The following version of "The Servant as Leader" is the original 1970 edition that Robert K. Greenleaf first published. This version was in print from 1970 to 1973. Careful readers of the original version will note that one of the student leaders Greenleaf chose to quote was a very young Hillary Rodham (later Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton), from her 1969 commencement address as president of the student body at Wellesley College. This quote and many other quotes from students of the time were removed and replaced with new material when Greenleaf did a major revision of the essay in 1973.

The revised edition of "The Servant as Leader" is the one that has been in print since 1973. Since that time more than a quarter of a million copies of it have been sold around the world. Robert K. Greenleaf probably never dreamed that his essay would influence several generations of servant-leaders and spark worldwide interest in servant-leadership.

Special thanks go to Harriet Lowe, whose longstanding encouragement to republish the original edition of "The Servant Leader" helps to make this possible.

The Greenleaf Center is pleased to be able to put back into print the original 1970 version of "The Servant as Leader." Those readers who are interested in obtaining a copy of the revised 1973 version of the essay can do so by contacting the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership.

—THE EDITORS

Part 1

THE SERVANT AS LEADER

This piece began with seminars for students of Prescott College in October 1968. Since then it has gone through several drafts with generous comments from friends, including students. It is put in print now not as a final or complete statement, but as a record of thinking in transition, drawn more from experience and searching than from scholarship, and with the hope that some who read it will respond with gleanings from their own experience with serving and leading.

Behind what is said here is a twofold concern: first for the individual in society and his or her bent to deal with the massive problems of our times wholly in terms of systems, ideologies, and movements. These have their place, but they are not basic because they do not make themselves. What is basic is the incremental thrust of an individual who has the ability to serve and lead.

My second concern is for the individual as a serving person and for the tendency of such people to deny wholeness and creative fulfillment for themselves by failing to lead when they could lead.

Overarching these is a concern for the total process of education and its seeming indifference to the individual as servant and leader, as a person and in society, on the assumption that intellectual preparation favors his or her optimal growth in these ways when, in fact, quite the reverse may be true.

Part of the problem is that *serve* and *lead* are overused words with negative connotations like obsequious, self-righteous, patronize, dominate, manipulate, exploit. But they are also good words and I can find no others that carry as well the meaning I would like to convey. Not everything that is old and worn, or even corrupt, can be thrown away. Some of it has to be rebuilt and used again. So it is, it seems to me, with the words *serve* and *lead.*

—Robert K. Greenleaf

HERMANN HESSE'S STORY, *Journey to the East*, tells of a band of men, each having his own goal, on a mythical journey to the East. With them is the servant Leo, who does their menial chores, sustains them with his spirit and his song, and, by the quality of his presence, lifts them above what they otherwise would be. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey finally is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey to the East. He discovers that Leo is the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader.

Leo portrays at once two roles that are often seen as antithetical in our culture: the servant who, by acting with integrity and spirit, builds trust and lifts people and helps them grow, *and* the leader who is trusted and who shapes others' destinies by going out ahead to show the way.

Can these two roles merge in *one real person*—for all manner of men and women, in all levels of status and calling? If so, can that person live and be productive in the real world of the present? For some time I have said yes to the first question. My sense of the present leads me now to say yes to both questions. This paper is an attempt to explain why and to suggest how.

The 1970s

Ours are revolutionary times. Not so much for the extent of turbulence and disruption as because of the emergence of a significant number of thoughtful and aware people who see more clearly the world as it is and are not satisfied with it. They challenge both the pervasive acceptance of injustice and the sharp disparity between the quality of society that they know is reasonable and possible with our available resources, and, on the other hand, the actual performance of the whole range of institutions that exist to serve society.

Many are taking a fresh look at the issues of power and authority, and some are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways. A

new moral principle may be emerging which holds that the only authority deserving of one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who choose to follow this principle will not casually accept the authority of existing institutions. Rather, they will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants. To the extent that this principle prevails, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant led. And with this we hope there will be an openness of style in which leaders will be natural people acting naturally, mortal people subject to error and deserving forgiveness like everybody else.

Moral principles do not emerge from theory, but from testing and experience. Theories are later built to encase and explain the working principles. The new principle of the servant as leader is more likely to emerge in practice in those segments of society where the concern is most intensely felt for justice (rather than order), for the performance (rather than the form) of our institutions, and for the appropriateness (rather than the result) of power and authority.

Currently this intensity of feeling is greatest among the students of our colleges and universities, but it is not yet clear that the necessary disciplined testing by experience, the hard sweating out of the how-to-do, will be done at this level. The test of experience runs the risk of failure, I believe, because the institutions where our students live and learn today are not generally ready to grow with students and support them.

Conversely, then, I believe this test of experience will succeed if and when our colleges and universities move from their present theoretical concern about life and change to become institutional model builders for the future. I do not see this yet under way. But some of the signs are encouraging. Let us listen.

Two students at Le Moyne College, Reginald Burton and Priscilla Hayes, responded to an early draft of this paper in these words: "every individual has ultimate control over his destiny and, thus, has the influence and the ability to mold the destinies of persons associating with him. . . . Leaders . . . are manifestations of the

community, of community relations, and of community problems. The nature of their ability allows them to expand their influence, in many cases, to national and international levels. . . . It is not the individual who decides that he is a leader or will become a leader, but the community that places him in that particular role. . . . The individual's choice is only whether or not he will accept the responsibility given him by the community. . . . Leaders are ordinary people who, through the needs of the community, emerge as 'special' people. Through certain events and situations, they acquire extraordinary and compelling powers that attract followers. It is the community's responsibility to control that power while at the same time supporting that leader who is voicing the opinions of the community."

These words state a part of the leadership equation. The other part is the will and the personal strength to opt for leadership as a meaningful lifestyle, toward which an individual may progress by conscious preparation. But Mr. Burton and Ms. Hayes have defined the more important part for these times. We must face the problem: the natural leader, called upon like Cincinnatus, is too rare to be embraced as the total solution, and yet the self-chosen leader, who does not see himself or herself as of the people, will ultimately be unacceptable, no matter how able he or she is.

Either way, the leader is trusted because he or she chances losing leadership by taking the initiating risks to venture for the common good, because he or she insists on the hard choices required to build and rebuild institutions within a social framework of radically expanded justice, and because he or she helps others sort out the destructive influences (the nihilistic, the hedonistic, the pathological) from the sane, the moral, the building forces and attitudes that ennoble human life. Effective servant-leaders who move in these ways emerge strong and speak with authority when the values and goals of those who go with them are truly served by their actions.

Let us hear more from the students. Hillary Rodham, president of the student body at Wellesley College, said in her 1969 commencement address, "Too long our leaders have viewed politics as the art of the possible, and the challenge now is to practice politics as the art of making what appears to be impossible possible.

"If the experiment in human living doesn't work in this country, in this age, it's not going to work anywhere. . . . The goal of it

must be human liberation, a liberation enabling each of us to fulfill our capacities so as to be free to create within and around ourselves. . . . We are, all of us, exploring a world that none of us understands, and attempting to create within that uncertainty. But there are some things we feel, feeling that a prevailing acquisitive and competitive corporate life, including—tragically—the universities, is not the way of life for us. We're searching for a more immediate, ecstatic, and penetrating mode of living."

It is not the obligation of society to deliver to anybody this more immediate, ecstatic, and penetrating mode of living. And those who pursue it too narrowly may lose their way. What we may achieve is more likely to be something unasked, that we experience for brief moments because, much like Leo, we achieve an inner serenity that enables us, with our own internal resources, to create within and around ourselves in a way that projects a radiance of trust and confidence into the wider society. Our acts may lift us above where we would otherwise be, and, in significant ways, we may take on the task of making the impossible possible. The result will not be a perfect society—because the view of what is possible, as well as of the impossible that might be made possible, will continually expand. As long as people are capable of visions they will be dissatisfied.

Professor B. D. Napier, dean of the chapel and professor of religion at Stanford University, offers an example of the effect on the environment of those who, in an imperfect society, manage to "create within and around themselves." He comments on David Harris, then age twenty-one, one of the better known of the recent student protest leaders, on the occasion of Harris's resignation as president of the student body of Stanford. "I don't know what Dave's reasons are for resigning and maybe that's beside the point. His ASSU administration has taken its toll on him and, I think in the long run beneficially, on official Stanford. But he's been there long enough to see his real stature, his authentic greatness. How often do you see a man who, in being himself, can help you be and find yourself; in whom you can detect no deviousness at all; whose compassion is no less compassion for being unsentimental; who cares like hell about the world he lives in and can somehow go on loving and believing in the people who inhabit it, even while he protests the ways we go on lousing it up? For all of his sharp, unremitting criticism—in part, of

course, because of it—all of us, and all of Stanford, and the whole college and university scene in America are better for having him where he's been." What more could one ask a man to accomplish by age twenty-one? A leader by example, a very special kind of person.

The students consider the building of trust as the central issue for leadership by means of service. Hillary Rodham summed it up this way: "Trust. This is the one word that, when I asked our class what it was they wanted me to say for them, everyone came up to me and said, 'Talk about *trust*, talk about the lack of trust both for us and the way they feel about others, talk about the *trust bust*.'"

Enough trust to hold a society together, so that the impossible can be made possible, will not issue, full-blown, simply because it is demanded. Those who strongly feel the need must do the hard work, the disciplined serving and leading that are necessary to bring it about. To put it another way: the young people who have brought the revolution thus far must accept its implications: they must produce, in their generation, new ways of building trust that are viable under the new conditions that are already emerging as a result of their initiative. Builders must emerge from among the critics if the present ferment is to produce a better society.

The youth revolution will probably move inexorably in ways that are inexplicable, painful, and disruptive. The issue here is not to justify or to condemn it. We accept the state of flux as something that *is*, and that is not going away simply because a lot of people don't like it. But we do expect also that the present turbulence will supply opportunities for advance, along with possibilities for disaster.

What direction will the movement take? Much depends on how determined today's young are to come to grips with the age-old problem of how to live in a human society. I say this because so many of them, having made their awesome decision for autonomy and independence from tradition, and having taken their firm stand *against* injustice and hypocrisy, find it hard to convert themselves into affirmative builders of a better society. How many of them will seek their personal fulfillment by making the hard choices, and by undertaking the rigorous preparation that building a better society requires? It all depends on what kind of leaders emerge and how they—we—respond to them.

I dare no predictions on the shape and structure of the society that will emerge from the present ferment. But I do know that there will be institutions and there will be leaders.

There will probably be many far-reaching consequences of the contemporary revolution. But here I want to deal only with that part of the future that affords opportunities for the servant as leader. I am concerned that enough of those who are servants rise to the opportunity and qualify to lead.

The servant-leader is not necessarily the most popular among his or her contemporaries. The "popular" leader type will very likely gravitate to easier alternatives. When Leo laid down the conditions for entering the Order they were tough and hard to take. My thesis, that more young servants should emerge as leaders, is not a popular one. It is much more comfortable to go with a less demanding point of view about what is expected of one *now*. There are several undemanding, plausibly argued alternatives from which to choose. Among them is the assumption that since the effort to reform existing institutions has not brought perfection, the remedy is to destroy them completely so that fresh new perfect ones can grow. Not much thought seems to be given to the problem of where the new seed will come from or who the gardener to tend them will be.

Serving stands in sharp contrast to this kind of thinking. It requires that the concerned individual accept the problems he or she sees in the world as his or her own personal task, as a means of achieving his or her own integrity. He or she sees the external manifestation of this internal achievement as beginning with caring for individual persons, in ways that require dedication and skill and that help them grow and become healthier, stronger, and more autonomous. The servant will move from this to larger spheres of influence, leading and showing the way to larger groups—institutions, perhaps vast culture-shaping institutions. One consequence of the contemporary revolution, as I see it, is that there will not be enough trust in any other kind of leader to make a viable society possible. This poses the challenge of the 1970s.

Serving (and leading as so defined) is not popular, because it is exacting and hard to attain. But it is highly rewarding and fulfilling when it is done well. The society-building voices that advocate it and are contending to be heard are speaking with more caution. They

have more respect for the integrity of those who might hear, and consequently they are more difficult to hear. But they must be heard, because only they hold out the adventurous pursuit of a dream as the path to wholeness. Criticism has its place, but as a total preoccupation it is sterile. If, in a time of crisis, too many potential builders are taken in by a complete absorption with dissecting the wrong and by a zeal for instant perfection, then the future of this civilization is dark indeed. The danger, perhaps, is to hear the analyst too much and the artist too little.

Albert Camus stands apart from other great artists of his time, in my view, and deserves the title of *moralist*, because of his unrelenting demand that each of us confront the exacting terms of our own existence, and, like Sisyphus, *accept his or her rock and find his or her happiness in dealing with it.* Camus sums up the relevance of his position to our concern for the servant as leader in the last paragraph of his last published lecture, entitled "Create Dangerously."

> One may long, as I do, for a gentler flame, a respite, a pause for musing. But perhaps there is no other peace for the artist than what he finds in the heat of combat. "Every wall is a door," Emerson correctly said. Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere but in the wall against which we are living. Instead, let us seek the respite where it is—in the very thick of battle. For in my opinion, and this is where I shall close, it *is* there. Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps, then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation; others, in a man. I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundations of his own sufferings and joys, builds for them all.

One is asked, then, to accept the human condition, its sufferings and its joys, and to work with its imperfections as the founda-

tion upon which the individual will build his or her wholeness through adventurous creative achievement. For the person with creative potential, there is no wholeness except in using it. As Camus explained, however, the going is rough and the respite is brief. It is significant that he would title his last university lecture "Create Dangerously."

What follows, as I have said, is written more out of experience and out of searching than as the product of scholarship. It is intended for those who accept *their* damned rock—the human condition—and accept that other people have rocks as well, and that, except for a few extreme deviants who will be restrained, *all* will live in societies and accommodate to each other.

This is written for those who want to serve and are resolved to be led only by servants, and who will respond to the opportunity to lead, if given, to the end that an increment of trust will be put into an imperfect society that is currently very short of it. It is for those who see integrity not just as affirming right thoughts and avoiding error, but as requiring *them* to be inventive, venturesome, risking the initiative to find better ways, *and* doing the hard and sometimes dangerous work that brings the impossible to reality.

If one may make an easy generalization about people, there are those who are visionaries, and there are those who see a vision but have their feet on the ground. This set of little essays has been written for the latter.

Who Is the Enemy?

Who is the enemy? Who is holding back more rapid movement to the better society that is reasonably possible with available resources? Who is responsible for the mediocre performance of so many of our institutions? Who is standing in the way of a larger consensus on the definition of the better society and paths to reaching it?

Not evil people. Not stupid people. Not apathetic people. Not the "system." Not the protesters, the disrupters, the revolutionaries, the reactionaries.

Granting that fewer evil, stupid, or apathetic people or a better

"system" might make the job easier, their removal would not change matters, not for long. The better society will come, if it comes, with plenty of evil, stupid, apathetic people around and with an imperfect, ponderous, inertia-charged "system" as the vehicle for change. Liquidate the offending people, radically alter or destroy the system, and in less than a generation they will all be back. It is not in the nature of things that a society can be cleaned up once and for all according to an ideal plan. And even if it were possible, who would want to live in an aseptic world? Evil, stupidity, apathy, the "system" are not the enemy even though society-building forces will be contending with them all the time. The healthy society, like the healthy body, is not the one that has taken the most medicine. It is the one in which the internal health-building forces are in the best shape.

The *real* enemy is fuzzy thinking on the part of good, intelligent, vital people, and their failure to lead. Too many settle for being critics and experts. There is too much intellectual wheel spinning, too much retreat into "research," too little preparation for and willingness to undertake the hard, and sometimes corrupting, tasks of building better institutions in an imperfect world, too little disposition to see "the problem" as residing *in here* and not *out there.*

In short, the enemy is servants who have the potential to lead but do not lead.

Who Is the Servant-Leader?

The story of Leo could be misleading by portraying him as servant first and later as leader. He was really the leader all the time. Because, in the first part of the story, his formal role was servant, his leadership contribution was not seen. When he disappeared the mission collapsed, not because the ostensible servant had gone but because they had lost their leader. Leo, in these two merged roles, is symbolically the *whole man. The true servant must lead in order to be a complete person!*

The servant quality probably emerges when one is quite young, and is shaped more by example than by precept. Who are one's heroes? Are they true servants of others or are they self-serving people?

The really critical question is, what distinguishes the servant of others from the self-serving person? Great injustice and destruction

have been wrought by so-called good people who presumed to be serving others. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those being served grow as persons; do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous while being served? Since so many people seem afraid to grow, the true servant-leader who brings it about is an extraordinary person, a Leo.

The leader facet of the servant-leader, the disposition to take the risks to initiate, to provide the ideology and the structure, and, in so doing, go out ahead to show the way, seems a conscious choice that is made when the issues of identity are faced in the late teens or early twenties. What follows then?—another crucial question.

One does not "learn" to be a leader the way one learns most things that are taught in college. Like anything else that is acquired, one will do better with a mentor or a coach than without one. But academic learning, unfortunately the main concern of the university, does not usually provide the kind of support that growth in leadership ability requires. An occasional teacher does become a great mentor for potential leaders; but, at present, one cannot depend on finding such a mentor and those young people who choose to grow as leaders are largely on their own.

The servant prepares himself or herself to lead by a process of growth through experience guided by a self-image as a builder and within a conceptual framework that suggests the strengths that will emerge *if allowed.*

Leaders are not trained; they evolve. A step-by-step conscious striving will produce something, of course. But a contrived synthetic person is not as likely to reach that level of servant-leader as will one who has evolved with his or her own natural rhythm. Yet one must consciously try and hope for a natural congruence.

There are processes, techniques, and knowledge sources that provide the *expertise* of the special field in which the leader works. The mastery of these takes time and hard work and the possession of them makes one an expert or a critic but not necessarily a leader. *Leadership overarches expertise,* and it cannot be reduced to a style.

A leader is not an identifiable style of person. Charismatic people sometimes lead well. Those who seem dull and pedestrian sometimes lead well. In an age of candor, charisma is suspect of being manipulative and may be a liability.

Effective leadership defies categorization, but one is risked—four words: direction, values, competence (including judgment), and spirit. Their meaning will emerge in later sections.

Ultimately, every established leader has his or her own ideas about the art (and it is truly an art). What is suggested here is a set of entering propositions that have withstood considerable testing. They are offered as suggestive only and are presented as a series of short essays, some elaborated more than others, but not as an integrated thesis. This will make it easier for the reader to select which, if any of them, to allow into the arena of his or her own inward confrontation.

Origins of the Dominating Leader

The first consultant of record on leadership was a man named Jethro. Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses. He came to visit Moses, who was the leader of the people of Israel in the wilderness. He found Moses wearing himself out on the job and gave him advice (in the eighteenth chapter of Exodus):

> You shall represent the people before God, and bring their cases to God; and you shall teach them the statutes and the decisions, and make them know the way they must walk and what they must do. Moreover choose able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe; and place such men over the people as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times; every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves; so it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, you will then be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.

This is the earliest statement of the hierarchical principle of organization. This principle sets the leader at the top of the organizational pyramid. He is the man who speaks to God (which makes

him the ultimate authority because, presumably, nobody else speaks to God). Below him the hierarchy spreads out until finally the little people have their little problems decided by the little rulers of tens. This basic principle of organization entered human knowledge over 3,000 years ago and still dominates everything that is organized—armies, churches, governments, universities, businesses. It has stood all of these years virtually unchallenged, as the laws of Euclid stood as self-evident truths for so many centuries. Mathematicians finally broke out of this slavery to the "law." Modern organization theorists are growing restless with Jethro's formulation but it has not yet been effectively challenged. The institutional world that most of today's college students will enter will still be dominated by Jethro's thinking.

A close examination of Jethro's principle reveals that it does not assume Moses in the role of servant. Clearly he is the dominating leader, dedicated though he may be to his job, and this arrangement seems designed primarily to assure his survival in that job. For the people, it is a design to provide justice (insofar as rulers are capable of rendering it). All that is promised is that Moses will endure and "this people will go to their place in peace."—This may have been a great promise in biblical times, but not for today.

To date, Jethro's ideas have not been replaced, in practice, by anything better. And most institutional life is locked so tightly with these assumptions that perhaps nothing less than the jolt administered by the modern young revolutionaries will open the way for better ideas. This is the great opportunity of this college generation—to go beyond the attack on the system and produce the better ideas, demonstrate their effectiveness by carrying them into the leadership of the forthcoming society, and become the future builders of trust.

Everything Begins with the Initiative of an Individual

The forces for good or evil in the world are propelled by the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of individual beings. What happens to our values, and therefore to the quality of our civilization, in the future will be shaped by the conception, born of inspiration, of individuals. Perhaps only a few will receive this inspiration (insight) and

the rest will learn from them. The very essence of leadership, going out ahead to show the way, derives from more than usual openness to inspiration, to insight. Why would anybody accept the leadership of another except that the other sees more clearly where it is best to go? Perhaps this is the current problem: too many who presume to lead do not see more clearly and, in defense of their inadequacy, they all the more strongly assert Jethro's principle and argue that the "system" must be preserved—a fatal error in this day of candor.

But the leader needs more than inspiration, more than insight. He or she has to take the risk to say, "I will go; come with me!" The leader has to initiate, push, provide the ideas and the structure, and take the risk of failure along with the chance of success. This is partly what the element of *spirit* is about; spirit sustains the leader as he or she takes the risk of saying, "I will go; follow me!" when he or she knows that the path is uncertain, even dangerous.

Paul Goodman, speaking through a character in *Making Do*, has said, "If there is no community for you, young man, young man, make it yourself."

What Are You Trying to Do?

What are you trying to do?—one of the easiest to ask and most difficult to answer of questions.

A mark of leaders, an attribute that puts them in a position to show the way for others, is that they are better than most at pointing the direction. As long as they are leading, they always have a goal. It may be a goal arrived at by group consensus, or the leader, acting on inspiration, may simply have said, "Let's go this way." But the leader *always* knows what it is and can articulate it for any who are unsure. By clearly stating and restating the goal the leader gives certainty and purpose to others who may have difficulty in achieving it for themselves.

The dictionary defines *goal* rather broadly. It is used here in the special sense of the overarching purpose, the big dream, the visionary concept, the ultimate consummation that one approaches but never really achieves. It is something presently out of reach; it is something to strive for, to move toward, or become. It is so stated