontally on an axle, about 30 feet in

diameter, 2 feet thick, and weighing about 5,000 pounds."[5] He then asks us to visualize the process by which we get the flywheel spinning. At first, our hardest pushes barely nudge it forward. Two or three hours of straining effort only get it to complete one turn. But we keep pushing, and gradually, gradually, the flywheel begins to move a little faster: through two turns . . . then three . . . four . . . five . . . the momentum builds . . . ten . . . twenty . . . fifty . . . one hundred . . . until at last—whoosh! The momentum kicks in and the wheel's own weight begins to hurl it forward, multiplying the force of our pushes to create unstoppable speed.

Then, says Collins, imagine someone came along and asked, "Which push made it go so fast?" The question is nonsensical, because of course we couldn't label any single push "the one"; it was our hundreds or thousands of small pushes, applied consistently in the same direction, which did the trick. (For more on single causes vs. multiple conditions, see Chapter 2.) Collins goes on to say that, in his studies of companies that went "from good to great," he too asked the wrong question. He was having his research team ask company executives how they had managed change and gained employee commitment, but the researchers noted with frustration that most of the executives couldn't answer the question; they didn't even understand it. Collins still deemed it a key question, however, given that it was what executives kept asking *him:* "How do we get the boat turned?" "How do we motivate people to line up?"

So he had the researchers keep digging, and eventually they realized that in the successful organizations, nobody thought about managing change. "It was utterly transparent to them," Collins says. "Under the right conditions, the problems of commitment, alignment, motivation, and change just melt away. They largely take care of themselves."[6]

In successful organizations, folks just turn the wheel.

Of all the quiet influence practices, "Doing the daily work with persistence and focus" has to be the most boring. A leadership book called *Shut Up and Do the Work* wouldn't sell a single copy, and it's not just executives who would ignore such a book: it's all of us. We all long for the secret sauce, the silver bullet, the *thing* that will make our colleagues, friends, and family members greet our entrances

with “Welcome, Great One!” and our suggestions with, if not awed delight, at least respectful attention. There’s a part of us that, coveting the powers of a baron or a legalist or a seducer, hopes for a spell that will give us those powers. Nor is it only about power, for we also want to make our corner of the world a better place and, in our optimism, keep looking for the way to make it better. We want the *answer.* But when it comes to making the flywheel spin, nothing answers like simply getting up in the morning and doing the work, persistently and consistently.

At Forum in 2004, Ed instituted the Excellence Awards, an annual event whereby employees could nominate individuals or teams to be recognized in various categories. The winners received engraved glass stars (like little wheel-gems) while the nominees received certificates with excerpts from the testimonials. Over the life of the program I, like everyone, collected a lot of nominations, and when I go back now and read through my certificates what strikes me most is the mundane nature of the praise. For example:

I nominate Jocelyn Davis for being an excellent manager. She engenders and demonstrates trust in her team by sharing useful information frequently and candidly. She encourages our best efforts by setting clear goals, making it possible to fail, and accepting and promoting, with appropriate discernment, her team’s ideas. Jocelyn manages well the dilemma of R&D’s contribution to Forum’s short-term and long-term needs.

How thrilling.

Yet as a result of my pedestrian endeavors, my team was highly motivated (said the nominator) and Forum was “well-placed to accelerate past the competition.”

“Well, that’s fine for a middle manager in a small firm,” you might object, “but top leaders of big corporations have to do big things in order to compete. It’s their job to craft strategy and make bold moves in the market. Isn’t that what ensures profitable growth?”

Yes, strategy-setting is part of a senior leader’s job. As MBA programs teach, however, the most important factor in any organization’s success is not its strategy but the overall success of the industry in which it resides. And the second most important factor (I have no data to support this, only long experience) is pure chance.

I saw Forum lifted up and brought low by both factors. In 2006, chance brought us a gargantuan contract with a branch of the US government, causing profits to soar; then in 2008 the Great Recession hit, dragging the entire training industry into a ditch and us with it. Of course winning the government contract involved more than chance, but the point is: neither that lift, nor the recession-caused collapse, had anything to do with a blue-ocean strategy. What prepared us to seize the big opportunity and later sustained us through the global financial disaster was something far less exciting: all of us, from Ed on down, coming to work every day and turning the wheel.

Western Pitfall 9: Regarding mindfulness as purely personal

Speaking of blue-ocean strategy (a term coined by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne in their book of that name), here's another metaphor: the tides rise and fall and sea predators come and go. We the fish can strategize all day long, but we'll still rise and fall with the tide and, not infrequently, suffer shark attacks. What keeps us moving forward—riding high tides and low, surviving most of the sharks—is simply the swimming.

More than that, it's the swimming in a school. When I first began learning about Zen, I was surprised by how often Zen centers encourage you not just to sit and meditate, but to sit and meditate with others. "Zen is not a solitary practice," says Roshi Enkyo O'Hara of the Upaya Institute and Zen Center. "As we chant at the end of our liturgy, 'May we realize the Buddha Way together.' "[7] I admit, though I do practice on my own, I have yet to practice zazen in a group. But meditation isn't the only way to be mindful; collaborative work, whether it's washing dishes at a homeless shelter or helping a sales team pursue a multimillion-dollar contract, can also be done mindfully. Whatever it is, there is great power in everyone "just doing it."

Rasmus Hougaard, managing director of Potential Project and co-author of *The Mind of the Leader,* teaches mindfulness to businesspeople. "At first our clients thought mindfulness was private, personal, or fluffy," he says. "The past few years, mindfulness has

received lots of media attention and been adopted by many companies, but there is still a lot of resistance. The skepticism is that it's like yoga: it might help my own well-being, but it's nothing to do with business." His response to the skeptics, he says, is that mindfulness "is about well-being, *and* it is about performance. It is about happiness, *and* it is about focus" (see "Influence in Brief: Mindfulness at Work," here). For instance:

One partner in a global consulting firm had been on a meditation journey, and it was a very private, personal thing for him, something he couldn't relate to his business. I started linking it to time management, and I said mindfulness is what helps us enable time-management tools. I talked about how we handle the flood of emails, or how we go into meetings distracted. How does mindfulness change the way we work?

Seeing mindfulness as something purely personal is the flip side of Western Pitfall 3: "Expecting everyone to sing 'Kumbaya.' " When it comes to Buddhism, many Westerners will first assume it's woo-woo, then either go all in for the woo-woo-ness (as did Gary, the Forum researcher who came to work in saffron robes and love beads) or else box it off as a matter for the spirit, not for business. Neither view does justice to the workaday practicality of Buddhist thought.

Influence in Brief: Mindfulness at Work

In Asia, influence is about relational systems of obligation—not power and control, but building social currency. You give people access to others based on your relationship, not necessarily on their performance. Should you later request help from them, they will of course try hard to help you. You reach out into your networks and create opportunities. Business and social are not seen as different; both are about helping people move forward in whatever they're doing.

–Molly McGinn

The West emphasizes strategy. Before any initiative, you create a strategy or do a study. It can take a year. In the East, people are more execution-oriented; the boss, who typically is more experienced, can just say, "We're doing this." It's more intuitive, but Westerners tend to see that approach as unscientific or not data-driven.

–Wesley Luo

Partly because of Western teachers, Eastern professionals are newly interested in Buddhism. Western teachers make the ideas more accessible and practical. Who can go live in a cave for 20 years when you have children and a career? Of course the pendulum can swing the other way: a minute of meditation won't do you much good. East and West have much to learn from each other.

–Helena Garlicki

Many of our clients call mindfulness "performance training" or "focus training."

–Rasmus Hougaard

One influence expert I spoke with said he'd never found anything in Eastern philosophy to match the insights offered by system dynamics, a Western approach to analyzing the nonlinear behavior of complex systems with an emphasis on the feedback loops operating within those systems. Although he is absolutely right about system dynamics' usefulness as a theory of the interrelated nature of reality, he may not be aware that the Buddha was the first to develop such a theory. It's called *dependent arising.*

Dependent arising is one of Buddhism's central doctrines. According to scholar John J. Holder, "the catalyst for the Buddha's enlightenment was his penetrative insight into the dependently arisen nature of all that exists. All existing things are conditioned by other things." Contrary to Hinduism's idea of an abiding ātman, Buddhism states that nothing has a permanent, independent essence. "Instead, all things arise, evolve, and eventually dissipate, because of complex causal conditions."[8]

In addition to its deep metaphysical implications, dependent arising has a straightforward application to the workplace: what I say and do affects everyone, and what everyone says and does affects me. This interrelatedness is why mindfulness (or lack of it) is never merely personal and why we can, as the discourse says, "establish mindfulness all around." Each person's state of mind spreads itself. We could think of it like dominoes, but it's more like a prairie fire, in which a single blade of grass transfers its flame to the next blade, and the next, and the next, until suddenly the whole plain is burning. As with the pushes that set a flywheel spinning, it would be silly to

ask “which flame” set the prairie alight. It doesn’t even make sense, really, to talk about flames as if they were separate, countable things; rather, we talk about a prairie *in flames* or a *flaming* fire. Human beings, says the Buddha, are like flames: interrelated to the point of nonexistence.

In *The Progress Principle,* Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer describe their research on “inner work life”: the flow of perceptions and emotions that comprise our daily experience on the job. Their study found that a positive inner work life led to higher motivation and better performance, while a negative inner work life caused both to drop. No surprise. What is surprising, however, is the degree to which the inner work life of their research subjects was shaped by everyday interactions with colleagues and not, as conventional wisdom would have it, by personality or temperament. While there may be people who are naturally happy or unhappy, Amabile and Kramer found that everyone in their study “had days when inner work life soared and days when it plummeted.”[9] Moreover, such changes tended to happen quickly and to result from small incidents. What had the largest effect on inner work life was someone’s sense of making progress—or not—on meaningful work, and that sense of progress or blockage was created, in turn, by a manager’s casual thumbs-up or thumbs-down, by a meeting that stayed focused or wandered, by a colleague who came through on a promise or didn’t.

So the good news is: we needn’t wait for the brilliant strategy or the brilliant leader to move us forward. When just a few people start turning the wheel together, though their efforts be but small and weak, brilliant things happen.

Consider the Buddha’s story about the country that had lost the Wheel-gem and degenerated to the point where citizens were crouching in their homes with weapons, ready to kill any passerby. “What will happen next?” the Buddha wonders. He speculates there will be a few individuals who decide they don’t want to live that way anymore. “Suppose,” they will think, “I go off into the forest for a while and live off the roots and fruits?” So they will go. After a week they will emerge from those places and embrace one another, saying, “Good fellow, it is wonderful! You are alive!” and this thought will occur to them: “By undertaking evil mental states, we brought

about the destruction of our kinsfolk, so let us now do what is good . . . Let us refrain from taking life."[10]

So they will refrain from taking life, says the Buddha, and because of this good deed, their life span and beauty will increase a bit; as a result, the children of those who had lived for ten years will live for twenty years.

And the next generation will do a little better and will live to forty . . . to eighty . . . to one hundred sixty . . . to six hundred forty . . . and gradually the flywheel will start to spin, faster and faster and faster, until at last the beautiful people with eighty-thousand-year life spans will welcome to their royal city a king, a wheel-turning monarch, caretaker of seven great gems.

The next quiet influence practice is *Attending to upstream factors more than downstream results.*

Chapter 10

Tend the Soil ~ Mencius

Around Forum: 2012. When Ed left and our new CEO took over, we on Forum's executive team knew we'd have to pull up our socks, ready at all times to discuss in detail the performance of our respective areas of the business. We went at it with a good will and socks pulled high. Unfortunately, each month the earnings projections for quarter, half, and year dropped a little more, falling well short of originally promised amounts. Our CEO was always scrupulously well-informed about the gaps; problem was, he had little idea what to do about them. Neither, it turned out, did we. We came up with plenty of ideas, most of which could be filed under "S" for "Sell harder": lead-generation campaigns, sales incentives, beefing up sales pursuit teams, and so on. I had my own group, R&D, devote more time to sales support while keeping product development going as best we could. But nothing seemed to help much.

Meanwhile our boss was demanding ever-more-frequent reports and rescue plans. His focus was accountability: he didn't think we had enough of it. When a team assessment pointed to lack of accountability as one of our shortcomings, he seemed to feel vindicated.

Looking back on it, I can see we were all running around trying to reap more corn from a field that hadn't been tilled or watered for some time. The boss told us to be accountable, and we *felt* accountable, so we reaped more vigorously. But swing the sickle as hard as you like: if the crop is meager, you won't get much. And in fact—again, this is clear only in hindsight—the field hadn't been truly

well-tilled for more than a decade. The pressure for short-term results had risen with the Pearson purchase in 2000 and had only intensified since then, hindering efforts to foster long-term success factors such as good people, innovative products, and happy clients. It's not that our various corporate owners hadn't invested in us; it's just that their investments had gone mostly toward sickles rather than water and plows.

One might draw the moral that there's little an individual leader, let alone an employee, can do to counteract faceless corporate forces. I am more optimistic. For one thing, Forum eventually emerged from the slump and, under new leadership and combined with another respected training firm, began to rise again. It would be trite to say "better than ever"; still, when I had lunch the other day with an old colleague—a freelance facilitator who delivers the workshops of many training providers—he opined that the company's content is still the best out there. The efforts of my team (not to mention all the R&D teams since Forum began) to keep product development going through the rough patches had, I think, a lot to do with maintaining that high quality.

For another thing, our influence as individuals exists and persists apart from any organization to which we happen to belong at a given time. You may not be able to turn an entire company's performance around, but if you have a reputation as a cultivator, then not only will your projects be more successful, more people will want to hire and work with you, leading to greater personal success for you in the long run. Take Ed: he went on to accept a leadership role with a global consultancy and, having retired from there, now travels the world as an adviser to nonprofits and NGOs. And everyone else from that executive team is doing something similarly valuable and rewarding. In our years at Forum, we learned how to sow, till, and prune. Today we're reaping the results, and the fields are full.

Pulling on Rice Shoots

[There was a man] who worried that his rice shoots weren't growing fast enough, and so went around pulling at them. At the end of the day, he returned home

exhausted and said to his family: *I'm worn out. I've been helping the rice grow.* (*Mencius* III.2)[1]

Mencius, the best-known Confucian, lived roughly two centuries after the philosopher whose ideas he developed (see "The Sage: Mencius," here). Like Confucius, he was a roving intellectual sought by rulers for advice on how to lead in times of turmoil. His advice might be summed up thus: "Get your heart right, and the rest will follow."

One of the most analyzed passages in the *Mencius* focuses on *ch'i* (or *qi*). Meaning "life force" or "vital energy," ch'i is the basis for much of Chinese medicine. *Qigong*—literally, "life-force cultivation"—is a system of physical forms and motion used to help ch'i flow and flourish.* Daven Lee, a Taoist practitioner and instructor in Santa Fe, explains that the central idea of qigong is maintaining harmony between yang and yin: up and down, sky and earth, outer and inner. In the West we tend to be yang-oriented, rewarded for running around in busy accomplishment, smiling and shining and being "on." But equally important, says Daven, is our ability to slow down, draw the curtains (actually or figuratively), and turn inward to the quiet, self-reflective yin. The buried seed gathering nutrients in winter is invisible; it is that long nourishment in darkness, however, which results in the flower we see blooming in summer. Qigong practice is intended to create this sort of harmony—up *with* down, outer *with* inner—through precise movements that circulate and nurture ch'i.

Kung-sun Ch'ou, one of Mencius' disciples, asks him what he means by the "ch'i-flood" and how to cultivate it. Here's what Mencius says:

> It's *ch'i* at its limits: vast and relentless. Nourish it with fidelity and allow it no injury —then it fills the space between Heaven and earth . . .
>
> You must devote yourself to this *ch'i*-flood without forcing it. Don't let it out of your mind, but don't try to help it grow and flourish either.
>
> If you do, you'll be acting like that man from Sung who worried that his rice shoots weren't growing fast enough, and so went around pulling at them. At the end of the day, he returned home exhausted and said to his family: *I'm worn out. I've been*

helping the rice grow. His son ran out to look and found the fields all withered and dying.[2]

The Sage: Mencius

According to scholar David Hinton, the book that bears Mencius' name was very possibly penned by the sage himself, or if not, is a pretty faithful rendition of his actual words.[3] Although written in the third person, the chapters are filled with anecdotes that convey a first-person perspective, making us feel as though we're listening in as Mencius travels around, visiting and conversing with emperors, dukes, and students. Government and leadership are his constant themes; so are family relations and friendship. Like his inspirer, he extols ren (humaneness) as the supreme moral quality, but while Confucius preferred to stay focused on outward behavior, Mencius looks within to the humane heart and mind (which, you'll recall, are the same word in classical Chinese). Per Hinton, Mencius sees the heart-mind as naturally good and therefore believes the key to a flourishing society is leadership "that allows our inborn nobility to flourish of itself."[4] But it's not enough to *behave* virtuously: the true leader *rejoices* in virtue, causing others to rejoice as well. When that happens, says Mencius, everything falls into place without struggle or strain, for "all beneath Heaven is transformed."[5]

We laugh at the silly man tugging on rice shoots to make them grow, but we've all done it. Executives facing shortfalls in the numbers throw incentives at the salesforce in an attempt to boost revenue fast. Project managers facing missed deliverables either plead for more resources or drive the team harder. Nor is this attitude restricted to the workplace; when something goes wrong in a personal relationship, there, too, we want to *fix it.* What "fix it" looks like will depend on our habitual approach to such things—some will get angry, some will suggest couples therapy, others will bolt for the door—but whatever we choose to do, it's likely to be aimed at

solving the immediate problem as we perceive it. Rice shoots not tall enough? Give 'em a yank. Still not tall enough? Yank harder.

Mencius goes on to say:

> In all beneath Heaven, there are few who can resist helping the rice shoots grow. Some think nothing they do will help, so they ignore them. They are the ones who don't even bother to weed. Some try to help them grow: they are the ones who pull at them. It isn't just that they aren't making things better—they're actually making them worse![6]

Just as bad as pulling on the shoots is neglecting to weed the rice paddy in the belief that "nothing will help." While some Eastern philosophers (most notably the Taoists) toy with a do-nothing approach, the Confucians are not among them. Anyone from an agricultural society knows crops don't flourish on their own but need to be cultivated, and cultivated long before the harvest. Unfortunately, many of us fail to apply this obvious truth to our human (vs. agricultural) relationships. We leave the crops unwatered until suddenly we notice things aren't growing. Then we leap in and start tugging, but it's too late.

Some well-meaning souls try to avoid such predicaments by being relentlessly helpful to everyone they encounter. Mencius tells of a prime minister, Lord Ch'an, who had two rivers in his territory across which he would ferry passengers himself. "He was certainly kind," Mencius says, "but he didn't know how to govern." Instead of serving as ferryman, he should have arranged for footbridges and cart bridges to be built. Then travelers could have avoided the ordeal of fording the waterways, and Lord Ch'an would have had time to run the country. Good leaders don't ferry people across rivers one by one. "It's impossible to govern by making people happy one at a time," says Mencius; "there aren't enough hours in the day."[7]

Quiet Influence Practice 10: Attending to upstream factors more than downstream results

Cultivating the upstream sources of results rather than pushing directly for those results is the theme of the book I wrote with Ed

Boswell and Forum's head of research, Henry Frechette. Its title is *Strategic Speed.*[8]

The book begins with the observation, backed by multiple studies, that most strategic initiatives fail to implement successfully and on time, even with a clearly mapped course and plenty of hands on deck. Why? Most leaders focus on the wrong things. They focus too much on pace and process and not enough on people, thereby creating superficial speed (like a hamster on a wheel) rather than speed that leads to genuine, sustained progress.

The worst leaders emphasize *pace:* they announce "We're moving fast!" and then, when the inevitable hitches occur, scream "Hurry up!" Slightly better leaders emphasize *process:* they gather masses of data, weave it into intricate charts and graphs showing how the work will proceed, distribute the PowerPoint—and then, upon discovering that the best flowchart in the world has zero power to inspire anybody to do anything, grow despondent over their organization's presumed resistance to change. But the best leaders focus on *people:* specifically, three "people factors" which, our research indicated, are the keys to strategic speed.

Before I say what those three factors are, let me explain how we came to the conclusion that speed is mostly about the people. For the main research study that fed the book, we worked with the Economist Intelligence Unit to identify, from a group of several hundred companies, a set that were faster at execution and another set that were slower. We then asked leaders within the companies to think about the characteristics of a strategic initiative they believed was successful and about the habits of their organization as a whole. For each of twelve items, we asked, "Was the initiative [or is your organization] more like A or B?" Then we compared the responses from the faster and the slower companies.[*]

On ten of the twelve items, the two sets of responses were strikingly different. For example, leaders in the faster companies said that "teams capture and communicate lessons learned from initiatives," while those in the slower companies said "teams move on to other assignments without a formal debrief." In the faster companies, "team members are comfortable talking about problems and disagreements"; in the slower ones, people "believe in keeping

their cards close to the vest as the best way to get ahead." Senior leaders in the faster companies "are closely aligned and committed to the success of initiatives"; in slower companies, "initiatives succeed in spite of lack of unanimous senior-level support."[9] And so on.

The two sets of organizations, it seemed, had very different approaches. In the slower companies, the emphasis was on maintaining a quick pace, being efficient, and not worrying too much about "soft stuff." The faster companies, in contrast, were actually being propelled forward by supposedly soft practices such as alignment, openness, flexibility, learning, and teamwork. The irony is that managers in the slower companies thought that by charging ahead without regard for soft stuff, they would move faster. They equated attending to people issues with "having to wade through a morass of human emotions, questions, quirks, and complaints."[10] In a quirky human world, however, there is no way around that morass. Effective leaders, knowing this, wade right into the swamps and marshes, digging channels for the water to flow. (See "Influence in Brief: Tugging or Tending?" here)

The three people factors are *clarity, unity,* and *agility. Clarity* is a shared, clear understanding of your situation and direction. *Unity* is agreement on the merits of that direction and on the need to work together to move ahead. *Agility* is the willingness to turn and adapt quickly while keeping strategic goals in mind.

Speed of execution can be predicted by looking at these factors. With high clarity, unity, and agility, you can expect to achieve rapid, sustained progress. With low clarity, unity, and agility, your endeavors will move slowly and clumsily no matter how hard you crack the whip; at best, you'll be driving a team of very fast hamsters, little paws scrabbling on their wheels.

Influence in Brief: Tugging or Tending?

I was an obnoxious 23-year-old brat who was going to step on anyone to get my way. It was all about achieving, achieving. As a junior account manager, I had no authority over anyone. I was doing very well at my job with clients—I was part of the biggest sale of our supervising program ever, almost a million dollars—but

internally, I was not well loved. In one meeting, the other junior staff lambasted me. One of them said, “You don’t care who you step on to get where you want to be.” Then we had to go through the Influence program, and I got slammed in my feedback report. I was devastated. My manager took some time to explain to me how to translate those values into behaviors. I believed fervently in the power of that program, because I had seen it firsthand.

–Tracy Hulett

Influence is about a full range of support in a web of relationships. Offers and requests are part of this nexus of relationships. A direct request, in an Asian culture, has *pressure;* it brings the force of the relationship into that request. It would be very uncomfortable, should the person be unable to comply, for them to say “No.” You and they would lose face. So more likely you would take an indirect approach: discuss the situation and ask for advice.

–Molly McGinn

Strategic Speed includes many examples of clear, unified, agile organizations and teams, from a UK-based telecom company to an Indian provider of satellite television to the American University of Iraq. The example I’ll share here comes from Forum itself.

When in the early 1970s Forum began hiring salespeople, a requirement was set that every account executive (as they were called then) spend ten days each year in the classroom, teaching. Some AEs sampled the whole Forum library while others preferred to specialize in one or two programs, but whether they went broad or deep, every AE acquired firsthand knowledge of our content and how it played out in client situations. As a result, the whole salesforce had *clarity* about the firm’s mission and products; had a sense of *unity* born of being in the trenches with peers, instructors, and senior staff (who also were required to teach); and had developed the kind of tap-dancing *agility* that sweeps over you when it’s 8:40 a.m., the class materials haven’t arrived, and a roomful of participants is staring at you expectantly. On sales calls, AEs thus equipped could do much more than spout lines from a product fact sheet. They could carry on authentic, experience-based conversations about the value Forum offered.

But ten days teaching meant ten days not selling, and sometime around the turn of the millennium the requirement was dropped. AEs' time was better spent doing their real job, went the theory. It's a perfectly reasonable perspective—for the short term. When I look at the long term, though, I see a gradual decline in salesforce capability that ultimately weighed us down.

In executive meetings a decade later, when we were discussing ways to boost the numbers, someone would occasionally muse: "Why not bring back that teaching requirement for the salespeople?"

There would be a short pause. Then someone else would say, "Yeah . . . but right now we really need them all out in the field."

So out in the field they would stay, tugging on rice shoots.

Western Pitfall 10: Obsessing about the short-term future

As we go about our days trying to get things done, there are four points in time where we might place our focus: past, present, short-term future, or long-term future. Westerners tend to see the points as separate, even at odds with one another, and are a bit obsessive about the third—the short-term future—while Asians (again, these are generalizations) will more likely see, not points, but a fluid continuum that must be considered as a whole. The stories of three legendary leaders will illustrate what I mean.

After Confucius, the figures about whom Mencius speaks most often and admiringly are Yao, Shun, and Yü—the "sage emperors" of China's misty past. Grand Historian Sima Qian (see Chapter 6) included their biographies in his annals; like Mencius, he was drawing on a centuries-old written and oral tradition. If ch'i is the heart of Chinese medicine, the sage emperors are the heart of Chinese political and ethical thought, held up by teachers down the ages as models of leadership, indeed of human virtue in general. "What would Shun do?" Mencius asks, offering the question to his lordly clients as a touchstone for hard decisions.

Emperors Yao and Shun are the stuff of myth, but with Emperor Yü, founder of China's first dynasty (the Xia Dynasty, ca. 2100 – ca. 1600 BCE), we are on slightly firmer historical footing. In the time of Yao, writes Sima Qian, floodwaters covered the land and the people

of the lowlands suffered famine, sickness, and death. Yao gave the task of mitigating the floods to a man named Kun, but Kun—described as competent but untrustworthy—did a terrible job. After Yao died, his successor, Shun, asked around for a new minister of works and was referred to Kun's son Yü. Motivated partly by his father's failure, Yü went above and beyond: he spent the next thirteen years surveying the entire country, appraising the soil and crops of each region, dredging channels for the rivers, setting up irrigation systems, and cutting roads through mountains and marshes. After his labors, "the nine lands were all set in order . . . the nine mountain ranges were all marked for roads, the nine waterways' headwaters were cleared, the nine lakes were banked, and the world assembled together."[11]

When Emperor Shun asked Yü for his secret, Yü touched his forehead to the ground and said, "Ah! What should I say? I think only of keeping myself busy every day" (which reminds me of Quiet Influence Practice 9: Doing the daily work with persistence and focus). Yü's character, according to Sima Qian, "was impartial, his personality was endearing, his words were trustworthy, his voice was the law, his behavior the standard . . . And so earnestly, so reverently, these qualities became the net's head-rope, the yarn's guiding-thread for his people."[12]

Shun chose Yü to follow him, and ever after the engineer-turned-emperor has been called Yü the Great, Regulator of the Waters. The title seems fitting, for even if Yü's life is colored by legend, it's clear that his rivers, dams, and roads helped found a civilization that has thrived for 4,000 years. Longer-lasting influence would be hard to imagine.

Infrastructure projects tend to be large investments with far-off horizons. You might think such investments must be undertaken on faith, trusting that your efforts will pay off years hence and ignoring today's falling profits. Certainly, some short-term pleasure and treasure must often be sacrificed; during his years of river-channeling, Yü spent barely any time managing his own farm (says Mencius), so he probably didn't get quite the yield he might have. But the good thing about big digs is that, undertaken in a spirit of ren,

they actually bear fruit at all four points on the time continuum: long term, short term, present, and past.

Looking again at Amabile and Kramer's *The Progress Principle* (see Chapter 9) we learn that endeavors with long-term impact have short-term impact, too. *Catalyst* is the term the authors use for anything that facilitates completion of high-quality work, and catalysts, they found, have an instantaneous effect on inner work life, even before those catalysts could possibly affect the work itself:

> As soon as people realize that they have, for example, clear and meaningful goals, sufficient resources, or helpful colleagues, they get an instant boost to their perceptions of the work and the organization, their emotions, and their motivation to do a great job. But as soon as goals are jumbled, resources denied, or the ball dropped by a colleague, their thoughts, feelings, and drives begin to crumble.[13]

These findings suggest we should see long-term investments as complementary to, not competitive with, short-term efforts. Think of it like physical exercise: you may not see visible results until a few months after starting a running regimen, and it may be years before you can complete a marathon; nevertheless, you'll feel a boost in mood and energy immediately after each jog. At Forum, keeping the R&D engine going in tough times meant that a decade later there would be good products to sell; it also meant that in the short term, the salesforce had something to talk about with customers, the marketers had topics for blogs and news releases, and new ideas vibrated throughout the company from week to week. The converse was true, too: when we stopped the teaching requirement for AEs, although their product knowledge didn't immediately atrophy, it seems to me there was an immediate drop in their internal sense of competence and confidence. Dance teachers have a saying: if you skip one day of class, nobody will notice—nobody, that is, except you.

Big digs, then, shape the present as much as they shape the future. They also have the ability to shape the past, for people who diligently tend the soil, channel the waters, and build the roads, trusting in long-term outcomes and persisting through short-term droughts and storms, often cause others to see their whole life in a new light.

Mencius tells the story of sage emperor Shun and his famously depraved father, Blind Purblind, who in his son's youth tried to murder him by (among other horrible methods) setting his house on fire and sealing him up in a well. When Shun ascended the throne, he was in the power position and no one would have blamed him had he severed all ties with his former abuser. Instead, he continued to set an example of filial devotion, going to visit Blind Purblind "full of respect, veneration, and awe," treating him *as if* he were a loving father.

It took years, but, says Mencius, "Blind Purblind finally understood."[14] He finally saw what he and his son had always been, were now, and could be to each other. Shun, with his patience and vision, had transformed his father's yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's best-known poem begins, "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan / A stately pleasure-dome decree." *Xanadu* has come to mean a fantasia of idyllic beauty, a somewhere-over-the-rainbow. Coleridge clearly thinks such places exist only in dreams; Mencius, however, believes in our ability to construct them for real, both in the physical world and in our human relationships. He quotes lines from China's ancient *Book of Songs* about a man who didn't just dream Xanadu, but built it:

He planned the sacred tower and began.
He planned it well and managed it well,
and the people worked with devotion,
so it was finished in less than a day.
He planned and began without haste,
and the people were children coming.
With the emperor in the sacred gardens
there, the deer lay in pairs at ease,
paired deer all sleek and glistening,
white birds all bright and shimmering,
and with the emperor at the sacred pool
there, the fish leapt so strong and sure.[15]

The next quiet influence practice is *Staying engaged when things get heated.*

Chapter 11

Be Present ~ Zen Master Dōgen

New York: Fall 1998. One of the more embarrassing moments in my professional life occurred during a launch meeting for a project with a large consumer-goods company.

We were gathered, Forum team and client team, in a conference room at the client's New York offices on a crisp fall afternoon. I was glad of the afternoon start time, having been the victim the night before of an overbooking fiasco that had required me to cab it to another hotel in the wee hours and sleep in a sort of garret—apparently one of just a handful of rooms left in Manhattan that evening. I was still feeling slightly out of it as the meeting began.

I was the project leader on the Forum side. On the team were Kelly, the project manager (a role junior to the project leader); Bill, the account executive; and Joe (yes, Toronto Joe again), the senior client liaison. The clients were two pleasant men whose names I don't recall.

Also in the room were two representatives of a video production company—I'll call it VidCo—brought in by Joe to collaborate on the project. VidCo's main business was corporate communications, but they were trying to enter the corporate education space. The clients had purchased from us a sophisticated sales training system, largely video-based, quite innovative for the time. We, Forum, were the curriculum experts, but we couldn't lay claim to any real technology expertise, so Joe had pitched a partnership, promising the clients that Forum and VidCo would work together as one team.

My short night's sleep wasn't the only reason I was feeling out of it. Though I'd led many client projects before, I had never led one

that involved a partner, let alone a tech partner, and back then my standard approach to new territory was to shut my eyes and skate on through. A couple weeks before this meeting I had presided over an internal prep call, which had included VidCo and had served, in theory, to introduce us to one another. In truth, however, I'd done nothing in the way of team-building. Worse, I had limited my review of the proposed program to Forum's pieces, figuring VidCo could talk about their pieces, so why bother to clutter my mind? VidCo had sent us information about their company. I hadn't read any of it.

I began the meeting by having each person share their childhood nickname. The clients chuckled; we were off to a good start. Then we got down to business. Standing at the head of the long conference table, I took the group through the slides describing the program, and when I came to the video part I looked down the table at the VidCo senior designer seated at the far corner. Her name was Blythe.

"Blaire," I said, "could you take us through the video components?"

She hesitated, smiling. "It's Blythe," she said.

"Oops!" I said. "Blythe, over to you!"

"Ho-ho-ho," went the room.

The clients had many questions for Blythe. At one point, I thought she hadn't been clear. "Blaire," I said, "I think it would be helpful if you could go over that bit again."

A longer pause. "It's *Blythe,"* she said.

"Wow. I am *so* sorry. What is my problem today? Nice to meet you, ha-ha!"

No one laughed this time. Confused faces turned from me to Blythe, Blythe to me. She resumed her spiel, obviously put out.

From then on, I just tried to get to the end. I moved from one agenda item to the next, smile fixed, eyes down, sensing things falling apart but not sure what to do about it. The clients wanted to add costly new features to the program; when I said we'd need to take a look at the scope, account exec Bill leapt in with "No problem!" Project manager Kelly had commented during the prep call that she was a *consultant* and had taken this junior role only in order to learn about the industry, a comment I had ignored. When one of

the clients now asked if she would be their regular point of contact, she replied (to my horror) that she wouldn't always be available due to her heavy travel schedule. As we were wrapping up, the other client asked whether Forum and VidCo had ever worked together before.

And somewhere in my blurred recollections of the scene, there is another incredulous stare from Blythe. Did I say "Blaire" a third time?

I honestly don't know. You see, I wasn't there.

Being There

This is the means by which we, who are ordinarily set into motion by things, become able to set things into motion. ("Instructions for the Tenzo")[1]

This is the way to turn things while being turned by things. ("Tenzo," another translation)[2]

Somewhere along the way to getting my master's degree in Eastern classics, I half-jokingly asked a fellow student who was taking a class on Dōgen to summarize the famous Japanese monk's teachings for me in one sentence.

"I can do it in two words," he said. *"Be present."*

The essay "Instructions for the Tenzo" (see "The Sage: Zen Master Dōgen," below) is directed at the person in charge of meal preparation in a Buddhist monastery. Dōgen begins by quoting a line from a twelfth-century Chinese book of regulations for monastic living: "In order to offer nourishment to the monks of the community, there is a cook." He continues: "Since ancient times this position has been held by accomplished monks who have a way-seeking mind, or by senior disciples with an aspiration for enlightenment."* The tenzo is one of the senior monks responsible for the community's well-being. The job is not for the faint of heart.

The Sage: Zen Master Dōgen

Dōgen Zenji (1200 – 1253), the founder of Zen Buddhism's Sōtō school, wrote hundreds of essays, commentaries, and poems—

not to mention an entire monastic code—all part of a grand attempt to scrub away centuries' worth of superstition and cultish ritual which, he seems to have thought, had weighed down Buddhism in Japan and whose removal would reveal Buddhism's pristine core as expressed in the Pāli Canon. "Just sit" is Dōgen's famously concise instruction for mindfulness meditation, and many of his essay titles convey a similar simplicity: "Painting of a Rice Cake," "Mountains and Waters," "The Moon." When we dive into the essays, however, we're met with conundrums such as these: "Know that a painted rice cake is your face before your parents were born." "Because green mountains walk, they are permanent." "The moons do and do not use coming and going: go freely and grasp firmly coming and going." Writings at once so disarmingly straightforward and intimidatingly opaque must, it seems, be approached like cakes, mountains, and moons: not merely analyzed with the mind, but encountered and appreciated with the heart-mind.

The essay spells out the head cook's duties and, more important, the attitude of *presence* with which those duties should be performed. In today's business world "presence" has become something of a cliché, often referring to nothing more than a confident air and a snazzy wardrobe. For Dōgen, however, presence is a deep matter. He illuminates the topic with basic how-tos ("First, go get the vegetables") combined with cryptic stories and allusions ("The water buffalo swallows the monk Guishan, and the monk Guishan herds the water buffalo"). When we look at the essay as a whole, three ways to be present stand out: 1) Pay attention; 2) Do it yourself; 3) Work with what you have.

First, *pay attention.* The head cook's every activity, from rinsing rice to washing dishes, must be performed "with close attention, vigorous exertion, and a sincere mind. Do not indulge in a single moment of carelessness or laziness," says Dōgen. "Do not allow attentiveness to one thing to result in overlooking another." You treat the ingredients and utensils with respect, picking them up and putting them down with courtesy. You preserve the rice water for gruel rather than wastefully discarding it. Having put the rice in the

cooking pot, you guard it well so neither mice nor “greedy idlers” touch it. Once a dish is cooked, you examine it and carefully set it down in its proper place. And once the meal has been served and you’re back in your quarters, you sit with eyes closed and count every monk in the community, calculating the portion of rice required for each, envisioning in precise detail the next meal and those who will eat it.

The humblest action, done with care and intention, creates good karma. Done sloppily, it creates bad karma. For Dōgen’s tenzo, there is no multitasking.

Second, *do it yourself.* Dōgen tells of a time when he was living in Tiantong Monastery. Walking across the courtyard after the midday meal he came across the head cook, who was drying mushrooms. The sun was blazing hot, the cook was hatless, and sweat streamed down his face as he worked. Dōgen went over and asked him how long he had been a monk:

“Sixty-eight years,” he replied.
“Why don’t you let a helper do this?”
“Others are not myself.”
“Reverend Sir, you follow regulations exactly, but as the sun is so hot, why are you doing this now?”
“Until when should I wait?”

Dōgen says it was then, as he walked away along the corridor, that he began to see the importance of the cook’s position. Later he describes a visit to another monastery, one in which all the cooking had been delegated to a servant while the tenzo “ensconced himself in his office, sometimes reclining, sometimes chatting and laughing, sometimes reading sutras, and sometimes reciting prayers. For days on end and many months he did not approach the vicinity of the pots.” He could not possibly have done his job, Dōgen says, and, “how pitiable was that person who lacked the way-seeking mind.” It was as if that so-called tenzo had gone to a treasure mountain and returned home empty-handed.

Finally, *work with what you have.* The biggest “don’t” for a head cook is worrying about the quality or amount of ingredients. “Simply make the best of what you have,” says Dōgen. Treat poor

ingredients with the same care as good ones. Don't despise a soup of the crudest greens; don't rejoice in a soup of the finest cream. "Never change your attitude according to the materials," he says. "If you do, it is like varying your truth when speaking with different people; then you are not a practitioner of the way."

That last line suggests Dōgen is thinking not only of bad ingredients, but of bad colleagues and bosses, too. Way-seekers work with what *and who* is before them, their attitude unchanging no matter the circumstances. Later on we're told that if a patron donates money for a feast, the tenzo should not rush off gleefully and buy food but rather consult with the stewards to decide how to distribute the funds. "Do not create a disturbance in the hierarchy by infringing on anyone's authority," Dōgen advises. Perhaps you dislike the head steward; perhaps you think he's an incompetent jerk. As a true tenzo, you go and consult with him just the same.

Why is being present so important? Why bother to pay attention, do it yourself, and work with what (and who) you have? Dōgen says: "This is the means by which we, who are ordinarily set into motion by things, become able to set things into motion." When our thoughts scatter in reaction to challenges, we become the moved-and-shaken rather than the mover-and-shaker. The more we worry about the crude greens, the less energy we have to make the soup—and then the situation is controlling us instead of the other way around. (I'm reminded of a contestant on *The Great British Baking Show* who was crying over a runny buttercream. One of the hosts told her to stop it, for "every minute spent crying is one minute less to show the world what a good baker you are.") Conversely, when we remain calmly attentive and engaged, we have at least a chance of getting a decent meal on the table. Presence is the basis for progress.

Quiet Influence Practice 11: Staying engaged when things get heated

The day after my disastrous launch meeting, Joe left a voicemail for the whole project team. He cc'd Connie, the regional vice president with ultimate responsibility for the account.

“That didn’t go well,” I heard him say. “The clients aren’t happy. Jocelyn, it wasn’t up to your usual standard. We need to talk about how to recover.”

I was mortified. I called Joe and went into a defensive crouch: “OK, first, I was working on no sleep. What Kelly said, I couldn’t believe it, what was she thinking? Bill was undermining me the whole time. And Blythe, wow, she could have just relaxed. I know it was bad. I’m sorry. But it’s not helping when you leave voicemails for everyone.”

Joe apologized for the group voicemail but continued to press me for a recovery plan. I hung up, dejected. I still didn’t know how to fix the situation and in the absence of any ideas was inclined to hole up in my office and work on assigning blame.*

About half an hour later, my phone rang. It was Connie, the regional VP.

“Now I’m really in trouble,” I thought.

But Connie was great. Like Barbara (the project manager in Chapter 2 who handled objections so well), she began by simply listening as I sputtered on about the unfairness of it all.

Then she said something I’ve never forgotten:

“You’re senior to these people. Kelly, Bill, Blythe—they’re going to take their cue from you. If I were you, I would go toward the conflict.”

Her statement woke me right up, for two reasons. First, it had not occurred to me that I, as project leader, was the senior resource. Yes, I had realized it was my job to run the project, but not that I also had the responsibility—the privilege, actually—to set the tone for the others, and that those others would show up if, and only if, I showed up. Second, despite having heard many times the Forum adage “Confront with respect,” I hadn’t fully understood that the way to deal with a conflict was not to back off from it, nor to head it off at the pass, but to lean into it.

“Go toward the conflict.” I repeated the phrase back to Connie.

“Yes,” she said.

“All right,” I said.

From then on, the project went well. Not perfectly; but well. I called Kelly and Bill and had a conversation with each to gather their input on the program. I called the clients and asked them about their

concerns and how we could improve. I set up weekly team and client meetings during which we would check our progress and make course corrections. I read and absorbed all the information from VidCo—and apologized, this time sincerely, to Blythe.

In short, I engaged. One thing I did not do was write up a formal recovery plan; it turned out it wasn't necessary, because now, everyone was on the same page. As soon as I went toward the conflict, the conflict dissipated like a bad dream.

To add a twist: all this engagement had to happen at a distance. I had moved several months before from Toronto to Santa Fe, where my husband had taken a college faculty position. So for that project, and for the next fifteen years as I worked mostly from my home office in New Mexico, I had to find ways to be present with people who were hundreds if not thousands of miles away.

Remote work is a common phenomenon these days—it wasn't so much, back in 1998—and it adds intensity to the challenge of presence (see "Influence in Brief: Presence at a Distance," below). Forum's programs on virtual leadership taught that dispersed teams are no different, really, from co-located teams; it's just that time, place, and culture gaps in the former tend to magnify ordinary hitches in team formation and function. Similarly, presence is achievable whether you are right there or miles removed; it's just that a home office makes hiding easier.

Influence in Brief: Presence at a Distance

People say it's different now. We are not in the office. We never meet. How do you establish trust when the brain is keyed into the attractive, welcoming face? Then there are the different cultures. People talk about it as not just a matrixed environment, but as a widely dispersed net that catches all sorts of bizarre sea creatures. If I am seeing more people around me who are not of my tribe, does it result in more fight-or-flight responses? Can you redefine "tribe" in someone's head to include the full system? Or are we stuck in fight or flight?

–Ken De Loreto

Social media has opened everything up, but it has also somehow put everyone back into silos, like in the 1970s, and this time they are self-created silos. Everyone is in a bubble.

–Court Chilton

Sometimes you don't even see your manager for the first year. And maybe their time zone is eight hours different from yours. The relationship is harder to build; some say, "I don't even know what my manager wants."

–Carol Kane

Influence is about empathy, about being present in the moment, about storytelling. And the real kicker is authenticity: how do you take off your mask and reveal who you are? All of this resonates across cultures. It's about human effectiveness, so it's relevant to everyone. Everyone wants to be better at these things.

–Andre Alphonso

Tips and techniques for dispersed teams are readily found with an internet search. One of the more useful concepts comes from designers of virtual learning, who advise that the communication method should get "warmer"—more interactive, synchronous, and multilayered—as the situation becomes more emotion-laden. For example, a routine project update can go out in an email; feedback on some product specs could be collected in an open document; a big change in strategy should be discussed in a real-time audio or video conference; and if you are laying someone off, you do it face to face. Some of the worst influence flubs are the result of someone's using a chilly communication method in a vain attempt to avoid a heated situation. The key is always to lean toward, not away from, the heat.

And, although the right technology is helpful when you need to build presence across gulfs in time and space, it's the attitude that really counts. Whether your team sits in one room or is scattered around the globe, there is no better advice than Zen Master Dōgen's: Pay attention. Do it yourself. Work with what you have.

Western Pitfall 11: Running from shame

What prevents us from being present? What keeps us from being open, aware, and engaged, especially in situations that feel threatening?

In the West, the commonest answer is: shame. Author and speaker Brené Brown is the most prominent among a host of Western gurus advising us to conquer shame by believing "I am enough"—a belief that (they say) enables us to approach life "wholeheartedly." Westerners seem to have a voracious appetite for this message; witness the immense popularity of Brown's two TED Talks. And indeed, when I reflect back on my behavior during that messed-up launch meeting, I might easily conclude it was shame causing me to shrink into my shell like a salted snail, and Connie's assurance that I was "enough" that enabled me to emerge from my shell and lead the way forward.

Eastern thinkers, however, don't generally buy this view of shame.* They see shame as a valuable emotion felt by good, humane people and as one of the glues holding society together. Here's where I may lose Brené Brown fans, for when I reflect further, I side with the East.

Since the 1960s, one of Western psychology's themes is that we should be happy with ourselves despite others' criticisms. Refusing to base our self-esteem on what others think of us (in other words, being shameless) is said to be the hallmark of mental health. If we object that that view sounds a touch sociopathic, we're told there's a caveat: we must not hurt or mistreat others. But if our mantra is "I'm OK no matter what," the caveat makes no sense. If I'm fine with myself and never mind your opinion of me, why should I worry about hurting you? If your disapproval doesn't affect my sense of self-worth, why should I not mistreat you?

Next we're told there's a difference between "toxic shame," which is the belief that there's something fundamentally wrong with us, and "healthy shame," which causes us to take responsibility for our mistakes.* But this caveat invites us to make a distinction between "bad shame" and "good shame" and in the process gives us an easy out. Who wouldn't pick Door No. 1—"I'm OK; begone, toxic shame!"—over Door No. 2—"I'd better mend my shameful ways"?

The Eastern perspective is harder but better: there is only one kind of shame, and it becomes toxic only if we regard it as scary and unhealthy.†

“This is the means by which we, who are ordinarily set into motion by things, become able to set things into motion,” says Dōgen. Here’s another translation of the line: “This is the way to turn things while being turned by things.” The second translation captures the spirit of mindfulness we saw in the early Buddhist discourses; there, if you recall, mindfulness didn’t mean being unmoved by emotions such as shame, but rather—being moved and not freaking out about it. At Forum we had a saying: “To influence, you must be willing to be influenced.” A sense of shame indicates we are willing to be influenced: willing to feel the sting of opprobrium and, instead of retreating or convulsing, to ask, “How should I change?”

Apologies to Western psychology, but we shouldn’t be happy with ourselves despite others’ criticism. We should be happy with ourselves because we are the sort of people who take criticism as a lesson and a gift; the sort of people who gracefully “turn things while being turned by things.” (I am far from being this sort of person, by the way. But I’m working on it.)

When I was interviewing Forum alumni for this book, one memory that came up repeatedly was people’s shamed reactions to their Influence feedback. Former Forum executive Andre Alphonso says:

> The Influence feedback hit people really hard, much harder than the feedback in [our management programs] ever did. I think it’s because it was filled out by peers, so people would give the surveys to their friends, and when the feedback was negative, they were hearing it from friends. People would feel slapped in the face. There was one senior leader who said, “I am devastated and I think I want to resign.” She was in tears. I let her talk it through; she did not resign. But she felt betrayed by people with whom she thought she had a good relationship.

Mike Maginn recalls:

> We got the most resistance around the trust practice: “Behave in a way that leads others to trust you.” Some people would get low scores and would freak out. I couldn’t just let it go, so I would make myself available after hours for one-on-one counseling. It was very powerful feedback, because if you’re not trustworthy, how can I work with you? So we tried to unpack it and get specific about it. We said there were three components: the information you bring, the judgments you make, and can you execute. That took a bit of the sting out: instead of “you’re an evil person,” we could give specifics on what to do in order to help others trust you.

And Court Chilton, who worked on the 1992 version of the program, says this:

> The feedback report was very powerful, but here's the rub: when people got less-than-good feedback on the "trust" practice, it would wreck them. People placed outsized importance on it . . . so, part of the problem was how to get items about trust in there in a way that would wake people up a bit but not destroy them. In later versions we tried to get more specific about the elements of trust. The result, unfortunately, was that the feedback became somewhat fragmented and watered down.

The Influence feedback report was eventually phased out, a casualty of proliferating internet surveys which caused 360-degree feedback in training programs to feel old hat. Though the reasons were understandable, I regret that the demise of feedback meant that participants were denied the chance to be like Bill, the cellphone engineer we met in the Overview, whose metamorphosis from Most Despised to Most Respected was legend at his company.

Bill, you may remember, was wrecked by his first-round Influence feedback. He progressed only because of that wreckage and how he dealt with it. He didn't pooh-pooh his single-digit ratings as insults from people less intelligent than he. He didn't think, "Screw 'em, I'm smart and I'm fine." Nor did he collapse in a paroxysm of shame. Instead, he listened when the instructor said, "Smart is good, but it is not enough," and decided *he* was not enough; that he wanted to be, and could be, more. He went toward the conflict—especially the all-important one within. Like the monk Guishan, he herded the water buffalo while the water buffalo swallowed him whole.

I don't know precisely how one achieves this kind of absolute presence, which results in the ability to turn the world while being wrecked by the world. I do know that the first step must be to look shame in the face, give it a bow, and invite it in for tea and rice.

The final quiet influence practice is *Walking away when influence is no longer possible.*

Chapter 12

Leave Well ~ Ibn Tufayl

My parents had a long career in the US Foreign Service. A big part of diplomatic life is parties—dinner parties, cocktail parties, pool parties, all kinds of parties—which sounds like great fun, until you consider that every such event is non-optional.

At any rate, my parents knew parties. And here's their advice:

Always leave a party while it's still fun.

Whenever I've followed this advice, I've not regretted it. Many a night, having exited the college beer-fest or post-dinner corporate revelries, walking down silent corridors back to my dorm or hotel room, I've been seized with fear of missing out. Why did I leave so soon?

But next morning, I would hear about the person who'd passed out next to the trash cans or the two colleagues who'd had a bitter argument, or (most typically) I'd ask someone with a wan face how the rest of the evening had turned out and get, "Oh . . . we had a few more drinks. That's about it." And I would be glad I'd left when I did.

Failing to follow the advice, on the other hand, has led to disappointment, even disaster. Over the years, I've learned to apply it to more than parties; it also works for jobs and other endeavors. In professional contexts one might change "while it's still fun" to "while you can still make a difference," but the principle is the same: Go out on a high note—or at least before they start vacuuming the carpets.

I've learned, as well, that it's not just the timing that's important, but the manner. On January 30, 2013, I walked away from The Forum Corporation. Although the *when* wasn't too bad, I certainly could have improved on the *how*.

For two years we'd had a series of leaders whose values clashed with mine and with the longtime ethos of the firm. I and others made attempts to lean in and to keep the party going, but by November 2012 I could see it was the wrong side of midnight and time to bow out. My best friend had been quicker on the uptake than I; she had made her exit, with grace, twelve months earlier. I wanted to leave well, too, so I called the head of the company where she was working now—he was another Forum alum—to get his advice.

"I need a bit of a runway, so I'm planning to leave in May," I told him.

"I wouldn't wait that long," he said, "but if you must, here's the thing. Now that you've made the decision, you'll be tempted to signal that you're out of there. You'll want to play the rebel or the savior. *Don't.* Keep your head down and mouth shut. Focus on your next move, and walk out quietly."

I wish I'd listened to him. In mid-January, after several instances of doing exactly what he had advised me not to do, I received a written reprimand. My boss had set up a call for the following week; I assumed he intended more scolding, and I'd had enough, so I got my ducks in a row and wrote a resignation letter offering to stay on for a month to ensure a smooth transition. I emailed the letter at 7:00 a.m. the day of the scheduled call. He emailed back asking me to dial in at 9:00, which I did, expecting a reasonably cordial conversation. Instead, I found myself on the line with him, his boss, and the firm's attorney. The attorney thanked me for my letter. She explained that as of right now my services would no longer be required, and that this call's purpose all along had been to terminate my employment due to "clear insubordination." I sat with open mouth as she issued instructions for returning company property.

Today, after seeing changes for the better in the firm's leadership and having been invited back for a spell as an independent contractor, I find it amusing to regale friends with the tale of Insubordinate Me. I always get high fives. The fallout at the time, however, really wasn't amusing, especially when it continued falling on me and others for months thereafter. If the final test of influence is the timing and grace of one's exit, I failed most of the test.

Boy on an Island

Forget all you've heard, and clutch what you see—
At sunrise what use is Saturn to thee? *(Hayy Ibn Yaqzān,* Sec.16)[1]

The utterly independent protagonist of the novel *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* (which the West often calls *The Self-Taught Philosopher*) knows exactly when, how, and why to leave a party.

The book begins with him as a child, growing up alone on a tiny island in the Indian Ocean. The author (see "The Sage: Ibn Tufayl," here) offers two different accounts of how Hayy got there. In the first, he is the son of a princess who, having eloped with a man against her family's wishes, sets the infant in a wooden crate and floats him out to sea with prayers to God to watch over him. Her prayers are answered when the crate, after a journey of many miles, washes up high on the shore of a lush but deserted isle, there to lodge in a thicket with its top sufficiently loosened to allow the baby to kick it free. In the second account, the boy is the product of spontaneous generation, a process involving a lump of moist clay and precisely the right chemicals and conditions for creating a human gamete, which divides and grows over many months until finally a child breaks out of the set clay like a chick breaking out of an egg.

From that point onward, the two stories converge into one. The baby—whose full name means "Life, the Son of Aware"—is discovered in the thicket by a doe. Having lost her fawn, the doe cares for Hayy: nursing him, warming and shading him, and once he can walk, leading him to edible fruits and plants. While there are no beasts of prey on the island, there are animals that compete for food, requiring the boy to compensate for his lack of claws, horns, and hide by crafting rudimentary weapons and clothing.

The Sage: Ibn Tufayl

"Abū Bakr Ibn Tufayl was born shortly after the beginning of the twelfth century in the little Spanish town of Guadix," writes Lenn Evan Goodman in his introduction to *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān.*[2] He was a Renaissance man (if that term may be applied to someone living

two hundred years before the Renaissance): a government minister, practicing physician, philosopher, astronomer, novelist, and theologian. Andalusia, aka Muslim Spain, was the greatest center of culture and scholarship of the day, and Ibn Tufayl seems to have enjoyed spotting and sponsoring new talent. The philosopher Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroës, tells of arriving in the capital, going to see the sultan, and finding him in conference with Ibn Tufayl. "Ibn Tufayl began praising me and speaking of my family and my background," says Averroës, "very kindly adding many good things which I really did not deserve." The three went on to engage in a lengthy discussion. Averroës, realizing the extent of Ibn Tufayl's learning, felt out of his depth. But the vizier soon put the newcomer at ease, as a master will. Later, says Averroës, "he sent me a gift of money, and a splendid robe of honor, and a horse."[3]

But Hayy's real education begins at age seven, when his beloved doe-mother dies. Beset by grief, he hopes "to discover the place where she was hurt so he could take away the hurt and allow her to recover" (39)—and his explorations of the doe's anatomy launch a four-decade intellectual journey that leads through practical knowledge (learning to hunt, fish, and ride; building shelter and mastering fire) . . . to theoretical knowledge (classifying the natural world; speculating about substances and forces) . . . to metaphysics (differentiating between matter and form; inferring the existence of the soul) . . . to cosmology (the courses of the stars; the necessity for the universe to have a non-physical, ultimate cause) . . . to theology (proofs of God's existence and that "He is being, perfection, and wholeness") . . . and finally, to a search for union with God via various ethical and physical practices (refraining from harm, meditating, eating little, and imitating heavenly bodies by spinning in circles "whirling dervish"–style).

At last Hayy achieves his goal. Ibn Tufayl cautions that words are inadequate but nevertheless provides us with "a hint and a glimpse" of Hayy's beatific vision, comparing it to a cascade of mirrors descending from the sun to the earth: "It was as though the form of

the sun were shining in rippling water from the last mirror in the sequence, reflected down the series from the first, which faced directly into the sun." (130) Part 1 concludes with Hayy as seer, his days spent in ecstatic contemplation of the Necessarily Existent.

In Part 2, his trance is interrupted by the arrival of a young man, Absāl, who has left his home on a nearby populated island to pursue a life of solitude. The two meet and, though at first mutually mystified, soon recognize in the other a kindred spirit. Absāl teaches Hayy to speak (for of course he never learned, being without companions) and they exchange life stories. Hayy is intrigued by Absāl's description of the religion—recognizable as Islam, though it could be any tradition-based faith—practiced on the big island, but he is puzzled by the symbols, rituals, and rules with which it is laden and which, as far as he can see, only obscure the beautiful truths he has been able to access directly via observation and reason. Absāl, for his part, is convinced by Hayy's discourses and vows to be his student. When Hayy suggests they go to the big island and preach the word to those there, Absāl warns it will be difficult since most of the people are pretty ignorant; still, they'll give it a try, he says, starting with a well-educated group he knows. The two men manage to flag down a passing ship and set forth.

Alas, the well-educated group doesn't appreciate what Hayy has to say. Not only are they confused by his preaching, they resent it. "The moment he rose the slightest bit above the literal or began to portray things against which they were prejudiced, they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds." (150)

Ibn Tufayl's favorite philosopher, Ghazāli, believed in sowing doubt about traditional wisdom: "For he who does not doubt does not look; and he who does not look will not see, but must remain in blindness and confusion." (16) To illustrate the point, Ghazāli wrote this couplet: "Forget all you've heard and clutch what you see / At sunrise what use is Saturn to thee?" Ibn Tufayl himself takes a slightly different view: while there are some people cut out to be self-taught philosophers, reasoning their way up to heaven without benefit of instruction, that road is definitely not for everyone.

Hayy soon sees he is doing more harm than good: if he kicks away their crutch of religious tradition, the people will only fall into

vice and despair. So, he and Absāl decide to return to their island. But before leaving, he goes to Absāl's friends and apologizes:

> He told them he had seen the light and realized they were right. He urged them to hold fast to their observance of all the statutes regulating outward behavior and not delve into things that did not concern them, submissively to accept all the most problematical elements of the tradition and shun originality and innovation, follow in the footsteps of their righteous forbears and leave behind everything modern. (154)

Back home, Hayy seeks his vision and gains it once again. Absāl imitates him and achieves almost the same heights, and thus the two friends live out the rest of their days.

Quiet Influence Practice 12: Walking away when influence is no longer possible

At certain times and in certain places, influence becomes impossible. How do we know when we've reached such a time and place? How do we know when remaining present and engaged is no longer the best course? And if we know it's time to leave, how do we leave well?

Forum's Influence program didn't offer much insight into such questions (see "Influence in Brief: The Limits of Influence," below). When participants asked, "What if I do this stuff and other people don't?" our answer was essentially, "Just do it, and eventually others will respond." That answer wasn't totally off-base. When Borg approached the wrathful McEnroe at the net, put an arm around his shoulder and said, "It's OK. Just relax. It's a great match"—McEnroe relaxed. Leaning in, calmly and gracefully, usually works.

Sometimes, though, to lean in is to fall off a cliff with no one to catch you. Sometimes, just as discretion is the better part of valor, walking away is the better part of influence.

Influence in Brief: The Limits of Influence

> A missing piece in [the Influence program] was the idea of setting boundaries or setting expectations. We spent our time looking at how to be successful at

influence. We didn't look at the limits. Influence took a very optimistic view: if everyone used those practices, things would be perfect. But if you try it and the other person doesn't, you're going to stop trying. If it turns into win-lose because the other person doesn't want to play—we had trouble answering that.

–Dick Meyer

Since 2008, I've seen more stovepiped companies than ever. Getting things done cross-functionally is seen as a pain and not essential. Since those terrible days of the financial collapse, everywhere I have gone—not just in financial companies—people are scared about their jobs. The smokestacks have been re-created based on fear . . . A CEO at a large insurance company says his direct reports don't talk to each other. They are each experts in their own world: "Leave me alone, my goals are not your goals." There is a huge need to help people figure out how to work together again.

–Mike Maginn

A fast-track career, money, and perks were all part of the corporate race. All was well until the economy went through a downturn and we had to make some tough calls. Some decisions did not sit well with me. I found myself in deeper search for meaning. The search for purpose led me to an alternative path and calling.

–Shibani Belwalkar

Business author Seth Godin advises us to distinguish between "dips," which need to be pushed through, and "cul-de-sacs," which need to be backed out of.[4] He calls the latter "strategic quitting." As for how to recognize a cul-de-sac, Godin and others offer a plethora of indicators: You keep working, but you never make any progress. The environment feels toxic. The bosses are detached. Your colleagues don't care. You're only average at the thing you've set out to do. And so on.

Problem is, such warning signs are all too easily ignored when we're in the grip of our innate tendency, evolved back in the days of woolly mammoth hunts, *not* to quit. "I know you've been raised on a steady diet of lessons on grit and perseverance," says Peg Streep, author of *Quitting,* "but the truth is . . . what's hard for human beings is letting go."[5] Studies show that people embrace change only when they perceive the change state to be much better than the current

state; even a bad party, once we're used to it, seems safer than an unknown party. Moreover, detached bosses, apathetic colleagues, and vague feelings of futility are ordinary features of life at work. We really shouldn't turn our back on a job or project just because there are days when it's a drag.

Instead of a bunch of little signs, what we really need is one big sign—a wailing siren or flashing red light—that alerts us when it's time to leave the building.

Here is that one big sign:

A powerful person resents you and your influence.

Hayy and his friend Absāl encounter resentment almost as soon as they arrive on the big island: their audience recoils reflexively from their message as cave dwellers would recoil from sunlight. In the real world, by contrast, resentment tends to develop over time, coming at you only after you have risen to a fairly high position and/or built a wide base of support. The small and meek don't set off bullies' threat sensors, which means that when you enter at a low or middle rank you generally have at least a few years to "establish mindfulness all around" (as the Buddha would say) before attracting any hostility. Entering at a senior level, your grace period could be a matter of months—unless you're lucky enough to be right at the top, a founder or CEO, in which case you may be able safely to work your magic for a long stretch.

But no matter your rank, if you have success as an influencer your success will, sooner or later, start to irk someone on high. It will be someone who gained their position the old-fashioned way: through bootlicking, intimidation, or technocratic expertise.* This person may praise you outwardly, but inwardly they will fear you. Unskilled themselves at inviting participation, sharing power, and aiding progress, they will not enjoy watching you do so. Feeling their perch to be precarious, they will seek to shore it up by eliminating potential rivals, including you.

At this point, you have two options. Option 1 is to leave the organization or group. Should you make this choice, it's best to follow the example of my friend, and of Hayy Ibn Yaqzān, and leave quickly and quietly with no grandstanding. Option 2 (your only option when there's no ready exit) is to back off and keep your head down,

way down, while you wait out the storm or prepare your lifeboat. You might be tempted (as I was) to try to shine all the brighter, or to make an ally of your adversary, or to use *jujutsu* techniques. Don't. When a powerful person resents you, the time for influence is past. The time for retreat and retrenchment is arrived.

Eastern Pitfall: Going with the crowd

"East and West have much to learn from each other," says Helena Garlicki, one of the many influence experts I've quoted here. It's true: although the East is, in my view, the best teacher of quiet influence, the West has a few lessons to share, too. So I'm going to conclude not with a typically Western pitfall, but with a typically Eastern one. It's a pitfall that Ibn Tufayl, a thinker who straddles East and West, hopes we may avoid.

As translator Goodman notes, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* is not an anthropological treatise—a real human child raised outside human society would be, if he managed to survive at all, non-human—but rather a thought experiment, one in which we may see ourselves as potentially transsocial beings. "The point is not to live on an island," says Goodman; "the point is merely to achieve independence from social myth, civil coercion, and cultural blindness."[6] Hayy, with his abilities to observe the world, wonder what is going on, and discover the answers for himself—abilities that make sense to us readers, even if the story is fanciful—demonstrates that we don't have to be prisoners of our circumstances. We can think our way up and out, to the stars and beyond.

Eastern thought, with its characteristic emphasis on the community over the individual, hasn't been terribly receptive to the idea that an individual might think outside the box. "The sticking-out nail gets hammered down," says the Japanese proverb. As a result, Eastern cultures have tended to lag behind the West when it comes to innovation. Andre Alphonso says:

> I was born in India, grew up in Australia, and later returned to India with my family to live for a number of years. I found that Indians are amazing at some things: they can copy very well, and improve, and they have a strong entrepreneurial flair, but their education system stresses rote learning and passing exams. The system

doesn't produce the level of innovation and critical thinking you may find in the West.

When we returned to Australia, my school-age daughter was assigned this essay question: "Two hundred refugees have just landed in this community; how should we deal with the situation?" My daughter was like, "How do I answer this? Where is the text that gives me the answer?" To Indians, that kind of question is ridiculous. Their learning is all fact-based. You look up the answer in a book.

The same could be said of education systems in China and Japan: their chief concern is to teach students *what everybody knows.* Since sociopolitical shifts in recent decades have weakened agreement on ethical and aesthetic matters, "what everybody knows" now comprises mostly scientific and mathematical knowledge, with the result that schooling in these regions has leaned heavily toward the technical. But the context for this mode of education isn't some sort of natural preference for science and math over art and literature. Rather, it's the belief that *teaching* is the transmittance of ancestral wisdom and *learning* is being able to restate such wisdom correctly and beautifully.

When we grasp this context (which, by the way, also characterized the medieval Western world) we can see the radicalness of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān.* Hayy learns the truth about every single thing—including God—unaided by society. He then decides society lacks knowledge of the truth, decides to inform society of the truth, and decides to turns his back on society when it can't handle the truth. No ancient Confucian, Hindu, or Buddhist could have written such a story. Although many Eastern sages rejected the establishment of their day and although Eastern cultures, like all cultures, have conventions that allow people to renounce the world, whether by taking holy orders or by retiring to the wilderness as an ascetic, such rejections and renunciations have typically occurred within the framework of a community that defines who one is and what is best. In spirit, the East is the Hotel California, where (as the Eagles sang) "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave." It took Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Tufyal to plant the seeds of modern Western individualism by imagining human

beings like Hayy: human beings with no need to check out, because they never really checked in.*

I said in the Overview that in order to tap into the strength-without-force that is influence we must believe, with the poet of the *Rig Veda,* that in the beginning "all this was water": a vast, quiet ocean breathing on its own, with "impulse beneath and giving-force above" and the gods making a late appearance as a rather loud and splashy troop of Jet-Ski-ers. The sage, rather than seeking to make a splash, slips silently into that ocean and shows us how to ride the currents—or perhaps, like Emperor Yü, works steadily and humbly to channel the waters, thereby laying the foundation for a million rice fields and pleasure gardens to come.

But there is another angle on the question. Hayy's story reminds us that there are islands in the ocean and that, while no man is an island, a man brought up to look to the stars rather than to the crowd has a different, and important, kind of strength.

We cannot always be collaborating. In fact, one of the standard subtitles for Forum's Influence program—"Collaborating for Results"—couldn't be used in Europe because of the word's lingering association with the Nazi collaborators of World War II: the politicians who chose to go along to get along and gained influence at the price of their souls. When evil gods come to power and a large chunk of the world backs them, we in the West, steeped as we are in a tradition of individual rights and self-reliance, have a bit of an advantage over our colleagues in the East. We are better placed to "forget all we've heard and clutch what we see." We are ready to doubt and to judge for ourselves. We don't mind being the sticking-out nail.

Still, we must realize there is a time for everything. When influence is impossible, it's time to leave with grace. When leaving is impossible, it's time to stay and blend in. And when influence is impossible, leaving is impossible, and blending in would be wrong, then—and only then—it's time to stand and fight.

When you think you're at that last stage, the fighting stage, make sure you're fighting for something real, true, and bigger than your own ego. Don't be Insubordinate Me, fanning flames of resentment to no purpose. Don't be that guy with bleeding face and knuckles,

passed out next to the trash cans, all because he could not leave a party while it was still fun.

Epilogue

The Thirteenth Sage

Gurcharan Das, bestselling business author and *Times of India* commentator, was CEO of Procter & Gamble India from 1985 to 1992. He told me the following story from his time there.

When I was heading up P&G India, we hired an assistant security guard for our main office in Mumbai. This fellow was a non-graduate, came from a small village, and spoke no English. His name was Kamble.

He started in the evening shift, and within a few weeks he had transformed the atmosphere. More and more people in the office started to stay late, because in the evening, everything worked. Anything you wanted, they'd say, "Ask Kamble." He could operate the telex machine and the switchboard. He knew how to run the film projector to view commercials. He could bring you tea and coffee. If something was broken, he could fix it. He knew the finance director had left for Delhi and was staying in such-and-such hotel and here is how you can reach him.

After about nine months, Kamble went to the head of Personnel and said, "The daytime switchboard operator's leaving. Will you let me run the switchboard during the day? I'm tired of working at night." The head of Personnel said, "What? You don't know any English. You don't even know how to pronounce the name of the company properly." (He pronounced it "Procter and Gamblay.")

I heard about Kamble's request through the grapevine, and I said, "Let's give this guy a chance for a few days, and if he doesn't work out, we can always get someone else."

So we put Kamble on the switchboard. A short while later I got a call from the company's chief attorney. "By the way," he asked, "do you guys have a new phone system? Your phone is always answered on the second ring. We want that same system in our office."

“It’s not the system,” I said. “It’s the person.”

As I was passing the operator’s booth that evening, I asked Kamble, “Why do you always answer the phone on the second ring?” He replied, “I think there may be a customer on the other end, and you might lose an order.”

I realized he knew instinctively why the company existed: for its customers. And he conveyed that attitude to everyone. Over the next six months, he achieved the same transformation of the day shift as he had of the night shift. If you needed anything: “Ask Kamble.”

Over the years he became a role model in our company, especially to the newer, younger managers. Without any degrees, he became a transformative leader. He taught us that you can inspire through strategy or words, but the best way to inspire is through actions. Just by being around, Kamble inspired people.

Our twelve sages of the East—from Confucius to Lady Murasaki to Gandhi—are impressive in their wisdom and impact. But there is a thirteenth sage who is no less wise, and whose quiet impact is no less impressive. That sage is Kamble, assistant security guard of the night shift, and his fellow influencers in every corner of the world.

The thirteenth sage is Connie, who after a disastrous launch meeting counseled me to “go toward the conflict.”

The thirteenth sage is Ed, accused of being too nice, who led Forum nicely through eight tumultuous years, creating profit all the way.

The thirteenth sage is Joe, who showed me how to make an ally of an adversary in two minutes flat.

The thirteenth sage is Mimi, who when I thanked her for her mentorship replied, “The learning went both ways.”

The thirteenth sage is Cedric the waiter, who took a moment out of the breakfast shift to tell the flustered new guy he was doing a great job.

The thirteenth sage is Barbara, who listened to me rant about how they’d mistreated my freelancer, then leaned forward and encouraged me to “say more.”

The thirteenth sage is Mona, whose kindly warning about sharp-edged flip charts kept me from quitting a job in my first week.

And the thirteenth sage is you and me, whenever we, like Kamble, inspire just by being around.

"It's not the system; it's the person," said Gurcharan Das. He's right. It's not the system, or the strategy, or the nineteen steps in a training manual; it's always the person. It's the Confucian double helix of ren, humaneness, the twin strands of "I'm a human, you're a human" spiraling through our work lives and home lives with colleagues and family and friends. When we courageously grasp those strands and let them guide us through the system, we transcend the system. We become the influencers. We are the sages.

In the final lines of the *Tao Te Ching,* Laozi says:

Sages do not hoard.
Having bestowed all they have on others, they have yet more.
Having given all they have to others, they are richer still.
The way of heaven benefits and does not harm;
The way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend.[1]

May we all lift our sights to that bountiful way.

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Appendix A

Quiet Influence Tactics

Self-improvement requires action and reflection. We can begin on either side—skill set or mind-set—but eventually we'll need to develop both (see "Influence in Brief: Doing or Thinking?" here).

In this book I've tried to convey the influence mind-set while providing plenty of practical examples to inspire action. Sometimes, though, we just want a few tips to help us get started. To that end, here are tactics for each of the twelve quiet influence practices.*

1. Demonstrating care for colleagues

- Be courteous and respectful in all your interactions
- Be available to those who request your advice or help
- Become familiar with other people's jobs and responsibilities
- Show appropriate interest in people's lives outside work
- Offer support without strings attached
- Show awareness of and concern for the pressures and constraints others are facing
- If you hurt someone's feelings, apologize without making excuses

2. Encouraging others to express objections and doubts

- Let others know you welcome questions and disagreement
- When someone raises an objection, begin by encouraging the person to say more

- Show interest in objections with your words, tone, and body language
- Listen for and acknowledge the feelings behind the objection, not just the facts
- Restate what you think you have heard and ask if you are correct
- Wait to suggest solutions until you have fully understood the concern
- Rather than asking for general feedback, ask how a specific plan might be improved

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Influence in Brief: Doing or Thinking?

Do you start with the doing or the thinking? I gave this advice to a client who was struggling in meetings: when you get in trouble in a group, just look up and say, "What do you think?" So he does it ten times, and he realizes his meetings are more productive. That's starting at the behavioral end. But when I teach facilitation skills, I say, "I can give you these techniques, but if you don't *believe* there is real knowledge in the room, and that it is your job to mine the collective wisdom, you will never use them."

–Joan Bragar

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3. Exuding appreciation and good cheer

- Maintain a pleasant, good-humored demeanor
- Say "thank you" often and with sincerity
- Express appreciation when others do something well
- Avoid overdramatizing setbacks and problems
- Welcome all feedback, both praise and criticism, as a gift that can help you do better
- Avoid speaking disparagingly about people who are not present
- Be the first to laugh at yourself

4. Taking time to develop a shared outlook

- Arrange time for group members to get to know one another informally

- Discuss how individual goals align with group goals
- Jointly create a team mission statement and set of ground rules
- Discuss members' roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority
- Allow others the time they need to explain their ideas
- Ask quieter group members for their input and advice
- Tell others what you need in order to do your best work

5. Converting adversaries to allies by aligning interests

- Signal your desire to work together rather than compete
- Think in terms of interests ("We both want this project to succeed") rather than positions ("I need at least 70 percent of the budget")
- Seek to understand your adversaries' preferences, values, and assumptions
- Be open about your own preferences, values, and assumptions
- Emphasize points of reconciliation and alignment rather than differences
- Early in a dispute, find a point on which you can agree
- Share resources and information in the service of joint goals

6. Backing those who take the lead

- Be just as willing to follow another's plan as to advocate for your own
- Support others in producing their best work
- Show interest in gathering and developing others' ideas
- When you repeat or build on someone's idea, acknowledge that you are doing so
- Say "Yes, and . . ." more often than "No, but . . ."
- Ask permission before revising somebody else's output
- Trust others to take charge of their own work

7. Finding ways to be effective in the face of aggressions

- Accept the structures and rules you know you cannot change

- Pursue what is in your best interest, not what feeds your ego
- Eschew the dominant and submissive speaking styles in favor of the “social” style
- Remain pleasant even as you advocate for yourself and your ideas
- In confrontations, resist the temptation to counterpunch
- Instead of trying to convince others, give others a chance to convince themselves
- Keep discussions focused on ideas rather than personalities

8. Managing your own emotions and behavior

- Use mindfulness meditation to help you observe your feelings with detachment
- Take some time each day to reflect, plan, or learn
- Respond calmly when your views or actions are challenged
- Consider how your behavior might be contributing to a difficult situation
- Develop the habit of pausing before you react
- Admit your own errors and uncertainties
- Strive to be the steadiest rather than the smartest person in the room

9. Doing the daily work with persistence and focus

- Avoid pursuing fads and flavors of the month
- Persist with your plans through the inevitable plateaus and dips
- Explain how each person’s contributions matter to the overall effort
- Set up a measurement system to track progress toward goals
- When mistakes happen, learn from them, adjust, and keep moving forward
- Regularly restate the mission: where you’re all headed and why
- Remind others that big results come from many small steps

10. Attending to upstream factors more than downstream results

- Work to build clarity, unity, and agility in every group endeavor
- Focus on people factors more than on fast pace or perfect processes
- Invest in building skills and knowledge—your own and others'
- Analyze the root causes of failures and successes
- Measure and celebrate interim milestones, not just end results
- Keep an eye on the long term even when under pressure to produce in the short term
- Check short-term fixes against your group's vision and mission

11. Staying engaged when things get heated

- Work with the resources and people you have
- When things are going awry, name the issue you see and ask others how they see it
- When in doubt, ask more questions
- Address interpersonal conflicts directly and respectfully with the people involved
- Remember that objections are a sign of engagement
- Test your assumptions and be open to revising them
- In heated situations, use "warm" (synchronous, face-to-face) communication methods

12. Walking away when influence is no longer possible

- Realize that retreat is sometimes the best strategy
- Watch for signs that your success as an influencer is rousing resentment
- When a powerful person resents you, know that it is time to walk away
- Once you've decided to walk away, resist the temptation to grandstand
- If you can't walk away yet, put all your energy toward seeking an exit

- If you decide to fight, be certain you are fighting for a good and necessary cause
- Always leave the party while it’s still fun

Appendix B

Q&A

The idea of quiet influence, not to mention the idea of learning it at the feet of ancient Eastern sages, may give rise to some questions. Here are seven, with my responses.

"Your ideas aren't science-based, so how can they be reliable?" There are dozens of books and articles on the neuroscience of influence, leadership, and mindfulness. While much of this research is useful, I saw no need to bring more of it to the table—and couldn't anyway, not being a brain scientist. My expertise is in leadership development (three decades in the business) and in philosophy and literature (MA in philosophy, MA in Eastern classics). These are the disciplines I've tapped for insight.

Moreover, when it comes to insight, not to mention impact, Eastern wisdom concedes nothing to modern science. Confucius, the Buddha, and Gandhi appear on top-20 lists of the most influential people who've ever lived. Dōgen is the father of mindfulness meditation. Rumi is said to be the most-read poet in the United States today, and my eight other thinkers are pillars of Asian and Islamic studies programs worldwide. Alas, outside the academy and some religious communities, the sages of the East don't get much attention in the West—or even much attention in the East, ever since technical education became a priority in many parts of Asia.

My second source, Forum's influence research from the 1980s and '90s, demonstrated the link between influence practices and job performance based on analysis of thousands of feedback reports and high-performer surveys. For more than two decades I had a front-row seat on this research and related training programs, knew

the experts, and saw the results in client organizations, so I can vouch for the work.

"Eastern cultures are said to be quite hierarchical. Why would we look to them for an egalitarian approach to leadership?" In the West, hierarchies are mostly what one might call *task hierarchies:* efficient temporary structures that organize individuals for temporary purposes. Asian societies, in contrast, are characterized by *relationship hierarchies:* lasting networks reflecting the honor owed particular people (mother, boss, teacher) based on who one is to them (child, employee, student). While deference is shown to those of higher status, responsibility runs both ways, and those of lower status also expect to benefit from the ties. Such ties are believed to foster group harmony, with individuals gaining much of their identity and power from the group. In these cultures, then, work gets done via a matrix of often unequal relationships. Influence and hierarchy are warp and weft of one social fabric.*

Furthermore, Eastern thought has an antiauthoritarian streak, and my twelve sages are part of it (see the Prologue). They were the bohemians of their day, although some hid their nonconformity in traditional guise. Skeptical of top-down authority, they relied on and were advocates for quiet influence in their dealings with the sociopolitical establishment.

"Shouldn't these ideas be discussed only in historical and cultural context?" Some scholars, believing all texts are artifacts of their time and place, will disapprove of my treating ancient figures and legendary characters as if they had real lessons to offer us in the modern world; nevertheless, that is my approach. Many fine studies of Asian cultures exist, but here I've tried to bring forward ideas that resonate down the ages and across cultural divides.

To repeat what I said in *The Greats on Leadership,* I take it as undebatable that some books contain wisdom transcending time and place. I also take it as given (though not undebatable) that we are human beings first, individuals second, cultural products third, and gender or ethnic stereotypes a distant fourth. Accordingly, we should make it our business to understand human nature deeply, individuals

thoroughly, cultures adequately, and genders and ethnicities only insofar as they shed light on the first three. The Eastern classics featured herein are ideal for developing such an understanding.

Not that my twelve selected sages were perfect people. Their impact over the centuries has been largely for the good, but in their own eras they had mixed intentions and effects. They all propounded some views that today would be seen as racist, xenophobic, or misogynistic. A few of them were more than a little nutty. I do not hold them up as personal role models; rather, I hold out their writings as treasure troves that repay exploration.

"You discuss only a tiny portion of each sage's work. Shouldn't we be taking a broader view?" When I voiced the same uneasiness about the speed with which my seminar in Eastern classics covered a host of thinkers, the seminar leader, Dr. Krishnan Venkatesh, said: "You only need to crack an egg in one place." With each sage, I think I've found a good place to crack the egg. While there are obviously many other cracks that would have worked, the ones I've chosen seem to me to release the greatest wisdom on the topic of influence. I hope these selections whet your appetite to read more of the books at your leisure.

"Far Eastern, South Asian, and Islamic cultures are very different. Is it fair to lump them together?" It's true, they're usually studied separately. Most Asian studies programs encompass only the Far East, while South Asian studies concern the Indian subcontinent, whose languages and religious practices are very different from those of China and Japan. As for Islamic thinkers, one might wonder why I've included them here at all. Islamic philosophers such as Averroës and Avicenna are the reason we've even heard of Plato and Aristotle; they were the preservers and transmitters of the Greek classics, hence are considered by many scholars to be part of the Western tradition. That view may be correct, but again: what all these Eastern cultures have in common, despite their many differences, is that sense of context or non-atomism I describe in the Overview. All see the world as ice cream more than pistachios.

It's possible that the core distinction here is ancient vs. modern rather than East vs. West. In other words, non-atomism may be an Ancient thing even more than an Eastern thing. Plato and Aristotle are in many ways closer to Confucius than they are to Thomas Jefferson, and a common feature of Eastern cultures is that none underwent a modern Enlightenment that elevated individual rights over group bonds. But that's a topic for another book.

"Your Quiet Influence Map rests on stages of group development. What if I work alone?" You may not belong to a formal team, but it's a safe bet that, like almost everyone these days, you depend on others to do your job(s). "All work is project work," said management guru Tom Peters at the close of the last century. Even an independent contractor must interact with project teams, including clients, suppliers, and partners. Whether such teams stay together for hours or years, the tools of influence are useful to them. (I hasten to add: this is not a book about how to influence strangers on social media or anywhere else. Some sort of connection or mutual interest, however slight, is assumed. To paraphrase the advice of several of my interviewees—if you want an influence relationship, you need a relationship.)

"What if I'd rather just kick butt and take names?" Oh, I hear you. Many days I'd rather do the same. Butt-kicking never really worked, though, and it's even less likely to work now, given flatter organizational structures, the rise of the service economy and knowledge work, the growing power of the customer, the existence of the internet, and accelerating globalization. Or we can shorthand all these trends as "VUCA" (see the Overview). Whatever we label them, and like them or not, they are inexorable. There's no going back to lifetime employment in an office or factory with co-workers who all look and think like us and managers who make all the decisions. There's no going back to a command-and-control world.

Fortunately, recognizing the limitations of command and control doesn't mean we have to be doormats. There is a middle way. And while a few of us will still succeed based on sheer genius (see: Steve Jobs) and a few based on sheer ego drive (see: Donald Trump),

most of us will be relying for our success on that middle way: quiet influence.

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The Program in Eastern Classics, housed on the Santa Fe, New Mexico, campus of St. John's, offers master's degree candidates the opportunity to read and discuss great texts of ancient and medieval China, India, and Japan while studying classical Chinese or Sanskrit. As a graduate of the program, I can say that I've never learned more or had a better time learning. This book is dedicated to my tutors (the St. John's term for professors), with an extra shout-out to Krishnan Venkatesh, who read and made important corrections to the Prologue.

Although the takeoff and touchdown were a little rough, my 23-year flight with Forum was, overall, a joy. My deep appreciation goes to firm founders John Humphrey and Richard Whiteley, along with the researchers and designers behind the original Influence training program and the myriad Forum alumni who know what a special place we were fortunate to be a part of.

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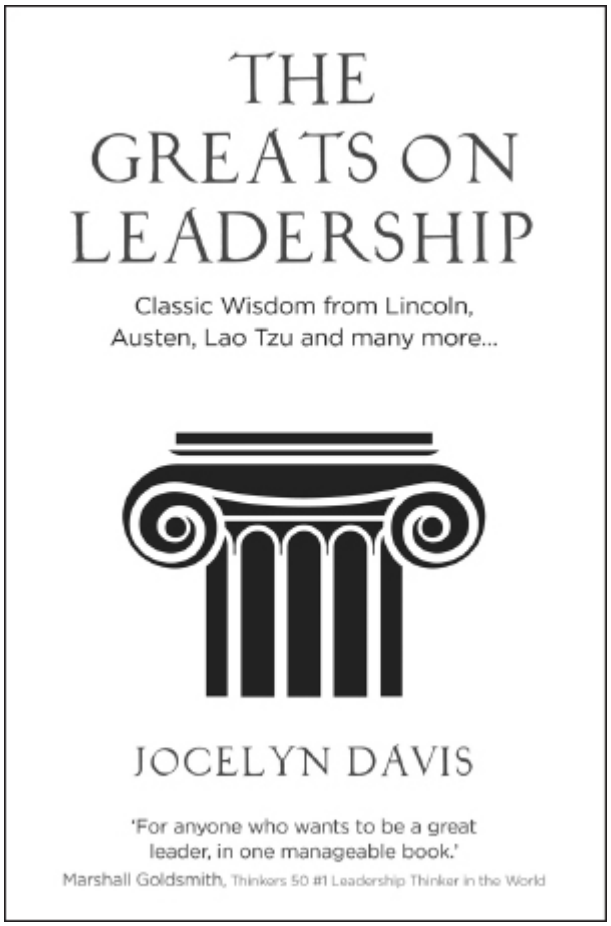
Please read on for an excerpt from
***The Greats on Leadership* by Jocelyn Davis.**



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Introduction

The Classic Art of Leadership

Leadership is neither a skill set, nor a theory, nor a collection of strategies. It is nothing so formulaic. Good leadership is a form of *practical wisdom*: an elusive and holistic quality acquired through study and experience and applied with judgment, moment by moment, to an unpredictable flow of challenges. No single workshop or how-to book can teach it. But in this book, you'll find a roadmap for developing it.

"When's Lunch?"

Cecil B. DeMille (1881–1959), the famous Hollywood film director and producer, was known for his ability to construct movies on a grand scale: pictures such as *Cleopatra* and *Samson and Delilah*, with colossal sets and crowd scenes involving thousands. And, being the revered director he was, he generally had no trouble getting a throng of actors to listen and obey as he called out instructions for a take.

Once, however, while filming the Exodus scene of *The Ten Commandments* (the 1956 version) on location in Egypt, the 75-year-old DeMille ran into a leadership challenge.[1] As the story goes, he was facing a crowd of several hundred extras dressed as Hebrew slaves while goats, camels, and geese waited with their handlers on the sidelines. It had been a hard morning's shooting, and the noonday sun beat down as DeMille, atop a platform with a megaphone, gave directions for the next take, which would be one of the most challenging in the film. Now and then a goose honked or a

camel snorted, but the humans were all silently attentive—except, DeMille noticed with irritation, for one young woman halfway back in the crowd, who kept chattering to the person next to her. After a few minutes of this, DeMille was fed up and shouted to the chatterer, in the time-honored style of a teacher dealing with whispering students: "Young lady! Would you care to share what you have to say with the rest of us?"

"Yes!" she shouted back. "I was wondering when the bald son-of-a-bitch was going to call lunch!"

A horrified hush fell over the crowd. Everyone looked nervously over at the young woman, then up at the imposing, but undeniably balding, director. DeMille lowered his megaphone and looked down at his feet as a few seconds passed.

Then he hoisted the megaphone once again and called "LUNCH!"

Good Leadership is Practical Wisdom

What DeMille demonstrated in that moment was the kind of leadership you'll never find in a tactics guide. He showed the ability to take in an entire situation (a tricky one he'd probably never faced before), decide how to respond, and act in a way that keeps things moving forward smoothly, all within seconds. He didn't consult a manual. No training seminar could have told him what to do. But what he did worked: after he called lunch, the crowd burst into laughter and applause and off they went for a break, coming back in the afternoon to shoot the scene.

This ability—to see the big picture, make a decision in context, and choose the most effective action from a nearly infinite list of possible ones, all in the space of a moment—can be described as practical wisdom. It is the quintessential quality of a good leader. In fact, good leadership can be defined as "practical wisdom applied to any situation where you're in charge (or trying to be)."

This isn't to say that leaders don't need skills, theories, and strategies; they do, but more than that they need the ability to integrate those skills, theories, and strategies and use them as a basis for action. A leader's practical wisdom is about seeing and grasping the big picture in every sense: all the people and their

needs, talents, hopes, and fears; all the possible paths forward and the obstacles that might obstruct them; and, perhaps most important, all his or her own motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. It's about being able to hover above the fray, choosing just the right action in an instant, even when things go sideways—even when someone in the crowd starts yelling about the bald son-of-a-bitch (or, if you're female, the big-haired bitch) on the platform.

Think of learning to be a medical doctor: there's no way to capture in one textbook, let alone one PowerPoint presentation, the huge range of possibilities for action associated with being a good physician. Yet that doesn't mean medical students can't master those possibilities. They can, and they do. To be sure, they do it by studying theories, practicing skills, and memorizing strategies, but what is most important is putting it together, so that, ultimately, they can take action without needing to refer to the manual. The same is true of becoming a good leader.

But how does one learn these things?

Leadership and the Liberal Arts

The boy who would grow up to be Alexander the Great used to sigh in exasperation whenever his father, Philip of Macedonia, vanquished yet another Greek city. "There won't be anything left for me to conquer when I'm king," he would say to his friends.[2]

Of course, when Philip died (in 336 BCE) there were still plenty of opportunities, and Alexander, now king of Macedonia at 20 years of age, summoned all the Greek leaders to a council in Corinth to make a plan for overthrowing the Persian Empire. He set off with a small army and a large debt. Within four years he had under his belt an unbroken string of victories that placed him on Persia's throne.

Throughout these campaigns he led by example, sharing every toil and danger with his men, who as a consequence were fanatically loyal. His allies, attracted by his reputation for generosity and trustworthiness, were staunch as well. He was both strategist and tactician, with a mind for high-level goals and gritty details. Those who heard him speak called his oratory inspiring. In just a few years he transformed a collection of fierce but unruly mercenaries into a

disciplined army, equipped with innovative weapons of his own design and trained to perfection. And by the age of 32 he had completed the conquest of the whole world as the Macedonians knew it, with an army five times larger than his original one and treasure worth several billion dollars in today's money.

What accounts for his extraordinary ability? As a boy he clearly had a big personality, and of course he was the son of a king, but many precocious children from powerful families grow up to be nothing more than full-sized brats. He had wealth, but money doesn't make an effective leader. He must have had plenty of talent, but raw talent won't make someone king of the world.

Alexander's talent, however, had an exceptional cultivator: his tutor, the philosopher Aristotle. Historian E.H. Gombrich describes Aristotle as "the teacher of mankind for 2,000 years" and says:

> . . .what he had done was to gather together all the knowledge of his time. He wrote about the natural sciences—the stars, animals, and plants; about history and people living together in a state—what we call politics; about the right way to reason—logic; and the right way to behave—ethics. He wrote about poetry and its beauty. . .All this Alexander studied too.[3]

We don't know the details of Alexander's lessons, but we do know that he grew up to be a lover of history, poetry, and literature. As king, he surrounded himself not so much with military captains as with learned men, whose conversation he enjoyed. His favorite book was Homer's *Iliad*, which he kept under his pillow next to his dagger. It's said he tamed his war horse, Bucephalus, not through ordinary training methods but by noticing what none of the professional trainers had: that the horse was afraid of its own shadow. Alexander turned the stallion's head toward the sun, putting the shadow out of sight, until it lost its fear and would tolerate a rider.

The sort of education Alexander the Great had from his tutor Aristotle was in the liberal arts: a curriculum consisting of classical languages, humanities, pure mathematics, and sciences. The ancient Greeks invented the concept of *artes liberales*, or "studies for free men"; the seven subjects were grammar, logic, and rhetoric (later named the Trivium) plus geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music (the Quadrivium).

By the early sixteenth century, these subjects, along with Latin and Greek, were seen by Europeans as the correct type of schooling for princes, government administrators, clergy, doctors, and lawyers. The system lasted for several centuries and worked well: people thus educated not only had been taught how to observe, reason, and communicate, but also had been immersed in great ideas of politics and philosophy and great stories of past leaders, their times and decisions, rises and downfalls. This kind of learning was supposed to transform how people understood the world, not just to load them up with facts and techniques. As the first-century Greek historian and philosopher Plutarch put it, “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

In the nineteenth century, however, there was an industrial revolution and technical knowledge began to be seen as the thing to have if you wanted to get ahead. Among business leaders, so-called scientific management methods gained popularity and were touted by theorists such as Frank Gilbreth, an early advocate of process improvement and familiar today as the efficiency-obsessed father in *Cheaper by the Dozen*. Gradually, as people saw the impressive results achievable with these methods, from assembly lines to anesthesia, they started to view the liberal arts as impractical; certainly not something on which doctors and lawyers, let alone business-people, should be spending their time.

How Do We Learn to Lead?

Nearly every organization today with more than a few dozen employees has some kind of leadership development program. But the trouble with all these learning programs is that most don’t work. A percentage (perhaps 15 or 20 percent, in my experience as a learning consultant) are well designed and well integrated into the organization, and pay off in the form of better leadership.[4] Many, however, are simply opportunities for people to take a break from work and bond over some fun activities. And plenty of them—the PowerPoint marathons held in windowless meeting rooms with bad coffee—aren’t even enjoyable. Leadership training is by and large a disappointment to participants and sponsors alike.[5] And while HR

can improve the competency models, hire more dynamic instructors, or design apps and portals to replace the slides and binders, such efforts won't solve the problem, which is the currently prevailing understanding of leadership and how to teach it.

Let's set aside the debate over whether leaders are born or made. Let's assume that leadership can be, to some extent, learned—or at least that nascent leadership ability can be developed. The question then becomes: *How do you learn it?* Is leadership a "skill set" in which people can be trained, as dogs are trained to sit and stay? Is it a theory one can absorb and then apply to certain problems, as one might do in the physical sciences? Or is it, perhaps, a collection of strategies to have handy at big decision points ("Let's see. . .I think Strategy No. 27 is the one to use in this situation")?

As we've seen, leadership is in fact something far more holistic. And in devoting themselves to studies of skills specific to their craft or business, to education that is more and more technical, leaders have lost an opportunity to develop the wisdom—the *practical* wisdom—that underpins real leadership ability. They have lost the perceptiveness and know-how that allowed Alexander, a good rider but by no means a professional horse-trainer, to determine why a particular stallion had resisted attempts at taming. Not only that, but given that most technical knowledge becomes outdated in a few years if not months, leaders have lost a foundation for learning and growing even within the bounds of their profession. Their training may fill a pail, but it doesn't light a fire . . .

Notes

Introduction: The Classic Art of Leadership

1. This anecdote was told by Johnny Carson on an episode of NBC's *The Tonight Show* in the mid-1980s.
2. Information on Alexander the Great is drawn from Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* and from E.H. Gombrich, *A Little History of the World*, tr. Caroline Mustill (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).
3. Gombrich, op. cit., p. 64.
4. For an overview of the factors that make leadership development effective or ineffective, see Thomas Diamante, "Leadership Development Programs That Work," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, ed. Manuel London (Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch. 12, pp. 164-179.

5. Brandon Hall (www.brandonhall.com), Bersin (www.bersin.com), and Deloitte (www.deloitte.com) are three good sources for research on leadership programs and their effectiveness. Brandon Hall's 2013 Leadership Development Benchmarking Survey (see findings summarized by Lorri Freifeld in "Survey: Leadership Development Programs Lack Effectiveness," *Training Magazine*, www.trainingmag.com, Sep 30, 2013) says that 75% of organizations believe their leadership programs are ineffective. Research by Bersin indicates that 80% of training content produced by large organizations is not widely used by its intended audience (see Josh Bersin, "The Black Hole of Measurement," *Chief Learning Officer*, www.clomedia.com, Feb 4, 2015). In Deloitte's 2014 Global Human Capital Trends survey, only 13% of responding companies say they do an excellent job of developing leaders at all levels (http://dupress.com/articles/hc-trends-2014-leaders-at-all-levels/). And in Deloitte's 2015 Global Human Capital Trends survey, less than 6% of survey respondents report they have "excellent" leadership programs in place to develop millennials (http://dupress.com/articles/developing-leaders-perennial-issue-human-capital-trends-2015/).

* All business anecdotes are my own recollections or are presented as they were told to me. Others may remember the events differently. In most cases, I've used real names; where indicated, I've used pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

*For more on influence as currency exchange, see Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion.*

* Adam Grant's *Give and Take* is a modern-day look at influence building as karma building.

* For more on why I have grouped these very diverse cultures together for purposes of learning about influence, see Appendix B.

* For a useful discussion of how East and West differ in their worldviews, see Richard E. Nisbett's *The Geography of Thought.*

* See, for example, *The Mind of a Leader*, by Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter. See also *Tricycle* magazine (online at https://tricycle.org), which contains articles, videos, and general information on Buddhist mindfulness and meditation practices.

* The Forum Corporation is not to be confused with “the Forum,” which was a revamp of Werner Erhard’s notorious EST training. Some EST participants reported verbal abuse, sleep deprivation, and exploitative sales tactics, giving this 1970s self-improvement program a cult-like aura. EST’s reputation created some complications for us at The Forum Corp.; even in the early 1990s we still had to reassure the occasional skittish client or new hire that we had nothing to do with Erhard and weren’t going to scream at our workshop participants or deny them use of toilet facilities.

* The father of *kaizen* was an American, W. Edwards Deming. Finding his management theories ignored in the United States after World War II, Deming, an engineer by training, took them to Japan, where they were received with eagerness by a business community struggling in the war's aftermath. Many in Japan credit Deming for the extraordinary success of the nation's manufacturing industry from the 1950s through the '80s.

* In 2009, Forum updated the seminar again, under my supervision as head of R&D. We retitled it *Leading with Influence.* This version did not include 360-degree feedback and did not dwell on lateral leadership, which by then was a familiar concept. In 2016, portions of the program were revamped yet again. While these updates were clearly needed, today I find myself drawn anew to the 1982 and 1992 versions. Some aspects seem quaint when seen through twenty-first-century eyes, but the rigor and innovation of the original research still shines, as does the excitement of the original program developers, who knew they were onto something big.

* The core practices are derived from several sources. Forum's original influence research identified three practices that correlated most strongly with job performance and reflected influencers' values: 1) Being supportive and helpful to others; 2) Being willing to share power for an overall goal; and 3) Behaving in a way that leads others to trust you. The 1992 update put less emphasis on those practices but confirmed the three-step process of building-using-sustaining; it also highlighted the importance of continuous improvement. In 2012, the Forum R&D team conducted research that identified the top factors contributing to employee engagement, including belonging, control, and progress. Other researchers have confirmed that a sense of participation, power, and progress is essential to motivation; see, for example, *The Progress Principle,* by Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer; *Employee Engagement 2.0,* by Kevin Kruse; *Drive,* by Daniel Pink; and the best-selling self-help book of all time, Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People.*

* There is ongoing debate among scholars as to precise dates for these authors and their works. All dates supplied herein are intended only to provide a general sense of timing and historical context.

† *Hindu,* used to denote a religion, culture, or philosophy, is a term of recent vintage. Until the nineteenth century, *Hindu* generally meant “of the Indian subcontinent” (*Hind* meaning India). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British colonialists began to distinguish “Hindus” from Muslims and Buddhists. Today, *Hindu* is the common term for thought traditions arising from the Vedas and/or Brahmanism. I will use it in that sense.

* The Buddha has never been worshipped as God, or even as a god, properly speaking. Buddhism, however, has many features of a religion, including contemplative orders and practices, doctrines of sin and liberation, and sacred writings and rituals. The Pew Research Center (pewresearch.org) states that as of 2015 there were approximately 500 million Buddhists worldwide, with 50 percent living in China.

These harsh practices may be seen as a form of spiritual bodybuilding, a way to amass psychic strength, magical prowess, and moral virtue. “Beware the power of my austerities!” is a warning intoned often in the Mahābhārata, usually by a sage, mortal or immortal, contending with another sage for superiority.

* Ancient Greek historian Thucydides might with justification claim that same honor, but he was more interested in accounts of specific events, such as the Peloponnesian War.

* In transliterating Sanskrit words, I have used the more common diacritical marks (such as ā for long a and ṛ for vocalic r) but have refrained from using less-common marks that make no difference to an English speaker's pronunciation (such as ṇ and ḍ for retroflex n and d).

* All quotations from the influence experts are drawn from my interviews with them; see Acknowledgments for the list of interviewees.

* Regarding quotations from the Eastern sages: When a book has universal section and line/verse references, I've placed those references directly in the text and included an endnote indicating the edition and translator. When edition-specific page references are needed, they appear in the endnotes.

* Information about classical Chinese characters supplied by Dr. Krishnan Venkatesh, senior faculty in the St. John's College Program in Eastern Classics.

* The people I quote in the “Influence in Brief” sections are business leaders, consultants, and educators with expertise in quiet influence. Many are Forum alumni. A complete list appears in the Acknowledgments.

* I have often wondered whether Roger von Oech had the *Zhuangzi* in mind when he wrote his creative-thinking classic, *A Whack on the Side of the Head. Whack's* philosophy is certainly in the Taoist tradition, and von Oech's use of fables, poems, and humor is reminiscent of Zhuangzi's "wacky" style.

* For more on Zhuangzi's philosophy, and specifically his views on transformation, see Brook Ziporyn's essay "Zhuangzi as Philosopher" at www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangziphil.

* For more on climate, see *Leadership and Organizational Climate*, by Robert Stringer; *Strategic Speed,* by Jocelyn Davis, Henry Frechette, and Edwin Boswell; and *Primal Leadership,* by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. See also Daniel Goleman, “Leadership that Gets Results,” in *Harvard Business Review,* Mar-Apr 2000.

* The American Institute of Masnavi Studies translation has “demonic apparition” instead of “boogeyman.”

* Polling subjects' ability to decide how they wish to present themselves to pollsters is one reason why political polls are never as accurate as we might wish.

* As noted in the Prologue, ancient Hindu culture regarded such austerities as spiritual and moral strength-building exercises. The discipline required to perform them was seen not only as a mark of existing virtue, but as a developer of greater virtue.

* The Sanskrit word I've translated as "the virtuous" is *satya* or *sattva*. Van Buitenen translates it as "the strict." It could also be rendered as "the just," "the true," "the worthy," "the wise," or "the excellent." *Dharma,* often translated as "the Law," can also mean "righteousness," "goodness," "justice," "virtue," or "the Way."

* “O Diligent Devotion!” could also be translated as “O object of my devotion!”–which would provide further textual evidence that Yama wants to grant his new ally’s wish and therefore omits his standard exception.

* For an excellent overview of contemporary research on the tightrope dilemma and other challenges and strategies for women in the workplace, see *What Works for Women at Work*, by Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey.

* The last third of the novel, which takes place after Genji's death and follows the exploits of Kaoru, son of Genji's third wife by another man, is similarly focused on the hero's female love interests.

* Like many of the episodes in *Genji,* it is a story of sexual abuse and therefore can be hard to contemplate. I offer it in the same spirit as I believe Murasaki presented all her female characters: as an example of a person using skill, finesse, and courage to gain some measure of influence in the face of overwhelmingly bad odds.

* A reader of this chapter remarked that Tamakazura's lot in life is hardly worth applauding. I agree; her situation, like that of all the women in *Genji,* is dismal. What is worth applauding, however, is how she handles her situation. The modern West tends to subscribe to the idea that *compassion* is the only appropriate response to those making the best of a bad hand. I believe that *admiration*—for the courage and brilliance to play a bad hand well, as Tamakazura does—is an equally appropriate response.

* Williams and Dempsey also looked at research comparing the workplace experiences of women of color to those of white women. The women of color in their study faced additional disadvantages when it came to three big work challenges, which the authors dub Prove-It-Again, the Maternal Wall, and the Tug of War; when it came to the Tightrope, however, women of color had a small advantage. The authors hypothesize that women of color are sometimes able to play into Western stereotypes that make an outspoken woman of color more acceptable to the dominant culture than an outspoken white woman. If this finding is accurate, it's another example of smart women using jujutsu tactics to their benefit.

* Hougaard's and Carter's previous book (with coauthor Gillian Coutts), *One Second Ahead,* is a businessperson's in-depth guide to developing mindfulness. The website of the Upaya Institute and Zen Center (www.upaya.org) offers information on Zen Buddhism in general, plus simple instructions for sitting meditation. An article providing both theory and practice for mindfulness meditation is "The Good Shepherd: Strengthening Our Natural Capacity for Awareness," by Helen Tworkov with Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, in *Tricycle* magazine (www.tricycle.org), Summer 2014. The *New York Times Well Guides* (available on www.nytimes.com) include "How to Meditate," by David Gelles, featuring audio instructions. Mindfulness apps are numerous; *Tricycle* magazine's archive of meditation app reviews may be found at https://tricycle.org/magazine/meditation-app.

* As noted in the Prologue, *Hindu* is the term commonly used today for cultural and spiritual traditions more accurately labeled *Vedic* or *Brahmanist*.

* For a deep discussion of how various cultures understand right and wrong, see *Riding the Waves of Culture,* by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner.

* The nature of the Wheel-gem is left vague, but it seems to be impressively large and able to roll great distances.

* Some commentators, noting that conquest never happens without bloodshed, have called this scene a “parody” of genuine warfare. I cannot agree. If the story is (as I believe it is) about everyday leadership, not just military leadership, then it serves to highlight the magnetic appeal of an effective leader and the eagerness with which people line up on his or her side—the draw of the humane, as Confucius might say.

* Tai chi, in contrast, takes its name from the Chinese word *taiji* (“supreme ultimate”) and was originally a martial art, although today, like qigong, it is mostly used as a form of exercise and meditation.

* For a full explanation of the research process, see *Strategic Speed,* Appendix A.

* For quotations from “Tenzo” in this chapter, I have used the Foulk and Kotler/Tanahashi translations interchangeably.

* I really didn’t spend all my time with Joe staging diva meltdowns. In fact, my normal mode with him was calm competence, which is one reason these incidents stick out in my memory.

* Anthropologist Ruth Benedict coined the terms *shame culture* and *guilt culture.* In her classic treatise *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,* she says that Japan is a shame culture (wherein bad behavior is constrained by the opprobrium of others and the threat of ostracism) while the United States is a guilt culture (wherein the law and individual conscience are seen as paramount). Eastern cultures, however, see shame as much more than just fear of rejection; it is, rather, a concept arising from a world in which relationships *are who one is.* Talk of an “individual conscience” distinct from family and friends’ opinions makes little sense in such cultures.

* See, for example, Avi Klein, “What Men Say about #MeToo in Therapy,” *New York Times,* July 1, 2018.

† I hasten to add that shame, in this context, is not to be confused with the humiliation sometimes heaped on survivors of sexual assault and abuse, nor with the unwarranted shame sometimes felt by those survivors because of society's tendency to blame the victim.

* For a discussion of these three types of “misleaders”—aka lackeys, tyrants, and bureaucrats—see my book *The Greats on Leadership,* Chapter 1.

* For more on Islamic thought as a bridge between East and West, see Appendix B.

* Sources for the quiet influence tactics include the two dozen influence experts I interviewed; Forum's Influence Tactics Guide (1982 and 1992 editions), which compiled advice from high-performing influencers in multiple industries; the works of the Eastern sages cited; and my own leadership experience, professional and personal.

* Of course, different Eastern cultures differ in their conceptions of hierarchy and its value. Elizabeth Griep, a business consultant who has worked with Japanese companies, notes one example: “The Japanese culture is more collaborative than some other Asian cultures. The Japanese tend to value equality and sameness: being one of the whole rather than standing out and being different. Our client at [the US division of a major Japanese manufacturer] said that every year they would fly people over to Japan to meet with the executives. These were the high performers, but the first thing they would do is have everybody put on the same white jumpsuits so you couldn’t tell who was a leader and who was not.”