

# The Leadership Spectrum: I. Three Primary Perspectives and Practices

**William Bergquist, Ph.D.**

This is the first of two essays that present a model of leadership styles that addresses the complex, unpredictable and turbulent challenges faced by contemporary organizations around the world. It is proposed that no one leadership style is best and that there are strengths associated with three primary styles, as well as strengths associated with various blends of these three styles. I will be using the metaphor of color in describing (and hopefully making memorable) each of these primary and blended styles. That is why I have titled this set of two essays “The Leadership Spectrum.”

In setting the stage for a description of each leadership style, I offer a basic model regarding the ways in which we approach the many challenges of 20st Century organizational life. This model concerns the ways in which we identify our current reality, our desired reality, and the ways in which to move from the current to desired state.

## **The Three Domains: Information, Intentions, and Ideas**

In Europe of the Middle-Ages there were many small fiefdoms, rather several small and large countries (as there are today). Each of these fiefdoms had its own set of rules, its own history of success and struggle, and its own rulers. Thus, there were a set of domains in Europe that required one to recognize distinctive differences in perspective and practice when crossing the boundary into a new fiefdom. I would suggest that the same occurs when we move from one set of perspectives and practices to another domain when tackling a challenging issue in one’s personal life or in one’s organization. There are three domains on which I wish to focus. These are the domains of *information* (where am I or where are we right now), *intentions* (where do I want to be or where do we want to be) and *ideas* (how do I or we get from where we are to where we want to be).

### **Domain of Information**

The *domain of information* is entered whenever we attempt to find out more about the current condition in which the client find herself. In seeking to identify this information, we act as researchers, asking questions that can be answered by a systematic collection of information. For example, if a college wants to know which of four academic programs are potentially most attractive to a particular group of prospective students, then a sample of these students might be asked to indicate under what conditions they would be likely to enroll in each of

these four programs. The information obtained is valid if the students have been honest, if the right questions were asked and if the sample used was representative of the entire pool of potential students. If the information is valid, then the college should be able to state with some confidence which of the academic programs is most attractive to this population of potential students.

In understanding the current situation, however, we (individually or collectively) must not only seek information that is valid. We must also seek information that is useful. It must relate to the target that the leader and her team wish to reach. Thus, if the target concerns increased financial viability for a college, then a market survey will be of little use, even if the information obtained were valid. It is only useful if the costs associated with each of the four programs also can be determined, along with the acceptable tuition levels for this population of students regarding each of the four programs. It is surprising to see how often information is collected that relates only marginally to the problem faced by an organization!

Many realistic plans can be established, and problems can be solved through the systematic collection of valid and useful information. This lies at the heart of rational, linear planning and modern management processes. In other instances, unfortunately, effective leadership cannot exclusively be based on information about the current situation. Many organizational decisions, particularly those involving people rather than machines, center, at least in part, on conflicting goals, objectives, or desired outcomes. Attention must shift from the domain of information to that of intentions. This domain is likely to be particularly important in today's society, where conflict in values and purposes is so common.

### **The Domain of Intentions**

The *domain of intentions* is entered whenever we attempt to understand and clarify our personal or our organization's mission, vision, values, or purposes. While research prevails in the area of information, clarification prevails in the area of intentions. Unlike traditional approaches to the clarification of intentions, which tend to emphasize enforcement or modeling, intention clarification focuses on the way in which mission, vision, values, and purposes come into being.

As we or our organization becomes clearer about intentions, we will begin to produce solutions that are more and more consistent with these intentions. The process of clarifying intentions becomes richer and more profound as each of us moves toward greater maturity. A mature intention is freely chosen; it is not imposed (an imposed requirement is part of the situation). A mature statement of mission, vision, value, and purpose is prized and affirmed; this statement serves as a guiding charter for one's department or organization and is repeatedly acted on in a consistent and persistent manner.

## **The Domain of Ideas**

The *domain of ideas* is entered whenever we attempt to generate a proposal intended to move from the current to the desired state. Ideas are sometimes fragile, often misunderstood, and easily lost. While information exists everywhere, we often ignore or misinterpret it. But we can usually go back and retrieve it. Similarly, even though intentions may be ignored or distorted, they resist extinction. Their resistance to change is often a source of frustration: old values linger as do old visions and purposes. Good ideas, on the other hand, are easy to lose and hard to recover.

Settings must be created in which ideas can readily be generated and retained. Two processes are essential. *Divergence* produces creative ideas. Divergence requires a minimum censorship of ideas, minimal restriction on people offering their own suggestions and taking risks, and minimal adherence to prescribed rules or procedures for the generation of new ideas. The second process is *convergence*. People must be given the opportunity to build on each other's ideas, to identify similarities in their ideas, and to agree upon a desired course of action. Convergence requires leaders to observe specific rules and procedures, to listen to ideas and to be constructively critical of other ideas. The domain of ideas often requires that we display a subtle and skillful interplay between convergence and divergence.

## **Colors of the Domains**

In the fiefdoms of the Middle Ages, not only did every domain have its own norms, values and narratives, it also had a shield or at least colors that provided this domain with a powerful, visual representation of its norms, values and narratives. While we are not in a place to design a shield for each domain, we can assign it an appropriate color. We have chosen to assign each domain one of the three primary colors on the spectrum: red, blue and yellow (acknowledging that there is a competing model concerning the three primary colors).

We are assigning the color of red to the Domain of Ideas. In fact, it is a ruby red-- for as we are about to see this is the domain that is glowing with energy and vitality. The Domain of Intentions has been assigned the color of blue (and more intensely azure blue). This is a color that represents sky and azure blue suggests a quite beautiful sky that inspires us to look upward and outward into the future. Finally, the Domain of Information is represented by yellow. A Golden Yellow represents the intense light emanating from the sun. We must be illuminated by light if we are to find our way forward.

With a brief description of each domain and with the color of each domain being assigned, we move on to a discussion of the nature of leadership that resides in each domain. We focus first on the domain of

ideas and the role played by a Ruby Red Leaders. Our attention then is focused on the domain of intentions and the nature of Azure Blue leadership. Our third domain (Information) is represented in the Golden Yellow style of leadership. We conclude this descriptive journey through the three primary styles or leadership by offering a mythic rendering of the three styles. In our second essay, consideration is given to a four style which blends all three. This fourth style is represented by the Rainbow. Later in this second essay essay, we consider three specific blends of the three primary styles, looking briefly at an Orange, Green and Purple styles of leadership.

### **The Ruby Red Leader of Action**

This is the Ruby Red style of leadership that is fiery. Resources are consumed at a rapid rate, generating a great deal of energy. We need this energy if we are to take action and not just stand in place. This is the leader who leaps out of the fox hole, charging forth in a manner that inspires those around them to also move forward. Without taking action, we are frozen in place—the most destructive state in which a human being can exist. We are no more than the small marsupials living on the African savannah who freeze in place when the lion approaches—for the alternative is to try running away or fighting the lion. Neither of these options make much sense for the marsupial—but do make sense for the human being who is no longer living on the Savannah and is fighting something other than lions. The key motto is: *“Don’t Just Stand There Do Something!”*

### **The Fire of Activism**

The activist dwells in a world of ideas that lead directly to action. Things are to be done immediately: “Why put off till tomorrow what we can do today!” For the activist, cautious deliberations are frustrating and demoralizing: “Let’s get on with it!” The activist tends to define the world in terms of leadership and risk-taking: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” He or she often suspects that the real problem of those who urge more deliberation is an unwillingness to take risks. The activist believes that action must be taken even though not all the information is in and even though the proposed solution is not perfect: “Something is better than nothing.”

### **The Ruby Red Relationship**

In their interactions with other people, the Ruby Red leader tends to be assertive and quite clear about what they would like to see in (and want from) their relationships. They tend to build their relationship around shared engagement and their relationships are often most pleasing for them when it accomplishes something important (and perhaps even unanticipated). The best working environment

for someone with a Ruby Red orientation is one in which there exists strong formal accountability. It is an environment in which there are concise and often quantifiable goals (management by objectives) and in which costs and benefits can be enumerated (return on investment). “I want to know when I have scored a point and don’t want the goal posts to be moving!”

Karen Horney is a noted and often controversial psychoanalyst. She was one of the first analysts to challenge Sigmund Freud’s theory about the Oedipus Complex and the female’s envy of men. She also was among the first analysts to write books for a lay population and, in doing so, presented a compelling theory regarding interpersonal relationships. She suggested that each of us, under conditions of anxiety (especially if it is related to our relationship with other people), is inclined to take one of three actions in relating to other people. We can move toward other people, away from other people or against other people. Her description of the preference to move against other people fits with our description of the Ruby Red leader. When confronted with a difficult or contentious relationship, the Ruby Red leader will push against and often confront the other person.

We can point to other theories that reveal a similar pattern. Will Schutz (1994) writes about our three interpersonal needs (inclusion, control, and openness/affection) and would conclude that the Ruby Red leader is likely to have a strong need for control. In the case of the Jungian-based Myers-Briggs (Briggs Myers and Myers, 1995) model of personality, we can speculate that Ruby Red leadership are likely to be aligned with the judging function.

We would also offer a somewhat controversial suggestion that the Ruby Red leader (at least in extreme form) is Introverted (rather than Extraverted)—in that this person is disposed to lead unilaterally rather than in relationship to other people. We will even go on to propose that all three of the primary leadership styles (in extreme form) are introverted. It is only in the fourth (Rainbow) style (to which we turn in the second essay) that we find a strong commitment to Extraversion – and will find the same thing to be the case with less extreme forms of each primary style and in the three blended styles (Orange, Green and Purple).

Finally, we turn to the insight-rich model of personality to be found in the Enneagram. Some of the major theorists in the world of the Enneagram (e.g. Riso and Hudson, 1996; Wagner, 2010) actually built their model of the nine Enneagram points around the three interpersonal orientations of Karen Horney. So, it is not too difficult to arrive at the conclusion that the Ruby Red leader is likely to align with three of the Enneagram types: 8, 3 and 1. The 8 type is often defined as being assertive, while the 1 is oriented

toward perfection and the 3 toward accomplishment. When you put these three types together, an insightful portrait of the Ruby Red leadership styles emerges.

### **A Ruby Red Portrait**

To engage these different perspectives, I offer the following portrait of the Ruby Red leader. The primary source of joy for someone with a Ruby Red orientation is the accomplishment of a goal. The primary source of energy comes from being able to accomplish something by oneself [autonomy] or with minimal collaboration (MBTI introversion). If necessary, the task is engaged with some forcefulness regarding the role to be played by other people (Schutz: control) (Enneagram: 8). The focus of attention for the Ruby Red is on the act of making a decision [MBTI judging].

A distinctive strength of the Ruby Red leader comes with the devoting of energy to getting the job done [Enneagram 3] and getting it done in the right way (Enneagram 1). A major concern of someone oriented to Ruby Red is appearing to be capable and successful [Enneagram 3]

The challenge for the Ruby Red is achieving a very ambitious goal (which is often set by an Azure Blue leader) and/or facing the caution and careful perspectives offered by those with a Golden Yellow orientation. The ultimate threat is being judged as a failure [Enneagram 3] This is where one's image of self comes to play (which often leads the Ruby Red leader into a mixture of Enneagram 2, 3 and 4]

### **Ruby Red: Viewing Other Preferences**

I am about to consider the other two primary perspectives and practices—but want my Ruby Red colleagues to offer a word about them first. Ruby Reds are strongly inclined to push for have a say about all sorts of matters, including their judgement about the Azure Blues and Golden Yellows. Let me first offer the Ruby Red view of those with an Azure Blue orientation: these people are Wishy/Washy. They are often “bleeding hearts” who spend all their time healing or mourning the state of our world rather than helping to take action that will prevent the injury and improve our world. The Azure Blue leaders are inclined to be dreamers. They are asking us to look over our heads while we are trying to solve the problem (which is not to be found up in the sky or clouds).

Those with a Golden Yellow are viewed by the Ruby Reds as uninvolved. They are “bean counter” who sit back and count the casualties rather than find ways to prevent these casualties. While the Azure Blues are doing the healing, the Golden Yellows are keeping the statistics regarding how many patients have been admitted and how many healed. No one is trying to prevent the injury or illness. It is up to

the Ruby Reds to take this preventative action. In short, those with a Ruby Red orientation are inclined to view analysis as a luxury when there is a crisis (and there always seems to be a crisis in the life of a Ruby Red). This is no time to sit back and gather data when we need to take action

### **The Azure Blue Leader of Vision**

This is the Azure Blue style of leadership that points to the sky so that we might all see the Intentions. Rather than looking down at the ground to see only the present state, we look upward to envision the future. Rather than starting a fire to produce energy (and ideas), we look up at the sky to find the energy inherent in the force of an inspiring image. Toward what are we moving—that is the key question. We must find direction in the midst of complexity, unpredictability and turbulence.

Vision requires that we find a consistent and compelling sense of mission and purpose. This is the leader who points in the direction of the enemy—so that the troops they are commanding know where to move when leaving the foxhole. Furthermore, these are the leaders who inspire their troops—showing them why they have taken on this enemy and why their courage and commitment truly makes a difference regarding the future of their family, organization, or society. The key motto is: *“Where are we going?”*

### **The Blue Sky of Idealism**

The idealist is someone who can envision rapidly how things could be and should be better. Within minutes of arriving on a new job, entering a new relationship, purchasing a new home or formulating a new program, the idealist is imagining and “seeing” how things could be improved. He or she challenges the mundane reasoning of the realist and notes that new perspectives are needed on old problems if the activist is to be successful in generating proposals to solve these problems.

Like the Golden Yellow realist, the idealist is reflective—but in a big-picture sense, not because he has a great interest in adequate information. The idealist is concerned about those who ponder the means too heavily and lose sight of the ends—concerned about losing the war while seeming to win individual battles through expedience. The idealist confronts the realist with her lack of courage: if bold vision is lacking then when will risks be taken and progress made? Without courage and vision where is the capacity to endure against adversity?

## The Azure Blue Relationship

While the Ruby Red relationship tends to be built on the accomplishment of a task, the Azure Blue relationship is built around persuasive and caring. The Azure Blue leader looks to establish relationships with people who share their interests—and in particular their personal values and life purposes. The best working environment for someone with an Azure Blue orientation is one that is infused with a strong and highly supportive culture. Metaphors of water, sky, floating, and flying are often found in this type of culture—regardless of the country in which the Azure Blue leader is working. There is often an ongoing search among Azure Blue leaders for these metaphors and the compelling images and visions associated with these metaphors.

Karen Horney would suggest that the Azure Blue leader tends to move toward other people when there is anxiety and tension in the relationship. This moving towards might be done in an effort to comfort or nurture the other person—or it might be done to somehow smother the other person with “kindness.” For Will Schutz, the Azure Blue orientation is aligned with an strong interpersonal need to be open in the sharing of personal information. With regard to the MBTI taxonomy, the Azure Blue leader is likely to be highly intuitive.

As in the case of the extreme Ruby Red, the extreme Azure Blue is ironically inclined toward introversion. While they seem, on the surface, to be highly engaged in their relationships with other people and to find energy in these relationships, it is often a one-way street: the extreme Azure Blue is giving to others, but finds it hard to receive the caring themselves (there is an inclination toward self-sacrifice and martyrdom). We find three Enneagram types that are aligned with Azure Blue. They are Enneagram 2 (the helper), Enneagram 6 (the pessimist) and Enneagram 7 (the visionary).

The alignment of Azure Blue with Enneagram 2 offers us an important insight regarding this leadership style. The extreme Azure Blue will often come to a helping relationship with an Enneagram 2 hook. They want something in return but never indicate what it is [a common dynamic among Enneagram 2 types]. The alignment of Azure Blue with Enneagram 6 offers us yet another insight. The Azure Blues are inclined toward helping other people because at some deep level they believe that our world is always wounding us—hence there is always the need for healing and support.

This leads us, in turn, to the role played by Enneagram 7 in our understanding of Azure Blue. In essence, Enneagram 7 is about looking upward and forward so that we might ignore or seeking to transcend the bleak picture offered by Enneagram 6. The Enneagram 7 is fully aware of reality—and knows that it is

not very pleasant. That's why the Azure Blue asks us to look up at the sky rather than down at the muddy and murky real world in which we are now standing. Even more dramatic is the realization that we are actually standing in (or sinking in) quicksand. We need a helping hand to pull us out (even if this hand is nothing more than a fragile dream of the future).

The Enneagram 7 type also instructs us about the visioning of the Azure Blue. It seems that the extreme Azure Blue is inclined toward promoting their own dream of the future, rather than entertaining the possibility that other people might also hold a valid and completing vision of the future. It often takes a Rainbow leader or a leader who blends Azure Blue with Purpose (as an advocate) or Green (as an informed helper) to bring other people into the collaborative journey toward a shared vision. We will have more to say about this in our second essay.

### **The Azure Blue Portrait**

In moving toward other people, the Azure Blue leader is likely to find a source of joy in building commitment to a vision—either alone or with other people. The primary source of energy for someone with an Azure Blue orientation is imagining what “could be”. This is in keeping with the Jungian (MBTI) intuitive function. The major focus of attention comes down to the devoting of energy to and nurturing of a specific relationship. This is in keeping with the Jungian (MBTI) concept of introversion (introverts are inclined toward relationships like the extroverts – but to only a few relationships rather than many relationships).

The strength of an Azure Blue orientation is providing serve to other people [enneagram 2]. Once again, one's image of self: might require attention to Enneagram 3 and 4 (as well as Enneagram 2]. The challenge for the Azure Blue is overcoming the skepticism of other people (often coming from those with a Golden Yellow orientation), as well as helping other people gain appreciation for the “people” part of an issue (often having to counter those with a Ruby Red orientation). The ultimate threat is being judged as someone who is ultimately uncaring—being found out as an Enneagram 2 with a hook.

### **Azure Blue: Viewing Other Preferences**

We must first of all note that those with an Azure Blue orientation hate to say anything bad about another person. They often tend to be “appreciation junkies.” However, if forced to share their concerns about the other two orientations then they would have the following to say. Those with a Ruby Red orientation can tend to be a bit cruel—even “heartless”. This is particularly true of those Ruby Reds who are in a leadership role. The Ruby Reds also can be blunderers. They can move forward without knowing

which direction in which to move. As a result, the plans being made can often lead to haphazard actions, unanticipated consequences and frequent reinventions.

What about those with a Golden Yellow orientation. While the Ruby Reds can be heartless, the Gold Yellows are indifferent—they are “soulless”. They are calculators, who tend to view everything from the perspective of numbers: “if it can’t be quantified then it doesn’t really exist.” This means that the truly important dimensions of life are often overlooked or undervalued. We need more soul, as well as more heart, in our contemporary world—so says the Azure Blue as a reluctant critic of the other two primary perspectives and practices.

### **The Golden Yellow Leader of Wisdom**

This is the leader who seeks illumination from the sun. This is the Golden Yellow of dispassionate, knowledgeable leadership. What is our current reality? We must shed light on where we are right now, so that we don’t stumble forth in the darkness. The path forward will be discovered and illuminated only when we have sufficient Information. This is the leader who ensures that there are adequate resources available to defeat the enemy. It would be foolhardy to leap out of the foxhole if there is inadequate ammunition, too few soldiers or an inaccurate (or nonexistent) assessment of the resources available to the enemy. Not only will soldiers be killed, but our side will be weakened and vulnerable to the enemy’s own initiative. The key motto is: *“Don’t Just Do Something, Stand There [and gain better understanding of where we are right now]!”*

### **The Illumination of Reality**

The realist dwells in a world of information. Such a world requires objectivity and diverse perspectives. It is a world that is quite challenging in our contemporary world of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) to which I have often added both turbulence and contradiction--resulting in VUCA Plus (Bergquist, 2019). It is especially the condition of contradiction that tends to frustrate the Golden Yellow realist.

What does it mean that we have two or more sets of data that portray quite different realities? And what does it mean for us to know that these different perceptions of reality are often dictated by political agendas, societal biases and a strong dose of arrogance and ignorance. The sunlight might be illuminating our reality, but there also many shadows and the sunlight has not penetrated all corners of our reality—especially those corners that are filled with anxiety and hatred. The realism of Golden Yellow is desperately needed right now—but the versions of reality that emerge are often suspect.

## **The Golden Yellow Relationship**

This is a relationship that is founded in clear and consistent communication. Golden Yellow leaders interacts with other people in order to learn more about the real world in which they are expected to lead. They are looking for objectively-based information—but that is hard to find. At the very least, an effective Golden Yellow leader will look for diverse perspectives on the real world—multiple stakeholders will be invited to the table, where they can share what they know or what they believe that they know without being intimidated or ignored.

Those with a Golden Yellow orientation will tend to build their extended relationships around shared expertise and those people with credible sources of knowledge. The best working environment for those with a Golden Yellow orientation is one in which there are strong formal operations that are being consistently monitored. Feedback about these operations is being taken serious and corrective actions are being taken.

When a relationship isn't working well, the person with a Golden Yellow orientation will want to move away from other people—especially the person with whom they are experiencing difficulties. This is the third option that is identified by Karen Horney. Just as the sun burns bright at a long distance from our earth, the Golden Yellow leader (or any other person with a Golden Yellow orientation) will want somehow to move out far enough to be safe and perhaps see things more clearly or more “objectively.”

The primary interpersonal need is for management of Inclusion: who do I want to be with and who do I want to avoid? What if they invite me to join them---do I want to accept their invitation? What if they don't want to include me—will I feel hurt or relieved? It is important to note that the need for Inclusion often drops off precipitously when we are going through a divorce or feel betrayed in a business relationship. If the level of interpersonal trust declines than a Golden Yellow perspective often becomes more attractive – at least for a short period of time (while we cocoon).

The inclination toward distancing and objectivity is represented as well in the Golden Yellow preference for the thinking function (MBTI) and for readily understood preference for Introversion (even with Golden Yellow preferences that are not extreme). The Golden Yellow orientation is also aligned with the three final Enneagram types: 4, 5 and 9. The fifth enneagram type aligns most easily with Golden Yellow. This type is about finding a safe place away from the hubbub of daily life. It is about being a bit of a hermit. By contrast, the Enneagram 9 is about being in the midst of the hub-bub—but finding a thoughtful and rational compromise among disparate and often competing perspectives. The

Enneagram 9 is a peacemaker and is probably the most constructive way in which Golden Yellow leadership can be engaged.

With Type 4 we ourselves confronted with an important irony. To the extent that Enneagram 4 is aligned with the Golden Yellow orientation then we find a contradiction in the desire of those with the Golden Yellow orientation to advocate rationality and reality, while choosing to focus on their own deep thoughts and feelings. While they might distrust the inner thoughts and feelings of other people (as being irrational or biased), they are likely to trust their own inner life and ironically rely on this inner life when making “rational” judgements about the world.

Michael Polanyi (1969), a noted Nobel-prize winning biologist and philosopher, wrote about this irony when distinguishing between that TO WHICH we attend and the that FROM WHICH we attend. When someone points to some events, we tend to look to where they are pointing (“To Which”) rather than looking at the act of pointing itself (“From Which”). Why have they selected this event for their attention? What is the reason they have asked us to attend to this event?

Polanyi would suggest that the notion of “objectivity” is always suspect, given that the source of this objectivity is always subjective. Our rationality is always couched in an irrationality to which we can never directly (or objectively) attend, given that we would once again have to find a place from which to mount our attention. For the Golden Yellow, there is always this struggle about somehow being rational and objective in a world that doesn’t take easily to such a stance.

### **A Golden Yellow Portrait**

As we compile a portrait of the Golden Yellow orientation and particularly the Golden Yellow style of leadership, we find that the primary source of Joy is found in gaining an objective sense of what is happening out there in the world. The primary source of energy comes from systematically arriving at an “accurate” conception of reality [MBTI: thinking] When seeking to focus their attention on something that is important, those with a Golden Yellow orientation are like to devote time (and energy) to remaining clear, consistent and rational in addressing real life issues-and they best do this by working with some independence from other people [MBTI: introversion].

The strength inherent in the Golden Yellow style of leadership is insistence on getting it right. The Golden Yellow leader, in turn, is challenged when being pushed to action without adequate information (this push often brought about by a Ruby Red leader). As already noted, they are also challenged when confronted with

alternative interpretations of reality (these interpretations often being offered by an Azure Blue leader). So, what is the ultimate threat for the Golden Yellow leader: it is not being perfect right.

### **Golden Yellow: Viewing Other Preferences**

Those with a Golden Yellow orientation often consider themselves to be the best judge of character and personal strengths—since they can stand back and objectively observe the behavior of other people and the consequences of this behavior. While they might wait from someone to ask for their observations and judgements, the Golden Yellows are quick to share what they “know.” First, those with a Ruby Red orientation can tend to be quite arrogant—especially if they are in a leadership role or are in a position to exert some authority (formal or informal).

To use the old phrase, the Ruby Reds act like “bulls in a China shop.” They often leave behind debris after they have taken action and do more wounding than healing. The Ruby Reds also are described by those with a Golden Yellow orientation as being ignorant: They move forward without knowing if sufficient resources are available. A new computer system is installed without any training being required—and it might not even be the case that this system is really needed: Ruby Reds seem to be attracted to shiny new toys!

When it comes to those with an Azure Blue orientation, the Golden Yellows are likely to use such terms as “irrational”, “soft hearted” and “dreamer.” The Golden Yellows find the Azure Blues to be particularly frustrating to work with because they are always ignoring reality and thinking only about the future. Why can’t we stay in the present for a few minutes and solve the problems that we face right now, rather than anticipating problems of the future or spending time envisioning what a world would look like if these problems didn’t exist. There will be no tomorrow if we don’t concentrate on today.

So ends the dialogue among people with differing perspectives and practices. Stereotypes can easily be elicited, and constructive behavior can often be misunderstood. Yet, the dialogue must take place and the biases must be unearthed, so that all of us might gain from the assistance of those who are different from us and, because of this difference, can complement our own understanding of the world in which we live and the actions we must take to improve this world. I offer several fantasies, to which we now turn, that might help us orchestrate this dialogue.

### **The Fantasy of Preferences**

There is some wisdom inherent in the fantasies, myths and fairy tales that are to be found in all cultures. At the very least, these compelling narratives reiterate (and reinforce) powerful images that are

prevalent in a specific culture. In recent years, many of the fantasies, myths and fairy tales have been replaced by stories that are portrayed in books, film, or television. In North America, two of the most popular productions has been *The Wizard of Oz* (a set of books for children and then a notable movie of 1939) and the well know science-fiction series, *Star Trek*, that has been watched on television and in movies. Both of the “myths” portray the three leadership styles and orientations offered in this essay.

## **The Wizard of Oz**

In this wonderful tale of a young woman, Dorothy, coming to full realization regarding the value of home and the people who populate her daily life, we encounter three characters who join Dorothy in her trip to a destination, Oz, that is to provide each of these characters with something that they deeply desire (only to discover that what they seek is already available to them).

The first of the characters that Dorothy encounter on her journey (down the Yellow Brick Road) is a scarecrow, who is not very good at scaring anything. The scarecrow wants a brain: “If only I could have a brain instead of just this straw.” While assisting Dorothy, the scarecrow exhibited a great deal of brain power. He emulated the Golden Yellow style of leadership. At the end of the *Wizard of Oz*, the scarecrow is awarded a diploma—which is a document that acknowledges his wisdom.

As the fraudulent Wizard notes, it often only takes a diploma to make someone seem smart. [It is worth noting that the original books were not just intended for consumption by children. Like *Gulliver’s Travels* and many other “children’s books”, the *Wizard of Oz* books offered critical comments regarding leadership in American during this turbulent time—the Depression years of the 1930s.]

The second character, like the scarecrow, was discovered nearby the Yellow Brick Road. He was the Tin Man, who had rusted in place during a rainstorm. With his ax in hand (to chop down trees), the Tin Man was unable to move. Dorothy and the Scarecrow were able to loosen him up with a bit of oil in each of the Tin Man’s limbs. With the renewed capacity to not just move, but also talk, the Tin Man conveyed his desire to have a heart. There is only a hollow sound when you bang on his tin chest. As in the case of the scarecrow, we discover that the Tin Man is full of heart. He is a gentle, caring soul who only comes to recognize this essential characteristic in himself when he is provided a symbol of philanthropy (a heart) that is acknowledging his generosity. In many ways, the Tin Man exemplifies Azure Blue perspective and practices.

This brings us to the third character, who is the loveable Cowardly Lion. Once again, we find ourselves traveling down the Yellow Brick Road (having faced the threats of the Wicked Witch and her minions). In

the midst of a terrifying forest, Dorothy, the Scarecrow and the Tin Man (along with Dorothy's dog, Toto), a ferocious lion appears. He roars and threatens everyone—except Toto. It is only when Toto challenges the lion that we discover the ferocity is only bluster.

The lion is actually a big fraidy-cat and soon acknowledges that he is in need of a whole lot of courage. Once again, we witness many courageous acts (along with a whole lot of fear) on the part of our Lion—especially when Dorothy is being threatened. Like many Ruby Red leaders, the bluster is mixed with some real caring and real courage. This caring and courage is acknowledged by the Wizard, who awards the Lion a medal of bravery.

For Dorothy, there is the desire to return to her home in Kansas. It is the Good Witch (not the Wizard) that points out to Dorothy that she too has only to look inward to find home and the people she has too often taken for granted. It is interesting to note that our three characters assume posts of leadership in Oz (as the Wizard flies off in his balloon). Hopefully, they will all read the present essay on the three primary styles of leadership and will be guided in their actions by what I have written. . . .

## **Star Trek**

We can move forward by four decades (and many centuries) to the world of the Starship Enterprise, that is led by Captain James Kirk and his loyal and competent crew. In the character of James Kirk (played by William Shatner) we find the exemplification of Ruby Red leadership. In keeping with the general theme of the television and movie series, Captain Kirk boldly going where no one else has gone! In doing so, he gets into trouble—as do many extreme Ruby Red leaders. He exemplifies action without thought (Golden Yellow) or direction (Azure Blue).

This brings us to the physician on the Starship Enterprise. It is Leonard McCoy (“Bones”) (played by DeForest Kelley). While Bones is a skillful and caring doctor, he is also quite emotional and gets into trouble or at least doesn't help matters when he focuses on doing the healing rather than trying to prevent the injury. Like many of the extreme Azure Blues, Bones is not inclined to be thoughtful and reasonable. In his frequent conflicts with the third character, Mr. Spock (who personifies the Golden Yellow), Dr. McCoy is often heard declaring: “I'm sick and tired of your logic!”

This leaves us with the third character, Spock (played by Leonard Nimoy), who is half human and half Vulcan. He is a being that desperately wants to remain rational under all conditions (struggling at times with the human half of him). Spoke gets into trouble or is not always helpful precisely because he gets caught up in the data without considering the human cost. One of the wonderful statements made by

Spoke exemplifies his Golden Yellow perspective: “may I say that I have not thoroughly enjoyed serving with humans? I find their illogic and foolish emotions a constant irritant”

It seems that all three perspectives and practices are required in operating the Starship Enterprise—just as they are needed in operating all contemporary organizations that are required in a world of VUCA Plus.

### **Reiterating the Important Messages**

I would suggest that the Wizard of Oz and Star Trek not only offer charming examples of the three primary leadership perspectives and practices. Both of these modern-day myths reiterated two important messages. First, we need to appreciate the strengths that we already have as those with a Ruby Red, Azure Blue or Golden Yellow perspective, who engage in practices aligned with one of these perspectives. Each style of leadership is to be appreciated and engaged in the organizations where we serve as members and leaders. We should not have to wait until the Wizard or Good Witch appreciates (acknowledges and honors) our strengths—and the strengths of people with whom we work.

The second important message to reiterate is revealed in the Star Trek narratives. Our strengths are wonderful when used in an appropriate manner, at the right time, and usually in conjunction with the strengths found among other members of our organization. We tend to get in trouble not from engagement of your weaknesses, but rather from the excessive or inappropriate uses of these strengths. This second message is particularly important to keep in mind when we are anxious and threatened (there are many alien forces operating on our own planet earth). The temptation for us to regress to an extreme (and often infantile) version of our strength is great when we are afraid. The courage of our Lion, the heart of our Tin Man, and the wisdom of our Scarecrow should be engaged so that we become collaborative and appreciative of those who can assist us in our own journey down the Yellow Brick Road.

### **Implications for Coaching**

While we might not have a scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion—or even a good doctor or Vulcan—to assist us in our journey, we can look to assistance from a professional coach. I wish to finish this first essay by suggesting ways in which a coach can assist us (or at least ways in which we can self-coach). This will mean that we need to return briefly to the concepts that introduced this essay: the domains of information, intentions and idea. And I will be talking initially to those who do the coaching.

## **The Nature of Effective Coaching**

First, it is important when coaching someone to acknowledge that those leaders who tend to dwell more on reflection than action are oriented either toward “realism” or “idealism.” Whereas the “activist” tends to dwell in the domain of actionable ideas, the “realist” prefers the domain of information and the “idealist” the domain of intentions. The activists perceive the overly analytical realist as an immobile, often obsessive person. Similarly, activist views the idealist as hopelessly romantic—a person who would rather build castles in the air than build a durable bungalow on earth. The realist, while very “well-informed”, may never lift up his or her head long enough or far enough to see what is actually happening in the world beyond the data.

Leaders are often pulled not only between reflection and action, but also between realism and idealism. The realist is careful and cautious, because of concern that problems may appear to be “solved” through wishful thinking (the failure of idealism) or without anticipating the consequences (the failure of activism). Too many people, according to the realist, go off half-cocked, with very little sense of the resources needed to solve a problem and without a clear understanding of the current situation to anticipate all of the consequences associated with a particular solution.

Effective coaching takes place in the three interrelated domains that reside at the heart of this model of leadership: (1) information (the essential features of the current state), (2) intentions (the desired state; what we intend to accomplish and/or avoid) and (3) ideas (specific ideas and subsequent action taken to change the current state into the desired state). Effective coaching blends attention to information, intentions and ideas.

Effective coaching also balances phases of reflection and action. Frequently, coaching clients will spend too much time in reflection and never move beyond untested ideas, or they will move precipitously toward action with insufficient attention to either information or intentions. The personality preferences of individual leaders will cause them to favor some of these domains over others, requiring that the coach help restore balance, if the leader is to be successful and well-rounded.

## **The Crucial Questions**

With this introduction directed to the person doing the coaching, we can now identify some crucial questions that can be conveyed either by the coach or by those of us who will be doing some self-

coaching. Following are some general coaching questions to be asked that are related specifically to the content of this essay:

- What is your strongest color/preference?
- What is your weakest color/preference?
- When and under what circumstances do your preferences change?
- What is the most important strength for you associated with your strongest preference? When are you at your best?
- What is your strongest color/preference when you confront opposition? What does this color look like when you engage it?
- What is your next strongest color and your weakest color when you confront opposition? When if ever do you engage these colors—perhaps in your childhood?
- When does your major strength(s) get you in trouble—and what kind of trouble do you get into?

Following are several sets of more specific probing questions to be posed regarding each of the three domains:

#### **The Domain of intentions [The Desired state]**

- How would you know if you have been successful in this endeavor?
- What would make you happy?
- Who else has an investment in this project and what do they want to happen?
- What would happen if you did not achieve this goal?
- What would happen if you did achieve this goal?
- What scares you most about not achieving this goal?
- What scares you most about achieving this goal?

#### **The Domain of information [Current state]**

- What are the most salient facts with regard to the circumstance in which you now find yourself?
- What are the “facts” about which you are most uncertain at the present time? How could you check on the validity of these facts?

- What are alternative ways in which you could interpret the meaning or implications of the facts that you do believe to be valid?

### **The Problem [gap between Current and Desired state]**

- How do you know that there is a problem here?
- To what extent do other people see this as a problem? If they don't, why don't they?
- How long has this problem existed? How big is it? Is there any pattern with regard to its increase or decrease in magnitude?
- What are the primary cause(s) of the problem? What is different when the problem does and does not exist? What remains the same whether or not the problem exists?
- Who benefits from the continuing existence of the problem? In what ways do you benefit (even indirectly) from the continuing existence of this problem?
- What will you miss if and when this problem is resolved?

The coaching process should then tend to shift toward the uncovering of solutions. This uncovering may occur while the problem is being described and explored—or it may even precede the exploration of the problem. It is not for the reflective coach to control the flow of the clearness process. Rather the reflective coach continues asking questions that move with rather than impede the client's own "natural" way of exploring the problem.

When exploring solutions to the client's problem (or your own problem when self-coaching), the coach and client move into a third domain—the domain of ideas. One or more of the following questions may be appropriate to ask:

### **The Domain of ideas [solution(s)]**

- What have you already tried to do in solving this problem and what did you learn from these efforts?
- What actions have you taken that somehow reduced the scope or impact of the problem—even if this action was not intended to address this problem? What did you learn from this serendipitous impact?
- How might other people help you solve this problem—especially those who have not previously been involved with this problem? What other resources which have not previously been used might you direct to this problem?

- What would happen if you just ignored this problem? What would happen if you devoted all of your time and resources to solving this problem?
- What is the most unusual idea that you have about solving this problem? What solutions have you dreamed of or thought about at a moment when you were particularly tired or frustrated?
- What would you do if you had much more time to solve this problem?
- What would you do if you had very little time to solve this problem?
- If you were “king” or “queen” what solution(s) would you impose to solve this problem? If you were a “fool” or had nothing to lose in trying something out, what would you do in attempting to solve this problem?

These questions all encourage a fresh look at solutions to the problem and encourage one’s client (or oneself) to probe deeper into their own ideas regarding potential solutions. Coaching clients often limit themselves in considering nontraditional ideas, in part because they have been “right” so often in their life that it is hard to risk being “wrong.” The effective coach provides a safe and supportive environment in which to articulate and explore these “wrong” and crazy ideas and in which to consider parameters of the problem and solution (time, resources, authority, approaches) which have always been on “the back burner” for this harried client. This is particularly challenging (and important) to keep in mind when doing self-coaching.

## **Conclusions**

There is one final point to be made that is fundamental to an effective coaching process—whether it is engaged with a professional coach or engaged with oneself. The coaching process must provide a safe setting—a sanctuary—in which we can reflect on the nature of a problem and its solutions. It should be safe when engaging a professional coach—not only because the coach is accepting and supportive, but also because the coach is not intruding with their own ideas. When we impose our ideas as colleagues, then the recipient of these ideas must acknowledge them, find something good about them (so that our feelings aren’t hurt), and—if we have been particularly helpful (in terms of giving our client considerable time and attention)—plan some way in which to make use of these ideas (even if it means that the solution is unsuccessful). All of this distracts our client from the real task at hand which is to find a solution to his or her problem, not to the newly created problem (making us feel good about our assistance, etc.).

The coaching process I have just outlined is simple, straightforward and often a valuable tool for a coach who works in an organizational setting or for someone who is coaching themselves. It all goes back to the basic description of the three domains. Ultimately, our perspectives and practices as leaders and contributing members of an organization should incorporate and move through all three domains whether we are burning with Ruby Red fire, gazing at an Azure Blue sky, or shining Golden Yellow light on reality.

---

## References

Briggs-Meyer, Isabel and Peter Myers (1995) *Gifts Differing*. Mountain View CA: Consulting Psychologist Press.

Polanyi, Michael (1969) *Knowing and Being*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Riso, Don Richard and Russ Hudson (1996) *Personality Types*. Boston: Mariner Books

Schutz, Will (1994) *The Human Element*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wagner, Jerome (2010) *Karen Horney's Three Trends (Moving Toward, Against, Away From) and the Enneagram Styles*. <http://www.enneagramspectrum.com/184/karen-horneys-three-trends-moving-towards-against-away-from-and-the-enneagram-styles/>

