Leadership as Understanding the Human Condition

There is in our civilization a great deal of ignorance about the human condition, and the more spiritually ignorant you are, the more you suffer. – Tolle, E., *A New Earth*, p. 284

The fundamental romantic illusion is that better management and better *systems* can essentially eliminate fallibility, that they can "fix" the human condition. –Block, P., *Abundant Community*, p. 43

We live with the reality of the human condition. We understand what we can and cannot do. Sorrow, aging, illness, celebration, fallibility, failure, misfortune, and joy are natural and inevitable. Life is not a problem to be solved or services to be obtained. –Block, P., *Abundant Community*, p. 66

When we contract out those competencies that family and community have lost to consumerism, we lose the power and pleasure of neighboring. We lose the exchange of qualities that make us most human and fulfilled. When we outsource the creation of civility and kindness to institutionalized anger management training programs in schools, relationship-building programs in organizations, and diversity training in communities, a local communal capacity for intimate exchange is lost. –Block, P., *Abundant Community*, p. 56

The abundant community is where one fully emerges as one of a kind, which some call individuation. This individuation can emerge only in the context of hospitality, in association with others, based on our gifts; and if the community does not surround us like that, we will never fully become who we are. –Block, P., *Abundant Community*, p. 69

The capacities of an abundant community are kindness, generosity, cooperation, forgiveness, and the acceptance of fallibility and mystery. All come from within and are part of our nature.–Block, P., *Abundant Community*, p. 84

1. What does it mean to understand "the human condition"?

2. What conditions do we need to create in our organizations to facilitate the individuation of persons, while weaving them into "abundance" for the community?

3. What do the "capacities" of an organization tell us about its priorities and norms? About its leadership?

The Human Condition(ing): Developing Model II vs. Model I Thinking

Children learn model I from their parents and from significant others because the behavioral worlds of the family, the school, and other social settings conform to Model I. Model I is probably learned through a model-I process-through what Kelman (1958) calls compliance and identification, which are based on learning through rewards and penalties rather than through internalization, according to which the individual tries out new behavior and makes it part of his repertoire because it is intrinsically satisfying.

The learning of model I meshes with two social mechanisms that, according to many researchers, are typical of everyday life in our society-attribution and social evaluation. (Argyris 1969.) Attribution means unilaterally assigning intentions to others, without public testing. Social evaluation means that individuals privately compare themselves with others, without open testing. Both processes reinforce and are reinforced by Model 1.

Once individuals find themselves in organizations, they are apt to encounter behavioral worlds in which model I again predominates. The assumptions of the special kind of rationality inherent in engineering, technology, and economics (Argyris, 1964), when applied to organizations, suggest that people are taught that if you want to succeed in human relationships and get a task accomplished you should behave according to the following directives. (I) "Focus on task-oriented behavior-get the job done; individuals are not rewarded for trying harder but for winning. (2) Focus on behaving rationally and de-emphasize and suppress feelings; the more emotions are expressed, the higher the probability for interpersonal difficulties and eventual rejection. (3) Focus on controlling others by designing their world; reward and penalize them and expect them to be loyal, which means focusing on values implicit in the first two directives (Argyris, 1962).

Adults programmed with these values tend to create human relationships that emphasize competitiveness, withholding help from others, conformity, covert antagonism, and mistrust while de-emphasizing cooperation, helping others, individuality, and trust (Argyris 1962). Under these conditions, people may learn to give and receive feedback that creates the impression of genuine confirmation or dis-confirmation but does not in fact provide it. Interpersonal diplomacy, being civilized, withholding feelings, and suppressing anger and hurt are but a few common examples of what individuals are taught to do to help maintain harmony in interpersonal relationships. Goffman's work (1959) provides examples of how individuals learn interpersonal diplomacy and policy in order to live a world of pseudo-authenticity.

Adults are probably taught to value attribution and social evaluation just as they are taught the logic of engineering and economics. They teach these values to their children by modeling them and by requiring compliance with them and/or encouraging identification with them. To the extent that adults use model I, they will tend to show low self-esteem, low trust, low openness, and little public testing and learning. With such characteristics, compliance and identification are probably the two major processes for learning Model 1. Reasons why people tend to go on using model I have been woven into our argument. Most people are not aware of their theories-in-use and hence are unaware of model 1. One consequence of model I is that it rewards suppression of feedback (which people need if they are to modify their behavior) and suppresses the negative consequences of suppression. After years of countless experiences of supposedly having been saved by these defenses and tactics of deception, individuals may internalize them. They teach these defenses to their children and design the world so that it not only reinforces the defenses but considers them attributes of maturity, poise, dignity, and adulthood. Under these conditions, individuals may believe that they value learning, self-acceptance, or being original but be quite unaware of how to behave according to these values.

People who behave according to model I tend to develop group norms to support the model-for example, in the form of organizational structures and policies-and become accustomed to them. Model I conditions cluster and reinforce one another, whether the individual wishes them to or not, and tension, inter-group rivalry, self-sealing attributions, or political lying become viewed as being as natural as apple pie. Once these phenomena become part of the social landscape, individuals see less need for changing them and may even design ways to circumvent or adapt to these processes. Even those who recognize self-sealing behavior on the part of colleagues or friends are quick to discount these behaviors; they say, "If you knew him as I do, you would know that under that ruthless exterior there is a heart of gold." ---Pages 82-84

LEarning Our Lunch

Please read through the Argryis reading above. In your lunch group please engage in dialogue around the question below. Please be ready to share your group's thinking in our large group gathering.

1. Why does a compliance and identification-based moral norm create difficulty for developing an organization grounded in competent, principle based, personally internalized moral thinking and decision-making?

2. Argryis suggests adults in Model 1 communities/family systems become programmed to value the task over persons and relationships, winning or losing tend over creating "human" relationships, and emphasizing competitiveness, withholding help from others, conformity, covert antagonism, and mistrust while de-emphasizing cooperation, helping others, individuality, and trust. What does this say about what we need to do to re-approach problem solving in our organizations?

3. Why is the placatory mask of "pseudo-authenticity" so destructive in the long run to developing trust, risk taking, and personal investment in the development of the organization?

4. To the extent that adults use model I, and show low self-esteem, low trust, low openness, and little public testing and learning, an organization suffers in its capacity for kindness, generosity, cooperation, forgiveness, and acceptance of fallibility needed to build abundance of the talents and gifts of it membership? Keeping in mind our work and work goals, as leaders, what specifically do we need to do to help persons in our organizations re-capture and develop "capacities" for abundance through human relationships?

CHART 1

Model 1   Model 2

BE RIGHT   ## LEARN

-competitive   -the willingness to question & inquire
-maximize winning, minimize losing   (experimentation and exploration)
-little public testing of ideas;inventing   -open confrontation in difficult issues
  untested motives for others
-rationalizing to make sense of our ideas

LOOK GOOD   ## FIND THE TRUTH

-overly concerned about self and
 unconcerned about others
-blind to impact on others and the
  mismatch between of words and
  behavior(can't walk talk)
-judging favorably of self in relation   -ability to be descriptive, non
  to others(doing it secretly & harshly)   judgmental acceptance
-
KEY TO PEACE/   ## PRODUCE RESULTS
AVOID CONFLICT

-withhold feelings   -the capacity to remain open to experience
-reduce incongruity by defensive   (acceptance)
  actions such as: blaming, stereotyping,
  and intellectualizing

SAVE FACE   ## STRENGTHEN
                                                  ## RELATIONSHIPS
-fearful of being vulnerable   -interpersonal relationships call for
-withholding of information &   initiative, collaboration, direct observation
  keeping others out of loop

Need for Certainty   Comfort in
(Ambiguity)——>

Based on work of Chris Argyris, John Ingalls, and Crucial Conversations