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4

Leadership

Legitimation and Authority

I began this book with a description of the first principles that should govern a University. Those principles, I said, were the search for the true, the good and the beautiful. Many readers will have realized that I am certainly not the first to suggest such a thing. A rather more famous teacher than I could ever hope to be once used almost exactly the same words. In a critique of the politics of Stanley Baldwin, who in his 1929 general election campaign adopted the motto ‘Safety first’, this teacher said, one Friday in March 1931, while walking with her pupils through the streets of Edinburgh, that ‘Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first. Follow me.’ The charismatic teacher here is Miss Jean Brodie, the character made famous in Muriel Spark’s novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, initially published in the *New Yorker* in 1961. Miss Brodie is, of course, a most dangerous precursor for any responsible educator to have.¹

Yet the problem does not lie in her concerns for the search for truth, goodness and beauty; rather, it lies in the ideas of ‘following’ (that we see in that slightly menacing and disturbing instruction, ‘Follow me’) and more pertinently in the ideas of leading that govern her practice as a teacher. The motto ‘Follow me’ figures quite highly among the worst things a teacher might ever say to their pupils. Miss Brodie’s girl pupils, the ‘Brodie set’, are to be charmed by the unconventional idiosyncrasies of the enigmatic leader that Miss Brodie sees herself to be; and she, in turn, is but a follower of some other, more dangerous political tendencies than those advocated by Stanley Baldwin, for she is an admiring follower of Mussolini (‘one of the greatest men in the world’, she calls him)² and of the *fascisti* who, at this time, are threatening the whole of Europe with a certain kind of authority-worship masquerading as strong ‘leadership’.

On the walk that March day, and in one of the many highly ironic passages for which Muriel Spark’s novel is rightly celebrated, Miss Brodie outlines her fundamentals of education. She takes the girls of her set out to walk to Edinburgh’s Old Town, ‘where history had been lived’, she says.³ She marches them there, and, en route, gives only one

definite, but deliciously charged, direction: 'We turn to the right', she says.⁴ Having made this turn, she is able then to expound her notion of education, which she sets against the practice of the more traditional head-teacher, Miss Mackay. It is worth quoting at length:

Meanwhile, I follow my principles of education and give of my best in my prime. The word 'education' comes from the root *e* from *ex*, out, and *duco*, I lead. It means a leading out. To me education is a leading out of what is already there in the pupil's soul. To Miss Mackay it is a putting in of something that is not there, and that is not what I call education, I call it intrusion, from the Latin root prefix *in* meaning in and the stem *trudo*, I thrust.⁵

The difficulty with this – Spark's irony – is that Miss Brodie is wrong in the matter of linguistic fact. The linguistic root that she describes here is the root *educere* (to educe) and not *educare* (to educate). She is not talking about education, but rather about *educing*. Although close in some superficial respects, educing and educating nonetheless remain substantially different; and the key difference has to do with leadership and following. To educe is to elicit or to infer, to bring a conclusion out of raw data; and in that sense, it is to 'draw out' or to lead out a reality from a mere raw or implicit potential. This needs 'leadership', in the sense given to that word by Miss Brodie, in that it needs someone to spot the reality within the potential and to draw it out. Education, however, is not the mere realizing of potential; rather, it is the ongoing making of more and more potential, the never-ending *desire*, identified now with the activity of research, to seek out the good, the true and the beautiful.

The key here lies in two notions of authority. To 'educate' is to assert one's own authority as the final word, with one's personal preference as final arbiter. Miss Brodie subscribes to such a view. She asks her set, 'Who is the greatest Italian painter?' and they reply that it is Leonardo da Vinci. 'That is incorrect,' replies Miss Brodie. 'The answer is Giotto, he is my favourite.'⁶ The 'authority' for this is nothing more or less than Miss Brodie's assertion of her authority: as 'the greatest' equates with 'my favourite', there can be no discussion, no proof or legitimation of the authority behind the statement – other, that is, than Miss Brodie's own charisma and force, or the weight given to her statements by her institutional authority. In short, it amounts to a form of leadership by whimsy.

Against this would be a version of authority whose purpose is to give authorization to the views and thinking of others, or to bring them to the point where their voice is legitimate; and it is only this latter that can be called education. Education, in this sense, is almost the very

opposite of educating. It is the ongoing quest after justice and freedom – and especially for the justice and freedom for future generations; and these things – justice, freedom, the future – are themselves restless and changing. Given the fact that we are oriented thus towards the future, which is unknown, it is axiomatic that the teacher cannot herself know in advance what might be the actual *content* of justice or freedom: education becomes a communal activity, involving teacher and learner, both now involved in an ‘inventing’. Here, I mean to signal in this word two senses: one sense of ‘finding out new things’ or discovery, and a second sense of ‘making’ or of inaugurating things that we have not heretofore seen.

In this sense, there is no simple ‘reality’ of either justice or freedom to be brought out from a potential source; rather, we constantly make and remake these things. There is a *poiesis* going on here: that ancient term not only gives us our own ‘poetry’, but it also means something like the kinds of ‘making’ that we associate with all forms of crafts, makings that are material and historically substantive – just as poetry is, when poetry is properly understood as a custodianship of a shared language and its possibilities for making meanings. This most certainly does *not* require the kind of leadership so admired by Miss Brodie, a leadership that simply brings *authoritarianism* instead of authority. One key and fundamental difference between authoritarianism and authority might neatly be summed up in the words of Hannah Arendt, when she writes, against authoritarianism, that while authority certainly implies forms of obedience, it ‘implies an obedience in which men retain their freedom’.⁷ Such authority is, essentially, an authority that acknowledges that it requires legitimation, especially from those who will choose to obey; and, further, authority such as this obeys the demand or desire for the production of freedom and its extension. By contrast, authoritarianism implies the end of any freedom by imposing the end of any discussion or debate or dialogue or change.

The counterpart of leadership is now called, especially in the management jargon, ‘followership’. Once more, we have an excellent literary example that might guide us: a poem by Seamus Heaney. In a very early poem, ‘Follower’, he writes of his relation with a great personal precursor figure, his father. He describes how straight a line his father was able to plough on the farmlands, and how skilled he was in leading his horse and his plough across the field and its furrows. The young Heaney writes that ‘I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake’, and describes himself as always stumbling along uncertainly behind, being always ‘a nuisance, tripping, falling / Yapping always’, even though his father sometimes ‘rode me on his back / Dipping and rising to his plod’.

In these lines, we see the young boy getting in the way, slowing the father down; but we also see the father helping, untroubled by the boy – indeed, bringing the boy into the same rhythms of his own body, quite literally ‘involving’ him and enfolding him in the work. The final lines of the poem show what happens in this situation, when generation speaks to generation, when they maintain a tradition and transfer a knowledge or an expertise:

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.
Heaney, ‘Follower’

In this moment, the poem transforms itself and its reader. It becomes a poem about memory, about bearing the weight of the past; but also about how a follower, heaving learned something, becomes a leader and, in so doing, also cares for the past and recognizes his debts. In leading, this new leader bears the weight of the past on his back; aware that he is a leader *because* of the past, and able to look forward and make his own straight lines – in Heaney’s case, the lines of verse, turning back and forth like the furrows of a ploughed field. He carries on the tradition of working the lines; but, as we also know from Heaney’s most famous early poem, ‘Digging’, he exchanges the lines of the furrowed field for the lines of verse, of writing itself, his ‘squat pen’ in that poem taking the place of his father’s spade in his hands. It is thus – in this fundamental act of *transformation* – that this follower gains his authority, becomes an author.

This is a little reminiscent of a political writing as well. I am thinking of Marx’s great opening to the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in which he argues that the great events of history happen twice, as it were: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. More importantly, right at the start of that pamphlet, Marx points out what we might now take as an almost entirely uncontroversial observation. He writes that people make their own history, ‘but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under given conditions directly encountered and inherited from the past’. In this, he is pointing out that, in the search for autonomy, for the authority through which people can make and subscribe to their own laws, there are necessary limitations and pre-conditions given to us by our place in history, our location in time and space. As he glosses this, in a tone that is actually rather like a foreshadowing of Heaney (and of many others), ‘The tradition of all the generations of the dead weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living’.⁸ This might also be, quite simply,

a description of the process of education itself: bearing the weight of the past, but for the purposes of making and imagining a new and different future. Indeed, our task, as Marx hinted in these same pages, is to learn to 'draw our poetry ... from the future'.

These examples – from both literary and political writing – help us to understand that leadership and followership are charged with meanings well beyond the simple idea of being at the head or tail of a race, or of an army, or of a group or institutional body. In becoming a leader, one faces some fundamental issues. There are questions of responsibility to be addressed, of adequate answering for one's own past or for a more general tradition, of having appropriate experience, of being able to transform that experience in various ways (from ploughing to writing, for instance) such that something new is made possible.

To lead does not mean to begin with a Year Zero and to ignore all that has come before, but rather to have a peculiarly privileged relation to all that has come before. To lead requires a profound historical sense: a sense of one's responsibility to history. To lead is to be in a privileged position that brings with it a burden, but a burden called 'answerability'; and what is being answered is, among many other things, the very history that has made us. This answerability is infinitely more than being 'accountable' for one's present decisions; and our contemporary notions of such 'accountabilities' are, sadly, a poor and entirely inadequate substitute for a real and substantive idea of what leadership entails. Perhaps above all, to lead means to assert a particular kind of break, to effect a break that will produce the *transformations* that we saw exemplified in Heaney. In this, it is clear and should now be accepted as utterly axiomatic that the leader, insofar as they lead, cannot be simply the agent of another, more powerful force – even a force to which they are to be held to account.

We can look at what this means for various qualities of leadership within the University. In some cases, the leader in question will be the vice-chancellor, provost or president; but the leader, in these days that have witnessed the rise of the managerial class, may also be one such as the registrar. If we limit ourselves to a consideration of these roles, though, we will be taking too narrow and too parochial a view of our question. As should be clear from my foregoing examples, leaders crop up in many guises and in many situations. Thus, we need to look at the micro-level and to consider the question of leadership in relation to teachers, students, colleagues; and also we should look at the macro-level and ask about the wider authorities that shape the University institution, including funding councils or education ministers and their associated political bodies. The fundamental question concerning leadership relates to the *authority of the University* as an independent

and autonomous institution within the much wider ambit of a society or a civilization, and thus to the legitimization of our search for the true, the good and the beautiful. It is only in the establishment of this independence and autonomy that any gesture towards democratization and justice becomes possible.

Let us begin elsewhere, and in another time.

1

On 18 October 1704, the philosopher Giambattista Vico, author of *The New Science*, gave one of his annual orations to the incoming student body of the University of Naples, where he held the position of Rector. The annual oration was a kind of keynote address setting the academic credentials and priorities of the University; and in each of the addresses that he gave Vico was at pains to iterate the foundational principles of his institution as well as to give leadership and to establish a kind of moral compass to guide the novices as they began their great courses and programmes of studies. He told the incoming novice students in Naples that year that the greatest benefit of learning is 'to be educated for the common good of the citizenry'. Their learning, and the teaching that goes with it, was not for private profit, but for the good of community.

Before we pass this by too quickly, let us pause to note what a refreshing thought that is. It is based on the idea that, even if not everyone follows a University education, still and nonetheless everyone benefits from the fact of it. A useful analogy is with the system of road-building or railway-building within a nation: whether individuals travel on these things or not, we all benefit from them; they unify communities in material as well as potential ways; they facilitate commerce and the transport of food and goods, improving thereby the very *fact* of civil life and culture, and even civilization itself. We might also compare this to the idea of a national health service: whether we as specific individuals are ill or not, the entire nation benefits from the fact of such a thing. Such an ethic appears to be entirely missing in the rather more mercenary ideologies to which we are encouraged to subscribe in our own time, in the mistaken Hobbesian belief that there is no alternative to a life that is individualistic, 'competitive', atomized and, as a consequence, 'nasty, brutish and short'. What might Vico's lesson here mean for the profession of the teacher, indeed for the very conditions of education as a whole; and what might it imply for the question of

leadership, not just in the Naples of the turn of the eighteenth century, but much more generally?

We should begin the investigation at the most substantial part of a ground-level in terms of the material daily work of the University: the level of the teacher and their authority. In earlier versions of the academy, the beginning teacher, seeking the authority to profess the discipline, was an apprentice. An apprentice learns a craft, but is also 'bound to serve, and entitled to receive instruction' from those already established in the craft. The two-way obligation here is vital: the apprentice is bound, but, once experienced enough, will be set free; the master is likewise bound, bound to give freely of their experience. In being thus bound together, like Heaney and his father, the generations together find what I will call the *intimacy of community*, and also recognize the centrality of the question of their responsibility for the community and its future. This – the necessity of establishing an intimacy of community – is already a fundamental precondition of citizenship. The apprentice is learning a craft, but also bearing it and its responsibilities, and thus becoming the guardian of its values; the master is attentive to their responsibilities towards the future in a community that extends beyond the academy, beyond the immediate environment in which they lead the apprentice, helping and shouldering where necessary.

In this old academy, then, *all* learning is apprenticeship – be it in engineering, medicine, law, literature, languages, or any other field, be it academic, technical, vocational or crafted. Further, there is no crude distinction between teachers and learners: we all both learn and teach at once. That overlap is vital to the organic energy of the whole institution, the whole arrangement of the community that is dignified or edified by the University. The community may be that of scholars in a discipline, but equally is that large and material community that we call civic culture, nation-state or even, at one limit, international dialogue. This is apprenticeship not just in English literature, say, but also and more fundamentally it is apprenticeship in the freedom of thought, and the freedom in citizenship.

T.S. Eliot thought something similar when he wrote of how literary and cultural tradition operates in an essay of 1919. In his celebrated essay, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', he explained that 'the new' can only be brought into being or made to happen by one who embodies a tradition. An absolute novelty, such as we might now associate with a 'Year Zero' mentality, not only lacks any kind of legitimacy, but is strictly impossible. Further, it is of necessity grounded in a falsification of how things actually are. To become 'modern', and to assert an authority and autonomy required to shape a future, we need to learn – and to

carry the weight of – the past, even if we are about to break with the immediate past in an act of imaginative and material creativity that we identify as a transforming of reality. In the newspeak terminology that governs us, ‘modernization’ can only happen if it is based on an organic continuity with the institution that is being modernized. However, those who deploy this word in its newspeak accent appear to believe that modernization requires a junking of the past: everything begins as if we were at a Year Zero. ‘Modernization’ is simply the cant term that we use to try to avoid the negative totalitarian connotations associated with that ‘Year Zero’ mentality.

Managerial ‘modernization’ assumes not only that the past is another country, but also that, as another country is it underdeveloped; and, consequently, there is nothing to learn from visiting it. In short, ‘modernization’, often like another cant term, ‘reform’, is designed rhetorically to assert a force of authority – the authority of a Miss Brodie and her preferences, here, now – over the possibility of learning from the past, from education or even from rational argument. In the more measured understanding of becoming modern – that is, in my sense here of the attaining of an autonomy – the apprentice teacher worked rather more like the Eliotic poet; and so they felt themselves bound to institutions, to disciplines and to the governance of the standards within those institutions: a tradition.

The idea of tradition can, of course, be both conservative and radical. In fact, it is precisely the ambivalence of the term that gives it its value: such ambivalence means that we need to discuss it, argue about it and even struggle over it in a culture of conversation or discussion. Sadly, however, this idea of tradition is now replaced with the qualities – or, more accurately, the ‘languages’ – of excellence, which strain belief. This is a language that brooks no discussion or debate: ‘excellence’, unlike ‘tradition’, is such a vague term that there is no possibility of any real discussion about it. All that we can do is to claim it: who would ever wish to claim that their institution was anything less?

Ever since the establishment of a culture of mistrust of the University – a culture generated under the pusillanimous mean-spiritedness of Thatcherism in the 1980s in order to justify the squeezing of public funding out of the academy and the exertion of governmental control over it – we have decided that University teachers need to be taught how to teach; and, more tellingly, we have asserted that this form of teaching-how-to-teach will most certainly *not* involve the processes of apprenticeship and the forging of the intimacy of community. Instead, in fact, the purpose will now be to ensure that there is *no* allegiance between generations and to require that the coming

generation will form an allegiance with the much more abstract idea of 'modernization' itself, now raised to the level of being something like 'professional modernization'. The Year Zero has arrived, so to speak. The incoming teacher must break with their forebears and determinedly ignore any authority that their experience might offer, and must instead endlessly 'reform'; and they will do so according to the whims of those in control of the word 'modernization' – that is, the government and its agents, now acting like an authoritarian Miss Brodie, armed not with the same charms and persuasive charisma, but with money.

It is in this way that we bear witness to the rise of an entire industry – a very costly industry, publicly funded – of various forms of teaching accreditation in the University. The titles of the units that provide this activity all vary, but they usually involve words like 'teaching enhancement', 'quality', 'development' and sometimes 'PVC' or Pro-Vice-Chancellor (reflecting the pious seriousness with which this is taken by senior management). In their work, these units all proceed entirely as if University teachers had never previously thought, themselves, about teaching. They work on the assumption that, having been students ourselves, we are nonetheless entirely virgin with respect to the very idea of teaching. Only an entirely atomized mentality ('teachers' over here; 'learners' over there) could reasonably think such a thing.

The general governing assumption in these programmes is that University teachers up until now have never really reflected on how they conduct their work in the classroom and beyond. The incoming teacher is thus placed in a position where they, too, must mistrust the existing faculty; and the procedure is one that systematically and structurally quite literally 'degrades' the teacher who has gone before. It is a form of instruction that proceeds by insulting the past, rather than learning from it. The effect of such programmes for teaching teachers becomes, in these 'units of enhancement', the same structurally and universally: they damage the community of free thought that is properly called learning and teaching. At macro-level, they become 'Learning and Teaching Subject Networks' or the Higher Education Academy (HEA): self-perpetuating bureaucracies that have lost any material contact with 'traditional' realities on the teaching and learning ground, despite their pieties about the sanctity and dignity of teaching.

Crucially, these 'innovations' work on the assumption that actual and material experience – the forms and methods of teaching in the past – counts for nought. The actual work that colleagues might have already done in the classroom is routinely ignored, to be replaced by the purely formal and abstract ideas of the *soi-disant* excellent classroom performance. Instead, then, of having the intimacy of community, the

incoming teacher finds herself or himself in a situation where what is expected is a kind of pledge of allegiance to the abstract qualities of an alleged 'best practice' in 'teaching-excellence'. There is, in this, a barely veiled contempt for practical experience, precisely and paradoxically at exactly the same moment as such practice is being vaunted as the most important aspect of our work as teachers. The bureaucracy of 'excellence in teaching' bases itself upon the imbibing of abstract guidelines, abstract ideas and images – that may have no basis in reality – of what goes on in an ideal lesson. Thus it was that, for a long time, every lecture – no matter its content – had to be codified as a series of bullet points on a PowerPoint presentation; that every lecture needed the same number of slides; that every lecture needed a bit of 'down-time' when students should reflect on what the lecturer just said; and so on.

These practices – often staggering in their lack of imagination – reduce the activity of teaching to a mere catalogue of mechanical operations; and the mechanic-in-chief is not the teacher, but rather an abstract and invisible agency that feels no need to argue for its essentially whimsical or technologically fashionable methods. In this, the teacher becomes a pure (by which I mean mere) 'human resource', a simple and reduced element in the machinery, and one that has itself to be mechanized, routinized and, above all, kept in check. We will find out more about how the language of human resources afflicts and damages the idea of proper leadership below. Suffice to say, for the moment, that the reduction of a colleague to the status of mere resource is not only damaging, but is also key to the operations of the quality myth that goes by the name of 'excellence in teaching'. Crucially, here, such a position calls into doubt any authority that the teacher may have, based on their experience of the subject domain and its specific disciplinary content.

These units for the alleged enhancement of teaching and learning have the effect of driving a wedge between generations, of raising a suspicious eyebrow over our apprentices, of de-legitimizing the experience of earlier generations; and, above all, of *mechanizing* what should be the *organic* community of the University and academy. In focusing on the allegedly *generic* skills that are deemed to be the cornerstones of any and all teaching activity, they actually empty the disciplines of their traditions, and de-legitimize their teachers, precisely at the moment when they are giving accreditation to those teachers. They demand allegiance to those generic skills and the accompanying quality agenda, rather than an allegiance to a community of free thinking.

As a consequence – and this is the single most important point here – the community is being denied the possibility of establishing its own new authority for shaping the future; and that is being replaced with

an authoritarianism that requires compliance with its various and multiple ‘guidelines’ and bureaucratically imposed ‘codes of practice’. Having established Year Zero by trashing the past and its experience, modernization now, paradoxically, freezes history precisely at Year Zero: there can be no future, no possible legitimate change. Yet there will be endless ‘reform’: that is, there will be endless modifications made to the abstractions to which we must be made to conform. To put this crudely, our ‘leaders’ may change their minds about what we do and should do: leadership by whimsy is the result.

2

None of this is governed by internal leadership within institutions. Rather, that leadership has caved in under the demand for forms of compliance with an imposed ‘quality agenda’. The result is a loss of independence, a loss of autonomy and, consequently and above all, a loss of cultural authority and standing for the University as an institution that is an essential part of a civilized community. The community here – that civic tradition to which Vico alerted us – is under threat. Superb teaching happens in our Universities, certainly; but it happens in spite of, not because of the quality-and-excellence agenda. That agenda, policed as it is by those who have made a career out of the de-legitimization of experience and authority, replacing it with the mediocrity of allegedly ‘excellent’ bureaucratic process, drives quality down to the lowest acceptable common denominator, and undermines what teachers and students are doing on the ground.

There is a consequent divorce between actual teaching and its alleged fundamental methods; and such a divorce has damaging effects for the question of leadership and authority. The model, based on the language of excellence, is replicated at other and more strategically telling points in the structural organization of the University. Just as teachers must be taught to teach (though not by qualified teachers), so also our ‘leaders’ also have their own form of leadership-accreditation (not based on anything called experience of an engagement with their community). In the UK, there now exists a rather large armature that addresses the idea of leadership in higher education; and one very significant body involved in this is the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE).

The Foundation offers a number of ‘tailored’ courses, all designed to address the very precise and specific circumstances of each individual

who will follow their programmes. This tailoring, however, itself begins to look 'off-the-peg' as soon as one consults and considers the Foundation's published materials. The organization runs a number of programmes; many of them designed in propaedeutic fashion to let a practitioner or participant move incrementally from one step on the ladder of leadership to the next. Thus, we have their flagship programme, the 'Top Management Programme' (TMP), which has been followed by very significant numbers of existing vice-chancellors in the UK. However, before undertaking this course, it will really make sense if one follows the 'Senior Strategic Leadership' programme, which is partly designed for those who are already in such senior roles, with an eye to moving on to vice-chancellorship. Yet, it might make even more sense to start at 'Preparing for Senior Strategic Leadership'; and, lying 'under' this we will find, for example, the 'Head of Department' programme. Thus, there are multiple levels of leadership established, each with its corresponding programme and each with its corresponding leader figure.

Two interesting things can be noted immediately. The first is that the materials for all these appear to have been prepared according to a standardized template: standardized and recurring features appearing for all levels of programmes that will be enjoyed by participants include things like a '360-degree feedback loop'; 'practical tools, exercises and leadership techniques'; 'cross-institutional understanding'; 'a safe and supportive environment'; and 'action-learning sessions'. It may well be the case that these all apply at each and every level; but do they not also apply elsewhere, even in the classroom, say? In other words, these are *not* in fact specific to leaders at high strategic level; *nor* are they addressing the specifics of each level. The result is that these kinds of activity are seen to be generic but, perhaps more importantly for present purposes, they are seen as the preserve of higher-level leaders; and they also serve to homogenize all leadership as if it were all much the same thing. In this, those things that are generic and abstract trump all that is the historically specific and the materially particular.

Secondly, in the programmes designed by the LFHE, all the senior programmes make use of workshops. These are interesting because the workshops are all grounded in Shakespeare plays. If you are 'preparing' for senior strategic leadership, you work on *Macbeth*; if you have prepared and are now doing senior strategic leadership, you work on *As You Like It*; and, if you've reached the Top or the TMP, you work on *Henry V*. In one way, obviously, the practising academic is delighted at this: the vice-chancellor is learning from the work of the English and Drama departments. Only, however, they are not. The plays become simply the merest allegories of leadership situations; and we are to

learn an extremely limited number of things from them: the virtues of inspiration, rhetorical communication or persuasion, the ability to 'sell' an idea and secure buy-in, questions of ethical leadership and so on.

The LFHE programmes all make extensive use specifically of workshops provided by Olivier Mythodrama, an organization dedicated to the use of drama – and especially Shakespeare – to help develop good leadership in business and the public sector. In one of the sample videos that are publicly available for the organization, Richard Olivier, a Director and practitioner in the company, gives a lecture on 'The Pyramid of Power' in which he analyses Shakespeare's ancient Rome as an allegory of the shape of power. He indicates that Shakespeare mythologizes history, and quotes Joseph Campbell to the effect that 'myth is something that never was, but always is'. The lecture, as also with the lecture in 'inspirational leadership' deploying *Henry V*, proposes that there is such a thing as an 'eternal myth of leadership'. This use of mythodrama is highly charged and highly significant.

We might set the question of mythodrama alongside other modes of learning, modes that might equally well involve an aspect of play or drama. As I have indicated in an earlier chapter, play is indeed central to learning; and, as is clear throughout this book, I believe that literature and the other arts can also offer helpful structures that allow us to understand management. However, play, with its central guiding principles of *fiction-making*, need not drive us towards a subscription to myth or archetype. Here, I take a lead from the scholarship of Frank Kermode. 'We have to distinguish', he writes, in *The Sense of an Ending*, 'between myths and fictions.' It is important to hang on to the *provisional* nature of the fictions by which we will learn. 'Fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive. In this sense anti-Semitism is a degenerate fiction, a myth; and *Lear* is a fiction.'⁹

Leaving aside for a moment the troubling correspondence between myth-learning and a certain anti-Semitism, we can see now the fundamental flaw in drawing up a 'myth' (especially an 'eternal myth') of leadership. Kermode again writes that 'Myth operates within the diagrams of ritual, which presupposes total and adequate explanations of things as they are and were; it is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures. Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change.'¹⁰ Right through most of the management ideologies of leadership, there is an ongoing strain of 'change-management'; but the problem is that managerialist leadership such as that promoted through the LFHE erects the *myth of the leader* as opposed to the fiction of the leader; and myth presupposes keeping things as they are. There simply is

no stable or 'eternal' essence of leadership that can be bottled and sold via the LFHE or any other programme.

From this, we get the third and decisive point of interest. In all of this, the leader becomes a rather isolated, if potentially heroic, figure. This is so even when teamwork is being vaunted: the team consists of those who are the followers; the leader stands apart, 'excelling' as it were – 'exceeding' the structures that they lead – standing then above and beyond the fray. It is not that 'there is no "I" in team; it is rather that "I" am not part of the team that I lead'. This leader is heroic in that isolation, always presented as having to 'deal with' things or people that 'block' or 'stand in the way of' the vision or idea. The clear guiding principle underlying this is that the followers are nothing more than 'human resources' to be manipulated, even to be fooled by rhetorical legerdemain ('motivating' them), into the appropriate behaviour in order to fulfil the 'journey' presented by the leader-figure. The journey, however, is that of the leader alone; the 'troops' are but the resources required to get to the destination, that eternal myth called 'excellence'.

Leaders decide things – in an abstracted form; and followers have to conform. This is not only a recipe for *hubris*; it is also a recipe for an unhelpful establishment of a fundamental division between the leader and their followers. Perhaps needless to say, it also offers a rather sad and desolate image of both the leader and their follower figures. It gives us a model of 'leadership' that we can recognize as all too common in our times: the leader becomes one who *confronts* their followers or community, proposes actions or beliefs that the community rejects and then proceeds in wilful ignorance of that rejection. This is the leader who demonstrates their strength of leadership precisely by doing things that are counter-intuitive, that insult the community or that fly directly in the face of what the community clearly wants. The result is precisely that form of *hubris* in which the leader makes themselves the centre of the story, distracting attention from the material history that the community is required to confront.

Within the University that is in any way affected – or infected – with these notions of the charismatic, decisive and 'excelling' leader, there is massive damage being done to the intimacy of community internally. This version of things actually pits the leader (in this case, the vice-chancellor) against the followers (the academic community); and an extremely unhelpful divide is established. That division generates a sense of leaders being 'out of touch' with things on the ground (and this is all the more pronounced precisely at those moments when the leader takes a keen interest and believes herself or himself to be firmly 'in touch'). More fundamentally, it damages any claim that the University might make for

the ideas of democracy or widening participation in the judgements and decisions that, once made, will take the institution in particular directions.

Of course, it need not be thus. It might be interesting if the vice-chancellor and other senior strategic leaders did indeed try to learn from the English and Drama departments, for example, and the kind of *playing* with fictions that takes place in those departments and disciplines. In such a case, there would be a much more productive interchange between leader and follower, and one in which the leading might come from the follower in some way, however slight or substantial might be that way. In every case, there would be a different relation – one of a shared intimacy of community – between the leaders and the followers. Indeed, the very fact of the discussion and debate would be something that would dissolve the potentially dangerous isolation of the leader, and would allow for a process called ‘learning’ to take place on all sides, a learning that would also have the benefit of being addressed to historical and material specifics, rather than to the abstractions of ‘the vision thing’. Such learning, based in discussion that involves the community and its traditions, is intrinsically more democratic than the hubristic isolation produced by subscription to the myth of the strong heroic and isolated leader.

The prevailing ideology of leadership, however, precludes such a positive set of possibilities. The individual who occupies the position of leader, presiding over institutions that are forced of necessity to proclaim structural excellence, must always logically be seen to excel and thus to embody the values of the institution; and in this, they are seen as one who, in a sense, stands even above their institution. That, after all, is what it means to excel – to exceed circumambient norms – in this way. In a proper University, by contrast with this vacuity of ‘excelling’, I have stressed that there is an element of what we might rather more prosaically term ‘going beyond what we have previously thought’: the point there is to seek things undreamt of as yet in our philosophies, and this entails a widening of the scope and ambit of our thought and activity.

This, however, is very different from the excellence discourse. Because it is essentially vacuous and meaningless, this latter gives us a state of affairs in which the individual leader demonstrates their leadership precisely by establishing a distance or a gap between themselves and the very institution that they lead. Excelling, in this, means placing oneself at a remove and working in a sphere of action that is fundamentally different from the sphere in which one’s followers are engaged. We usually call it simply being out-of-touch with realities on the ground; and it is out-of-touch with those realities because it has abstracted itself from those realities, preferring allegiance to an abstract sphere of excellence and supposed quality.

If we are indeed to modernize in any serious sense of the word, then we might start the process by trying to catch up with 1704, when Vico asserted – indeed, rather took for granted – that the University could establish a shared intimacy of community action, that it had a public function and that such a function implied a relation to civic authority in a way that was designed to contest authoritarianism.

3

The underlying premise for my argument here is that we are facing something of a crisis of leadership in higher education in Britain, as also in the rest of the advanced economies. That crisis has been to a large extent provoked by what we might call ‘the rise of the managerialist class’; and the result of that onward march and triumph of the archetypal members of that class is that instead of leaders, we have managers; instead of followers, we have resources.

A little history can contextualize matters. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Universities – and, of course, as we are always reminded, there were fewer of them then – were centrally funded by government. There was a more complicated support system, of course, in that we had research councils and industrial bodies that helped fund research; but the bulk of funding for most Universities came, as today, through the form of a ‘grant-letter’ that disbursed public funds. Between about 1919 and 1979, the grant-letter came from the University Grants Committee (UCG), headed, in its latter days (1973–83), by Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, a very eminent Cambridge mathematician. Then, in the midst of his leadership, came 1979 and a general election.

One of the things that developed at this time was a kind of ideological struggle, not between class interests, but rather a struggle for something that, in another context, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas would come to call ‘the public sphere’. Essentially, two views of what society is about came to the fore. Interestingly, for those of us interested in language, the struggle was in many ways a struggle about semantics, especially over the word ‘individual’. At the time, among the many things, I taught Chaucer. I liked pointing out to my students that, for Chaucer, the word ‘individual’ meant something different from what it had come to mean in 1979. In fact, its meaning for Chaucer was rather opposite to its meaning in the more recent period. To Chaucer, the word meant something like ‘indivisible from’: an individual was one who could not be defined separately from their social sphere, their sphere of operations. Now, as

we all know, the word in more recent times means precisely the opposite: it suggests one who is totally distinguished from her or his circumambient background. Monty Python got the paradox right in *Life of Brian*, a film that is most definitely a product of its time (1979), but whose relevance remains pertinent today.

In the film, Brian is made into a reluctant leader of sorts: he is followed everywhere. In frustration, he decides to address his followers; and he tells them that they really do not need any heroes or leaders. They repeat his words, like schoolchildren reciting their lesson. 'You don't need a messiah', he shouts, 'you're all individuals'. 'Yes,' they shout back in perfect chorus, 'we're all individuals'. At which point, a little voice pipes up, 'I'm not.' In the film, it is the very denial of individuality that produces individuality: it is the very denial of leadership that produces the singular individual capable of leading.

In the non-fictional events of that same year, the political battleground is drawn between those who see society as a kind of arithmetical aggregation of discrete persons, each making their own way and caught in what looks a little like a primitive Hobbesian struggle with the unpleasant and graceless business of a life that is based in aggressive competition. On the other side, there are those who believe in the existence – and the necessary preservation of – a public sphere, public good, a public (define it how you will: nation, class, gender, etc.) to which they might be prepared to sacrifice their private interests for the more general good. These are members of the benevolent group, grounded in ideas of cooperation; and they are set against the graceless who subscribe to an ideology of fierce competition and the priority of something vaguely called 'business'.

It is important to note that the idea of business in the ascendant at this moment is indeed vague. No actual or specific businesses are being described; but an ethic of competitiveness and aggressive ruthlessness is being ascribed to the world of business as its presiding normative value-system. It is this kind of position that is satirically critiqued in the figure of Gordon Gekko in the 1987 film *Wall Street*, when he pronounces the fundamental ground of the new business ethics in the phrase 'Greed is good'. The idea of business behind this, however, has to remain abstract; for, in 1979 and the years that follow, it is about to be applied to all aspects of public life, including the University. From this moment on, Universities start to be described by government ministers – and, eventually, by some vice-chancellors – as 'businesses'.

Greed against civics; competition against cooperation: put like this, of course, it is amazing that the first group won out in the ongoing struggle of ideas. It is more than amazing: it is testimony to the power

of a certain kind of conservative force and ideology that prefers to think of the social as, at best, parochial. As Mrs Thatcher once put it, 'There is no such thing as society. There are individuals, and their families.' In that mode of thinking, from which we still suffer, there is always going to be damage done to the idea of the intimacy of any community that takes community as something that exists beyond one's front door and, with it, damage to the existence of a University.

Among the losers in this contest, then, were all those who believed in community and, yet more important politically, those who worked in the public sphere. In order to make sure that things stayed this way for as long as possible – that is, in order to drive home their victory – the graceless put in place institutions and laws that would ensure the establishment of new norms. We usually call all this Thatcherism; but that would be to dignify one individual too much, I think. The key point is that, in the image of Thatcher, a select few – identified with the ideology of acquisitive individualism buttressed by aggressive ideas of business-competition – were able to win against all the others; and these became our 'leaders'. That is to say: new forms of social legitimation, or of legitimation of individuals in the public sphere, were established. All relatedness was to be conducted like a business, with calculation of input and output, or of efficiency and gain becoming the key motivations for any and all action.

As Walter Benjamin knew ages ago, such a situation could lead only to war: and, in the 1982 war in the South Atlantic, we established the new paradigmatic model of the leader, a model that has stayed with us and plagued us ever since: the 'war-leader', be it Thatcher in the Falklands/Malvinas or Blair/Bush in Iraq. These leaders work essentially on the principle of a counter-intuitiveness whose effect is to place them in a world apart, to put them deliberately out-of-touch with the community that they are in place to serve, represent or lead. The hubris we see here as a determining characteristic of leadership is exactly the same, however, as we saw in Miss Jean Brodie. She, we recall, asserts her own authority in the face of everyone else by the whimsical claim that Giotto is the most important Italian painter, for the simple reason that she herself likes him. Thus, she has 'proven' her case. The paradigmatic 'war-leader' typically leads by telling us that 'if only we knew what they knew', then we would agree with them. The key, for present purposes, is that they thereby place themselves in a different sphere of operation from those of us who are followers. The intimacy of community is determinedly broken and replaced with a hierarchical and atomized fracturing of the civil or public sphere.

At the more local level of the University, we begin to see the hubris of individuals who start to style themselves not as vice-chancellors but

rather as chief executive officers. These individuals believed, possibly honestly, that they were running a business; and the logic then is that they establish a fundamental principle, for internal governance as for external self-presentation, of competition, aggression, ruthlessness and the bottom financial line. This has massive repercussions. While it is entirely reasonable to make a case for saying that a University should be run in a business-like fashion, that it should have an eye on performance and on its economy, it is a fundamental category mistake to proceed by wilfully forgetting that this is but a *simile*. We can be run *like* a business; but it most certainly does not follow that we *are* a business. One could equally make an entirely reasonable case to say that a University should be run *like* an orchestra; but it would be clearly silly to expect it to found its entire operations on the musical abilities of its staff and to set itself on a par with the Berlin Philharmoniker. Birmingham University is most certainly not the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, even if these diverse organizations could, in principle, be organized and managed in a similar fashion.

At the same time as this is happening in the higher education sector, there is also a further structural change going on. As I indicated in my opening chapter, the UGC mutates into the HEFCE and, explicitly here, a marked change took place: where the UGC had operated as a buffer between the State and the Universities, between government and the academies, HEFCE had the opposite brief. Its task was to grant money to the Universities, but to take with the money whatever message it is that the government of the day wants to promulgate. HEFCE becomes explicitly an agency of or an arm of government. This is the first major explicit politicization of the Universities in the modern era. It calls into question any idea that the University can now exist as an independent and autonomous authority in its own right; and consequently, it calls into question also the University's power of granting and distributing authority to a community more generally.

Now, what follows from this is a domino effect: HEFCE is henceforth an agency of government, answerable directly and solely to the minister for education; vice-chancellors, as recipients of the moneys disbursed by HEFCE, now become agents of HEFCE, and answerable to its chief executive; registrars become agents of vice-chancellors – or, more precisely, they become equally agents of HEFCE, for they now make the claim on the moneys, since they are in charge of structural and administrative organization; deans become agents of the vice-chancellor; heads of departments become agents of the dean; and lecturers become agents of the institution. In short, we no longer have staff or personnel, but rather we have now all become, in one way or another, the merest ‘operatives’ of an overarching system of authority. We are now, in an

appalling and profoundly insulting phrase, 'human resources'. Further, in a fundamental structural shift, the 'leadership' in the University now cannot represent the interests of the academy (including those of staff and students) to the wider public sphere; rather, their task is to represent the interest of government to staff, students and public sphere, and also to ensure that those interests are properly executed.

Further, and perhaps most troubling of all, at the end of this chain of agencies, the student now also becomes an agent of government policy. Their 'task' becomes one where they are expected to use their University education in order to help fulfil a role in forms of employment that are sanctioned and legitimized by the State: their task is to contribute, directly as a result of their study, to the economy in whatever happens to be the approved fashion. This becomes a tacit *requirement*, in fact: they must make 'business', vaguely conceived, more wealthy through the generation of more economic activity. In a fee-paying regime, further and with a cruel irony, they act as this kind of agent of government, *but* they are now also expected to pay, themselves, for the 'privilege' of fulfilling the role, as agent of governmental ideology, thus given to them.

The prevailing ideology in all of this is, of necessity, an ideology of consumerism. What leadership is left is given over to a vague idea of 'market forces'. However, despite the prevailing terminology, market forces are never *free*: they are controlled and regulated, not always accountably and, though perhaps always *legally*, not always *legitimately*. These forces do not exist in order to extend civic freedom or democracy; rather, they exist in order to reduce the content of freedom and justice to matters of consumerist 'choice' and 'value for money'.

Two key shifts thus take place. First, there is the explicit politicization of the academy in which it becomes the agent of government. This has the effect of driving a coach and horses through the Haldane principle, whose effect right through the twentieth century was to keep at arm's length the relation between government and the Universities. With the demise of the Haldane principle in all but name, the University thus loses academic and many other forms of autonomy. Secondly, the registrar-manager now ascends to a key position, at least alongside the vice-chancellor if not yet higher in the hierarchy of internal authority and leadership. This is so because, in the business model, the very question of what might be the academic content of our activity depends upon our 'business plans' as academic departments. If it can be shown that we are, as a specific department, 'in deficit' according to the accounting regime deployed by the University then it follows that we are not justifying our existence; and if we cannot then persuade others to help us out by cross-subsidy within the overall business, we should be closed. I will deal with this more fully

in my final chapter, on finance, below; but suffice to note for the moment that the registrar now has a key leadership role *in the academy*, for, in the business model the academy is *but an adjunct* to administration and organization. The administration itself becomes the determining and, importantly, the *controlling* centre of the University's authority.

Within all this, followers have become human resources. As a mere 'human resource', I am placed on a par with the paper clips, with the sole difference that I am classified as 'human' as my distinguishing factor. However, as a resource, I am – like the paper clips – fundamentally interchangeable with others in my category. All that is now required is that I am properly managed, not offered leadership – and certainly not offered a form of leadership that might involve me democratically in government by discussion and dialogue. The kind gloss on the terminology of 'human resources' would be to say that my humanity is recognized for what it is, in a profound ethical care; the reality, however, is that my humanity has to be minimized in terms of efficient management of the system as a whole. Thus, for example, initiative is thoroughly to be encouraged – but only as long as the effect of the initiative shown is something that conforms to and improves the operation of the existing system, helping to sustain whatever vision is proposed by the internal leadership of the academy, now itself necessarily a shadow of government policy. In order to ensure this, the human resource is required to operate simply as an element in an overarching mechanized system, the better to 'deliver' the 'product' or 'offer' that constitutes 'the student experience' and so on.

What has happened to leadership within this, especially in a sector that exists for the production of critical thought? It is surely immediately apparent that we can also see the question looming that was more explicitly in the air in those dark days of the early 1980s: the question of academic freedom, which must include the ability freely to criticize leaders, including those in government or its agencies, and also freely to criticize the ways in which one's own institution – once it is effectively an arm of government – is being run.

4

As virtually anyone within the sector now knows, we operate within a highly bureaucratized system. This, while it may appear to offer some managerial benefits, actually operates in ways that militate against proper leadership. The key to an understanding of this lies in what we can call the demise of argument or debate. One way of leading any

large organization, such as a University, is to find rational principles for moving towards the future development and ongoing work of the organization. Habermas would describe this in terms of our being able to have systematic argument, from widely differing points of view. The aim is to provide legitimacy for the operation of the organization, as well as to ensure that all participants share, in equally committed fashion, the work carried out.

The way this works, in a rational fashion, is for arguments to be laid out in public in an effort to secure consensual agreement regarding the laws that might govern us. That is the literal meaning of autonomy, the 'giving ourselves the law' encompassed in the language of the *autos nomos*. The argumentative positions must be articulated without prejudice or bias, and simply as what each participant sees as the better case, based on established facts and desired endpoints. Participants then try to persuade each other, and to do so without any coercion, threat or force other than the force of the argument itself. If the parties can establish a consensus on these grounds then, according to Habermas, the result is the expression of a rational will; and, in the University environment that we are presently discussing, it will offer us the benefit of commitment from all parties and a clear sense of an agreed direction for the organization. As a further corollary, the debates must be kept under review, in case of changing circumstances or the emergence of new and different argumentations.

This is not how things happen. Given the distance between leaders and followers in our institutions, and given that they effectively operate in incommensurable realms of discourse, such dialogue and debate is never among equals. A Brodie-style authority is asserted, but very indirectly. It is rather difficult in many cases to bring about consensual agreement: conversation and persuasion both take time, for they depend upon our reflecting on matters of substance. In terms of the politics of management, the decision, in the face of this difficulty and potential waste of time, is to abandon the very pursuit of rationally agreed plans. Instead, what we have is the much quicker pursuit of agreement regarding much lower-level and seemingly peripheral matters: the establishment of agreement regarding *procedures* or *processes*. As long as such procedures are themselves content-free, there is no need to detain ourselves over matters of substance.

Sometimes the agreement in question here is even agreement about procedures for reaching agreement about plans – the plans themselves hovering ghost-like in the background, but their substantive content never being openly discussed. The logic then is that the leadership can substitute an agreement about a *procedure* for an agreement regarding a *plan*. While it may look *as if* we are debating matters of academic substance, we are in fact *limited* to a mere discussion of the 'best

practice' in terms of how we reach decisions in general terms. To agree to move things in accordance with a specific set of procedures becomes *the equivalent* of agreeing to substantive change or stability itself; for, if the procedures by which the plan is agreed are shown to conform to the (agreed) processes for making decisions, no one need ever discuss anything of substance anymore. There is a systematic eradication of legitimate decision-making, and its replacement with purely legal protocols for a decision-making that will now take place elsewhere. This is a useful shorthand description of bureaucracy.

Habermas worried that many societies might operate entirely legally, but without legitimacy: that is, they establish laws, but the laws have not been arrived at through a rational process of examining substantive argument involving participants. Bureaucracy moves a step further. Instead, then, of providing an argued case for something that can have the force of consensually agreed *law*, we have abandoned the principle of having law – and certainly for establishing legitimacy – in this way. Weaker than a law is a 'guideline' or a 'code of practice'; and these are essentially matters or procedural protocol. The very terminology of guidelines and codes is indicative of the fact that, in principle, they offer such latitude that it is difficult for any reasonable individual to contest them: after all, they only offer guidance, and do not constitute an agreed set of fixed and established rules. Given that these are not *laws*, further, they do not even need really to be argued for in the first place: they are 'merely' guidelines or codes. However, once we do have such guidelines or codes, they start to assume the *force* of law, and to operate precisely *as if* they were laws that have been arrived at in rational fashion. The result is that our bureaucratized and mythic leadership may have *power*, but that power now has grounding neither in *legality* nor, certainly, in anything approaching what Habermas would regard as *legitimacy*.

Leadership and its corollary, governance, are thus established essentially on the basis of something no more substantial than occasional anecdote or 'news management', as it is sometimes called. Slavoj Žižek has written about how this operates, in his book, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*. There, he discussed the more extreme political forms that this kind of leadership has taken in world history; and, alarmingly, he finds the model in the manner of governance operated by Stalin. He points out that Stalinism operated as a 'strictly centralized system of command'; but the problem for many of the cadres was that, frequently, no clear order would be given regarding what was being actually 'commanded'. Instead, Stalin provided only vague hints and general guidelines or, in Žižek's terms, nothing more substantial than a mere 'sign' indicating a general tendency or direction of travel. The enthusiastic cadres, eager to

curry favour with the controlling centre, would typically over-respond or 'excel' themselves in their response, as if the sign were in fact an order. Thus, for example, there might be the placing of an anonymous derogatory comment regarding someone or some event in *Pravda*, or some ostensibly very minor matter of culture would be referred to in praiseworthy terms; and it was up to the cadres to 'interpret', to find the meaning behind the signal. Stalin, thereby, is of course absolved of specific responsibility: he did not give the order as an order at all. There is, in fact, no need now to issue orders: the cadres intuit the general trajectory, and maintain their own authority and legitimacy by fulfilling orders that have not actually been given.

This then becomes a whole and functioning system of leadership. Citing Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism*, Žižek goes on to indicate that 'important policy changes were often "signalled" rather than communicated in the form of a clear and detailed directive'.¹¹ In this, the leader can get things done, can remain 'above' the fray ('excelling') and can also appear even to be critical of the actions carried out by the cadres, such criticism furthering the sense of enigma and charisma – but also the unpredictability necessary to ensure enthusiastic compliance. This leader shows, in the words of Žižek, a basic 'mercy' against the power of the law itself, a mercy that I have referred to as 'whimsy' above. He then goes on: 'Is it not a fact that showing mercy is the only way for a Master to demonstrate his suprallegal authority? If a Master were merely to guarantee the full application of the law, of legal regulations, he would be deprived of his authority, and turn into a mere figure of knowledge, the agent of the discourse of the university.'¹²

Now, it would clearly be a mad exaggeration to suggest that vice-chancellors are Stalinist. However, it is not at all a wild suggestion to indicate that the methods of leadership have certain structural similarities (or, in Fitzpatrick's extremely troubling terms, that a certain Stalinist practice has become 'everyday'). Specifically, they both engender and indeed are grounded in bureaucratic authoritarianism rather than legitimate authority. Firstly, there is the 'excellence' in which the leader-figure hubristically exceeds the bounds of the institution, establishing a fundamental chasm or division between the worlds inhabited by leaders and followers. Secondly, there is the assumption of a power, but without the corresponding responsibility (for responsibility belongs to the realm of the enthusiastic cadres, or 'middle managers'). Thirdly, there is the ostensible 'enabling' of the cadres, whose 'job' is to so internalize the signs that they can, in turn, replicate the system of authority at work and, indeed, even excel in it by going further than is required. With such an internalization, the cadres of middle managers can then themselves assert an authority

over institutions in which they work to be 'whiter-than-white' in terms of the way that they fulfil or interpret the 'signs' given from the controlling centre. In passing, of course, it should be noted that to be whiter-than-white is to be lying: there *is* no colour whiter than white. The phrase is lifted from the discourse of consumerism and specifically from advertising related to cleansing: it was a certain washing powder that would allegedly get clothes whiter-than-white. Finally, while all of these procedures may be legal (even if they involve lying), they lack legitimacy.

More commonly, we have that system whereby leadership now implies an identification of the local leader (in our case, a vice-chancellor, say) with a more 'central' leader (a government official, for example). The resulting version of leadership looks rather peculiar. A useful example to highlight what is at stake here comes in an address to the Association of University Administrators from Steve Smith, the President of Universities UK in April 2009, when the then-Labour administration was indicating that it was inclined to require (note the 'signalling' going on here) that all academics demonstrate fully the 'impact', beyond the walls of the academy, of the research that they undertake. The President's speech (going further than is actually asked for by government) had him assuming the actual position of a government minister and asking specifically whether the arts and humanities community had done enough to demonstrate that they should be funded according to these new impact-driven criteria: 'if you were sitting in the Treasury, you would ask: do we need 159 institutions doing humanities and social science research?' he said. The question is not one that is meant to elicit dialogue and debate.

More recently, in an attempt to defend the supposed 'independence' of the 2010 Browne Review Committee that looked into funding the University system on the UK, Julia King, one of the two vice-chancellors on the Committee, explained that, while there had been no direct interference by government, nonetheless the Review would have been doomed had the Committee not taken into account and internalized in their deliberations the fact that they expected government to be making massive cuts in the teaching budget for the University sector. The cadres were doing what they were told, without the necessity of anyone telling them to do it.¹³ The structure here is akin to that described by Žižek in the political sphere; and, crucially, those who should be 'leading' their organizations now 'lead' by internalizing a logic, infiltrated from elsewhere, that has been neither debated, nor discussed, nor even established.

In the end, we have what is properly called a system of the delegation of guilt and blame. This is a further characteristic of bureaucracy. It is clearly anathema to rational leadership; and, equally clearly, it deserves no followership.

5

To be a leader, we need to have at least one follower. Far from it being the case that leaders and followers are semantic opposites, they are in fact semantically tied to each other, almost bound to each other like apprentice and master. In a peculiar – and deconstructive sense – a leader paradoxically depends upon followers to follow them, else they lose their position as leader. In other words, the followers are in an odd sense logically prior to the leader; and the leader is dependent upon the followers. You might say that the leader follows the followers in this respect.

What explains this deconstructive relation? Ethics – an ethics of leadership – I believe offers us at least one viable answer. Ethics require two things: firstly, a realization that, in any human relation, there is a kind of demand that comes from the fact that the person with whom I am in relation is fundamental to my own continued existence and well-being; and, secondly, a realization that, just as I face this other directly, so we are both part of a wider network of social connectedness and relation. Leadership, in these circumstances, is that which can be agreed as a condition of our continued and sustained well-being. In short, leadership is also the search for justice and for the increase in human freedom; and it too is governed by the demands of the true, the good and the beautiful. Perhaps a yet more pressing observation deriving from this is that, if our leadership is to be in any real sense ‘effective’, it has to embody the view that the institution as a whole has an ethical relation to the wider society of which it is an integral part. The intimacy of community required for good leadership *within* an institution is but a micro-level of the intimacy of community that drives the good or just or free society as a whole. This raises the obvious question regarding the role of the University in terms of social, political and cultural leadership within a wider community.

There are a great number of theories of leadership now available to us in the management discourses and business worlds. Indeed, we can trace a more or less straightforward history of the evolution of thought about leadership and the varied modes of its ‘effectiveness’. It will be useful here, as we explore the question of the leadership of the University in society, if we have a brief summary of the various positions. In giving this summary, I am indebted to the work of the Centre for Leadership Studies in Exeter University, and specifically to their *A Review of Leadership Theory and Competency Frameworks*, carried out by Richard Bolden *et al.*¹⁴

Broadly, the history of leadership theory follows a trajectory that goes from the ‘great man’ or iconic and charismatic leader theories through to what is now called ‘transformational theories’ of

leadership, in which the management of change, including changing the potential of staff, has become more central. Bolden *et al.* point out that, although there are a number of differences along the way in the various theories that have been advanced, nonetheless they nearly all share the certain common characteristic that they all think of the leader in individualistic terms.

One of the most helpful summations of the practices of leadership is that advanced in the so-called 'Leadership Grid' drawn up by Robert Blake and Jane Moulton. The grid plots the coordinates, along two axes, of 'consideration for people' (the y-axis) and 'concern for production' (the x-axis); and the gradations along each axis go from 0 to 9. The resulting 'best practice' model is that which gives coordinates of (9,9), combining a score of 9 for both 'production' and 'people' (highest concern for production allied with highest concern for people). In such a case we have 'team management' where the leader has brought about a commitment to a shared general goal, based on trust and mutual respect. Interestingly, the grid also proposes a model that is called 'authority-compliance' (coordinates of (1,9)), in which the concern for production is rated at 9 (the highest) while consideration of people rates at 1 (the lowest); and the chief characteristic of this mode is that management prioritizes efficiency and tends to regard human elements as potential interferences or obstructions to that efficiency. This, I shall note simply in passing, is what appears to be increasingly prevalent as a daily experience of the norm for ideas of leadership in the University and other public-sector organizations.

We come closer to establishing a healthy dialectic between leader and follower when we reach the theories of Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H. Schmidt, who seek to consider leadership in terms of a potentially evolving and changing balance between 'boss-centred' and 'subordinate-centred' involvement in the leadership decision-making processes. Here, we see the introduction of the idea that bosses can learn from subordinates. This is carried a little further in John Adair's 'action-centred' leadership. In this, Adair proposes that there are three elements that need to be kept in mind: the task, the team and the individual. These operate in intersecting fashion, rather as in a Venn diagram, where there are varying sizes of 'sets' (the task might dominate in some situations, the individual in others, for example) and where there are also therefore varying quantities of intersection among the potentially diverse interests. The action-leader is the person who can participate in any and all of these circles of interest; but, crucially, they must also maintain a distance, flying as if in a helicopter above the entire activity, so as to be able to take consistently the global overview.

Clearly, this last comes quite close to my own depiction of the leadership dilemma, in which the leader is essentially structurally *required* to distance themselves from activity on the ground. While it is indeed necessary for a leader to take an overview of a global whole, it is also equally important, in my view, that others can fly in the helicopter, as it were.

Bolden *et al.* conclude their survey with an attention to Robert Greenleaf's work from the 1970s onwards on what he calls 'servant-leadership'. This comes closest to the kind of idea that I am advancing here. In servant-leadership, we acknowledge that there are two competing priorities in play for those who become a leader. The servant-leader is the person who starts from the desire to serve; and, in serving, they come also and in turn to desire to lead. Key to this, though, is that the servant-leader is leading in a fashion that is informed by the demand for service to others, to those with whom they exist in the relation that I have been calling the intimacy of community. Against this is the individual who is leader first ('perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions', as Greenleaf puts it).

The two positions here are polarized extremes, of course; and most leaders sit somewhere along the spectrum and not at either end. The difference, however, is fundamental. In Greenleaf's words, it manifests itself:

in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived?¹⁵

After this brief summary of the available theoretical models for leadership, it is clear that the ideas of leadership that govern Universities in our time are simply out-of-date: we have not 'modernized' at all. The question here, though, is how we might look at servant-leadership in terms of the relation of the University as leader to the wider society of which it is an integral part.

There is a long history of anti-intellectualism in the Anglo-world; and that now manifests itself most evidently in the mistrust of the University that has been established as an ideological norm in our conservative cultures. The real question for the sector is how we might rehabilitate the University as an institution worthy of respect, treated as an institution of at least equal importance alongside the vague 'business' that our

governments demand that it serve and thus able to participate in a culture of conversation that enables government-through-debate. The idea that the University is there primarily to function as a menial service-provider for this vague world of business is extremely short-sighted; and, worse, it limits the possibilities that the University might have to offer to the wider social sphere. It reduces the idea of 'service' to an extraordinarily narrow range of activities and options; and that reduction not only damages the University, but also damages the whole of the social and public sphere of which it is an integral part.

While we are now witnessing a slightly more serious understanding of the idea of the leader-as-follower, it nonetheless remains the case that a proper dialectic between the two roles has not yet been established. Instead, the dominant understanding of the leader is one based upon the 'pyramid of power' or, more generally, upon the fundamental error of establishing a hierarchy of power within the public sphere or shared citizenship. Our 'intimacy of community' is not based upon mutual respect and, at this historical moment, the University finds itself endlessly trying to justify its existence, rather than assuming a role as occasional leader and constant servant-leader of a wider public sphere. The logic of the position that I am advancing here, however, is that the leader is indebted to the follower for any power that they have; in brief, the power lies neither with leader nor follower but with their *relatedness*, their shaping of an intimacy of community in the pursuit of justice and enhanced freedom. This kind of leader establishes the kind of authority validated by Arendt, an authority that gains obedience without any loss of freedom; but I go further, to argue that leadership is leadership *if and only if* it enhances freedom and extends it. It is not enough simply to protect existing freedom; the point of leading is to offer freedom more widely.

What might this mean in the University? It means, above all, finding out what the constituency wants to do. It means *encouraging dissent* rather than conformity; and this dissent becomes the language that shapes possible futures and keeps them open. It means challenging all authorities, especially those that are illegitimate or that assume the position of a Miss Jean Brodie. At the present time, we urgently need the University to assume this kind of servant-leadership if it is to establish its legitimacy – the legitimacy of the life of the mind and even of thinking itself – as an important element in the public sphere. That is, we need the authority of the institution as a bulwark against the forms of authoritarianism that threaten not just the University but the whole of our public life, the whole of our social, cultural and political communities.