The Art of Leading Oneself

An understanding of ‘leading oneself’, illustrated by means of contemporary art.

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by Sascha Christian Plöbst
“The first and best victory is to conquer self.”

Plato (Laws, 626e)
STATUTORY DECLARATION

“I declare in lieu of an oath that I have written this master thesis myself and that I have not used any sources or resources other than stated for its preparation. I further declare that I have clearly indicated all direct and indirect quotations. This master thesis has both been submitted at the IMC Fachhochschule Krems and the Linnaeus University Kalmar and has not been handed in elsewhere for examination purposes.”

Sascha Christian Plöbst

Date: 31.05.2013
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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals extensively with ‘the Art of Leading Oneself’. In the course of this paper, an understanding of the term ‘leading oneself’ is given. Furthermore a reflection upon the reasons why it is necessary in nowadays society and business world to lead oneself is provided. The core of the thesis constitutes a thorough discussion of possible elements of the art of leading oneself. In conclusion it is to be said, that on the basis of the knowledge of an individual’s frames of references, a framework of personal values and vision should be created. In a second dimension it is necessary to deeply reflect upon the inner Self and to gain insight about the authentic Self. Through the acknowledgement that an individual can learn from failures, the principles of the crucibles are described. In a third dimension, the bridge to ‘the Art of Leading Others’ is build and a rough overview of the necessities of sensegiving in the communication process is given. Concluded, it can be said, that it is of utmost importance to know and incorporate the authentic Self in every activity.

Keywords: leading oneself, self-leadership, leadership, Authentic Leadership, Theory U, Presencing, Sensemaking, Sensegiving.

**Schlüsselwörter:** sich selbst führen, Selbst-Führung, Führung, Authentische Führung, Theory U, Presencing, Sinnstiftung, Sinngebung
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1 INTRODUCTION

I want to start this thesis with the core of Plato’s seventh and eight letters from the collection of the thirteen, which were written between 387 and 350 BC. These two letters are dealing with Plato’s experience in Sicily and the two leaders of Syracuse, Dionysus I. and Dionysus II. It is to say that I obtained the knowledge of this out of the comprehensive article ‘On the Art of Leading Others Through The Art of Leading Oneself. An Interpretation of Plato’s seventh and eight letter’ which was written by Daudi (2013).

In Plato’s first trip to Syracuse, he tried to coach and help Dionysus I. in the art of leading others. He perceived him though as not coachable and the mission was without much success. Plato was not able to educate him because Dionysus I. did not accept Plato’s technique of coaching. Dionysus I. even threatened to imprison Plato at this stage. Plato returned consequently to Athens and founded Akademos in 387 BC, which basically laid the foundation of the educational system in nowadays world. The main idea of Akademos was to educate people to educate themselves.

When Dionysus I. died, his son Dionysus II. succeeded him. Again, Plato was asked to come to Syracuse to educate the younger Dionysus. Plato accepted the second mission because he wanted to apply his ideas of coaching and consulting and create a figurehead for his new approach towards teaching. Fortunately, this time Plato perceived the younger version of Dionysus as coachable. However, it was hard work which lasted 2 years. In the end Plato was not successful in transforming Dionysus II. due to external factors. Anyhow, through this experience, Plato formed and found the true sense of education and further developed this understanding in Akademos.

His model is in the broadest sense best described with Karl Weick’s concept of sensemaking. It consists of three main pillars – Reflexion, Logos and Action. Reflexion is achieved through talks and dialogues, where Plato tried to make sense with his ‘clients’. He wanted them to reach an insight and to
develop their own understanding of the problem. Within Logos, Plato used practical knowledge – nowadays called ‘case studies’ - and suggested, that through the case studies, a leader can mirror him/herself and mirror his/her action in the events, which are described in the case. The third dimension, the action, can be understood as to discover some sort of inner theory where leaders work with their own selves and on their characteristics and behaviour. Hence they consciously discover their minds and intentions. And in this very notion, the – in my opinion – core of Plato’s understanding of education can be found. A leader should thrive to create harmony between his inner and outer respect. He/she should align the realms of respecting oneself with the respect of others and should therefore create a balance between those two. Only when the first one is achieved, the latter can follow. “The Art of Leading Others Comes Through The Art of Leading Oneself” (Plato n.d., cited in Daudi 2013).

1.1 Research question and anticipated outcome

The aim of this study is to extensively deal with Plato’s aphorism ‘The Art of Leading Others Comes Through The Art of Leading Oneself’. In the course of this paper I will strongly concentrate on the latter part and try to formulate an understanding of what it means to lead oneself and why it is necessary in nowadays business environment to have knowledge about this art. Furthermore I will investigate on possibilities how the art of leading oneself can be achieved within a business context. In order to elaborate on these statements, the following research questions are going to be discussed and analysed:

1. What does ‘leading oneself’ mean?
2. Why is it important to lead oneself?
3. What are possible elements of leading oneself?

The underlying reason for me to write this thesis is my aspiration to become a future leader. During my work in an international company I experienced
different leadership skills and qualities as a result of the various supervisors I was exposed to. Hence, I was interested in developing my own leadership competence to further nurture my strategical leadership skills as I am aiming to also lead people in a way that they feel supported and that they can ultimately unfold themselves. In order to achieve that goal, I have to first understand and learn how to lead myself though.

Because: **How can I lead others, if I am not able to lead myself?**

This inspiring and activating quote goes back to 387 BC and to Plato when he was coming back from Syracuse and founded Akademos. It furthermore constitutes the main theme of the Master program ‘Leadership and Management in International Context’ at the Linnaeus University. During the first courses of this program we learned the importance of leading oneself in order to excel in life. Besides that we had to reflect upon various business and psychological models, which are dealing with that respective issue.

To put the topic in a business context it is to say that leadership is an incremental component that influences the existence, survival and functioning of any group or organisation. However, the organisations of today are in need of more than great leaders. In fact, as the environment becomes more complex and intercultural, what they need is extraordinary leaders capable of leading themselves to lead others by developing the necessary competences and motivations that allow them to high perform, and to foster integrative, innovative and creative thinking within an organisation.

In the course of this master thesis, I am trying to understand the fundamental needs of what is required to lead oneself. Hence, it can be considered as a paper where I am discovering and interpreting the various aspects of ‘the art of leading oneself’. I suppose that this will contribute to a more holistic view on leadership and thus might be helpful for my aspiration of becoming a leader. Besides that, I presume that the requirements and
needs to become a good leader are extremely individual and are dependant on the very personality. Manz and Neck (2004) were stating that leading oneself is neither a trait nor a descriptive theory. Rather than addressing a particular problem or stating a solution, leading oneself should be considered as a prescriptive theory, which offers a high-level guidance to designers. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that this work will help and inspire the reader to grasp the idea of leading oneself and form his/her own way in order to excel in defining who he/she is and what he/she wants. Furthermore, this work will help the reader to lead him/herself to ultimately lead others.

1.2 Current state of the art

The general trend from a ‘command and control’ leadership attitude towards a more open, inspiring and convincing approach was already mentioned in 1989 in De Pree’s book “The Art of Leadership” (De Pree 1990, p. 46). This general development is in nowadays society more needed and applicable than ever.

Manz (1986) laid with his article the basic theoretical foundations of self-leadership and stated therein, that self-leadership is a psychological construct that represents one’s capacity for performance enhancement through a repertoire of ongoing cognitive, motivational and behavioural self-navigation strategies. Researchers grouped the common self-leadership strategies into three main categories: behaviour-focused strategies, natural reward strategies and constructive thought pattern strategies (Manz & Neck 2004, Manz & Sims 2001). Behavioural focused strategies include self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward and self-punishment and are aiming to increase an individuals’ self awareness in order to enable behavioural management and to furthermore set behaviour-altering goals for themselves. Natural reward strategies strive to create situations in which a person is motivated or rewarded by aspects of a task or an activity which
was successfully mastered. Constructive thought patterns are intended to identify and replace dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions.

Based on the above-mentioned principles, Manz and Sims (2001) introduced the concept of ‘SuperLeadership’ as an effective form of leadership which emphasises on empowering followers and creating self-leaders. They state that “the first step of SuperLeadership is to master self-leadership” (Manz & Sims 2001, p. 7). Furthermore, this paradigm emphasizes on the importance of having individuals in a company, which have the ability of leading themselves in order to lead others. Neck and Houghton (2006, p. 274) arguing that the most common criticism towards the concept of self-leadership is the conceptual indistinctiveness with classic theories of motivation (such as self-regulation). Thus, some researchers have questioned the uniqueness of the concept of self-leadership and considered it as a mere repackaging of individual differences already explained in previous personality theorems (Markham & Markham, 1995, 1998 cited in Neck & Houghton 2006, p. 275).

The social cognitive theory of Bandura (1986, cited in Neck & Houghton 2006, p. 279) constitutes another major conceptual framework whereon self-leadership strategies are based. Therefore, this theory suggests that human behaviour is determined by a relationship among internal and external influences as well as behaviour in general. The basic assumption of this system is that individuals have control over setting their own performance standards, which is principally influenced by their degree of self-efficacy.

Neck and Houghton (2006, p. 280) also see the necessity to distinguish between self-leadership and self-management. They are stating that self-management consists of a set of strategies, which are designed for individuals to manage their behaviour “with respect to reducing discrepancies from immediate externally set standards” (Neck & Houghton 2006, p. 280). However, self-management does not include the assessment and creation of the respective standards themselves. Hence, self-management does not address the purpose and importance of given
standards. The self-leadership approach on the other hand puts a much stronger focus on the self-influence in terms of what should be done and why.

Bennis and Nanus (2007) are dealing in their book ‘Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge’ with the question of how an individual can manage him/herself in order to lead others. In this very respect the authors also distinguish sharply between leaders and managers (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 20) and state that leadership can be learned (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 25, p. 223). In this very respect it is also of major importance to be authentic. One should not just pretend to be a leader and stick to models and rules learned in a textbook. Shamir and Eilam (2005) are describing in their article the concept of the life-story. The life-story approach serves as essential element in defining and developing authentic leaders.

Senge (2006) and Scharmer (2009) are extensively researching on the necessity to know the inner self and to operate from a state within one’s deepest future possible. This encounters the authentic self.

### 1.3 Design

In the first chapter an understanding of the term ‘leading oneself’ is formulated. In the second chapter I will try to answer the second research question and decipher the need, why leading oneself is important in nowadays society. In the main part of this master thesis, I want to invite the reader to the art exhibition ‘leading oneself’. In this part I have subsumed five principles of leading oneself, which aroused out of the analysis and the research I did. I included an array of paintings of my most famous artists, Dali, Picasso, Delacroix and Pollock. In the course of this thesis I will try to explain with the help of those paintings, the concepts and models which I discovered during my research. As a matter of fact, art has become a very important and interesting aspect in modern experimental development programs. I am aiming to create a relationship between the contemporary
art and the common theorems of leading oneself. This approach should somehow constitute an enriching aspect on the work in general. The readers of this work should furthermore be stimulated to see something quite concrete and practical in their interpretation of art, which will re-join their interpretation of reality and the problem in general. “The paint is the medium that can illuminate the dark shadow memories that emerge in the beauty of colour and form. By making inwardness open to evaluation and interpretation, the work of art does the work of exposing truth of being in the world with a subtle and profound wisdom” (Van De Windt 2004, p. 4). Art consequently helps the reader to stretch his/her imagination and take another’s point of view in order to be open and flexible (Smith 196, p. 47).

"Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand.” (Pablo Picasso)

1.4 Limitations

In my understanding, the limitations sector within a thesis serves as a synchronisation process between the reader and the author and aligns all parties’ expectations as well as their frames of references. Therefore I devoted quite a space to the limitations of that paper as I think it is elementary to do so.

1.4.1 The areas of leadership

Koestenbaum (1991, pp. 98-100) is defining four basic areas of business: world, strategy, culture and leadership mind (see Figure 1 The Areas of Leadership). The first area (world) contains the global political and economic situation and is understood as a historical and market force which is governing the world and which every enterprise must operate in. The strategy is therefore a company’s response to the world situation. Koestenbaum defines these two business areas - the practical world and the
companies’ reaction to it - as objective phenomena, which are compromising the strategic side of leadership.

**Figure 1 The Areas of Leadership**

![Diagram showing areas of leadership]

Source: Modified after Koestenbaum 1991, p. 99

The third area, the culture, is an intangible dimension that defines what people feel and how they behave. The culture must support the strategy. “In an effective company, it is the culture that translates strategy into tangible results” (Koestenbaum 1991, p. 100). The fourth area - the quality of the individual leadership mind - is considered as a critical success factor. “Culture is made possible through a critical mass of individuals who think and act as leaders – individual executives with leadership minds” (Koestenbaum 1991, p. 100). Koestenbaum (1991, p 102) considers the fourth part as the starting point, “where it all begins”. He is furthermore combining the culture and the individual leadership mind as subjective dimensions.
With the division of subjectivity and objectivity, Koestenbaum (1991, p. 101) is addressing the importance to distinguish between those two realms. He is claiming, that the two territories have their own language and logics and that the thinking and the methodology for each is different. “Outer space requires science; inner space, intuition. The outer world needs measurement; the inner world, poetry” (Koestenbaum 1991, p. 101). Hence are techniques for strategies, which are managing the world economy, different to those approaches, which are dealing with the culture and individuals.

In the course of this paper I am going to deal only with the area of the individual leadership mind and am not addressing the other three areas respectively. Nevertheless it is to be said that all areas are equally important and need to be considered in a business setting. Leading oneself deals though with the very individual and the mind of a respective leader, and therefore I am concentrating mainly on that area of business.

In other words, I am just concentrating on ‘The of Art of Leading Oneself’ and exclude the ‘The Art of Leading Others’ from the scope of this study. I see leadership as an iterative process; first one has to lead him/herself in order to lead others; One has to internalize what it means to lead him/herself and one actually has to ultimately lead him/herself in order to lead others. Therefore I am focusing on the first part of the process and elaborating on that further in the thesis.

1.4.2 Toxicity in leading oneself

A further limiting aspect in this work is, that I am not assessing possible negative aspects when it comes to leading oneself. If an individual cultivates - in the course of his development - a negative value system or an (at least for the majority of the society) incomprehensible and not desirable vision (e.g. Mussolini or Hitler) it can result in toxic leadership (see also Lipman-Blumen 2005 or Shaw, Erickson & Harvey 2011). As a matter of scope and interest, I am not investigating on this negative branch of leading oneself and concentrate on the positive aspects of what leading oneself can
contribute to a better self. If the reader is interested in the topic of Toxic Leadership, I can recommend the master thesis of my dear colleagues, Manon Delabelle and Doriane Bourdoux which holds the title: ‘Toxic Leadership. An understanding on how a business environment is ‘contaminated’ by leaders’.

1.4.3 Gender (in)equality

Additionally, I am not addressing the necessity of the differentiation between men and women. The reason for this decision is, that I strongly believe that there is no gender difference when it comes to leading oneself. There is an ongoing discussion between the unequal treatment of women in the business world. I believe that this treatment and the resulting perception of unequal vantage points are to be neglected in the future, as in my perception, the new Generation Y is not differentiating anymore between the intellectual capabilities of men and women. Furthermore I believe that with the education, future business people are receiving nowadays, the foundation for this misperception is not laid any longer. Leading oneself is not dependant on the gender and I therefore not distinguish male or female specialities as I think that this will foster the unequal perception of men and women in general. Consequently, I am not dealing with the dimension of gender in/-equality.

1.4.4 Cultural aspect

Besides that, I am not taking into consideration the dimension of the culture, as I am merely concentrating on the individual self. Malik (2006, p. 55) thinks that management is not dependant on the culture. He argues that there is a distinction to be made on the ‘What’ and ‘How’ of management. “What successful leaders are doing, is in all cultures the same or pretty similar. How they are doing it however, is strongly dependant on
the culture”¹ (Malik 2006, p. 55, author’s translation). Malik’s statement is supported by the research of Alves et al. (2006) on the cross-cultural perspective of self-leadership where they are stating, that a “holistic perspective of self-leadership is valid in every culture but the selection and use of specific strategies may differ” (Alves et al. 2006, p. 342). Nonetheless, it may be that in some countries or even religions, the concept of leading oneself is already interwoven and actively lived (e.g. Buddhism). But as a lack of scope and also the lack of literature, these differences will not be considered in the course of this paper.

¹ Original German quote: „Was wirksame Führungskräfte tun, ist in allen Kulturen gleich oder doch sehr ähnlich. Wie sie es allerdings tun, ist sehr stark abhängig unter anderem von Kultur, aber keineswegs nur von dieser.“ (Malik 2004, p. 55)
2 METHODOLOGY

In various discussions within the classroom about the methodology of the thesis, someone stated: ‘You are not choosing the methodology, the methodology chooses you’. I think this statement is particularly true when it comes to this thesis. I had a clear topic in mind and with this topic I started to think of possible ways how to gather data. I came up with the following ideas, which are explained in this chapter.

The used methodology of elaborating on the research questions is twofold. First, secondary data was used to discuss the respective topic and present the current state of discussion. Literature was researched with the help of Austrian and Swedish libraries as well as with online collections and metadatabases such as SpringerLink or ScienceDirect. After that, primary data was compiled. Due to the nature of the topic, experimental techniques, such as observation or experimentation were not applicable within this thesis. Therefore the non-experimental techniques were used and conversations were held.

Manz and Neck (2004) as well as Neck and Houghton (2006) are suggesting to perceive self-leadership as a normative model rather than a descriptive or deductive theory. Furthermore, they are stating that normative theories are common in the applied fields of business and forming a prescriptive character, which emphasizes on ‘how’ something could be done. They contrast it to deductive or descriptive theories, which are trying to explain the basic operations of different phenomena. Therefore, I tried to form an understanding of how the possible elements of leading oneself could look like and used conversations with experts to get further insight on that topic.

2.1 Use of conversations

According to Arbnor and Bjerke (2008), the terms interviews, dialogues and conversations have to be treated as different techniques when it comes to
qualitative methods. Interviews can be seen as more structured and comparable, whereas conversations are semi-structured and open. The latter contributes extensively to the creation of new knowledge and unforeseen topics within the conversation. The methodical procedure, which was used in order to answer the research question foresaw to incorporate and develop the technique of holding conversations in order to get – next to the theoretical background – also real life experience and knowledge on the topic.

To make sure to get results from as many different angles and views as possible, eight coaches and lecturers from different fields and countries were selected and questioned. Conversations with non-directing questions were asked and gave rich, in-depth insights on people’s personal understandings and opinions on the respective topic. During the interviews I was highly attentive and sensitive regarding the counterparts’ personal biography and how it shaped the progress of the conversation. To ensure a comparable approach, the conversations were recorded and afterwards partly transliterated. I did not however fully transcribe the whole conversations, as I do not see the benefit of this exercise. Nevertheless, if the full content of the conversation is required and requested by the reader, I will – after agreement with the respective conversation partner – provide the respective audio file. A list of the partners will be included in the appendix (see 8.2 Conversation partners).

2.2 Semi-structured Conversation Guide

To ensure a somehow structured process during the conversations, a semi-structured conversation guide was developed. Three main conversation areas were constructed: Leadership in general, Leadership development and Leading oneself. Within the first area, I tried to find out the overall understanding of leadership of the conversation partner. The first question was a rather generic one, as I asked ‘How do you define leadership’. The underlying purpose of this question was to find out the frames of references
of the conversation partner and what the personal understanding of leadership is.

In this stage I decided not to give any hint regarding the topic of ‘leading oneself’ as I tried not to bias the conversation partners in a sense that they will alter their primary understanding/definition of leadership. With the help of supportive questions, my understanding of the conversation partners towards the topic of leadership was extended. As a concluding question I asked whether the conversation partners see a need to distinguish between managers and leaders within a company, which gave further insights in the thinking.

Based on the findings of the first area, questions regarding leadership development were asked. The general approach towards leadership development as well as the role of failure and the importance of defining moments or crucibles were discussed. As a concluding question I asked if the conversation partner thinks that leadership can be taught within a classroom.

In the third and last area, I confronted the partner with the topic of leading oneself and Plato’s aphorism ‘Leading others comes through the art of leading oneself’. In a joint discussion I tried to find out what leading oneself means for the partner, why he/she thinks it is necessary and how it can be achieved. The concluding question of this area was, if the conversation partner sees leadership as science or art. The detailed structure can be found in the Appendix (see ‘8.1 Structure for expert conversations’)

### 2.3 Grounded Theory

With the use of the grounded theory method, data of the conversations and other sources which were considered as useful, such as documentaries, interview collections, online discussions, lectures, art, paintings etc., were collected and the key points marked with a series of codes, which were extracted from the content of the respective source. Furthermore I made use
of social media and checked regularly conversations on LinkedIn or Facebook in order to gain more knowledge about the respective topic. An overview of the used media can be seen in Figure 2 Used Media within the thesis. The information I gained through these media served as a ‘suspension’ for my answers to the research question.

**Figure 2 Used Media within the thesis**

![Diagram showing used media sources and research questions](Image)

Source: Author’s figure

In order to address every research question, the codes were grouped according to the different field of answers and a structure for a table to fill in all the gained information was created. This table will be henceforth called ‘Grounded Matrix’. The superior categories were defined accordingly to the research question and where therefore labelled: WHAT, WHY, HOW.
To get an accumulated picture of the number of mentions of the various codes, they were grouped into similar concepts and outcomes in order to make them comparable and workable. From these groups, specific clusters were formed which built the basis and the main contribution to discover the fundamental theories on answering the three research questions. The main focus in this research paper is laid upon the third question – ‘What are possible elements of leading oneself’. Therefore the codes of the first two superior categories were not accumulated and no clusters were built.

It is crucial to understand that I interpret the grounded theory approach in the sense of ‘grounded in reality’ and that I used every possible source available in order to not limit myself on expert interviews or conversations as I see especially this process as an evolving one which can develop in various directions. Therefore I believe, that limitations (in the sense of just focusing on interviews or ‘empirical research’) will lead to constraints, which are not helpful and may – to a certain extend – also distort the outcome of the thesis.

In this thesis I am not using quantitative research methods such as surveys or other methods with focus on numerical data. Broad generalisations and structured questionnaires are in my opinion not sufficient and – at this stage of research and personal knowledge – not applicable and will consequently not lead to the desired outcome. Furthermore the low flexibility in data collection as well as the need to capture the data beforehand and perform a pre-coding is obstructive in answering the research questions. However, I suggest to do further research on that specific area and use the outcome of this thesis to formulate a research question, which can be explored with the help of quantitative research methods.
2.4 Author’s presence within the work

Harwood (2005) is stating the importance and the general validity of using personal pronouns within research papers. He argues that such usage indicates a demonstration of the author’s presence within the work. During the course of the literature review I have observed that the majority of the professional authors are using personal pronouns. To quote examples I chose Schopenhauer and Scharmer:

“So niederschlagend diese Betrachtung ist, so will ich doch nebenher auf eine Seite derselben aufmerksam machen, aus der sich ein Trost schöpfen, ja vielleicht gar eine Stoische Gleichgültigkeit gegen das vorhandene eigene Uebel erlangen läßt”\(^\text{2}\) (Schopenhauer 1849, p. 57)

“I personally believe that the current global situation yearns for a shift of the third kind, which in many ways is already in the making“ (Scharmer 2009, p. 5).

Hence, I also decided to show my commitment to my work and demonstrate my presence within this paper by using personal pronoun. There might be demur that this could lead to losing the objectivity within the research. But as Daudi (1986) stated that objectivity seems to be tremendously hard to achieve, even if objectivity is the main aim of a research. He argues that the researcher starts the process with a personal understanding and an individual interpretation of a topic. Furthermore the choice of the literature is somehow based on the frames of references of the researcher and therefore also somehow influenced and not fully objective. In the course of this study and also based on the research questions and the respective topic, I am regarding the construct of reality as socially constructed, I think that there is no objectivity, objective reality or universal truth, which can be

\(^{2}\) This quote serves just as illustration of Schopenhauer’s usage of personal pronoun within all his works. The content of this quote is not relevant for the thesis and is therefore not translated into the English language.
detected. We can differentiate between the physical realm – where a certain portion of reality can be said to be objective - and the social realm, where the objectivity for emotions or feelings is full of multiple realities, which are related to and based on personal interpretation.

Considering all this, it is to be said that I – minding the need to be as objective as possible – tried to be aware of my frames of references regarding the research topic and be as open as possible to achieve the highest possible ‘objectivity’.
3 WHAT DOES ‘LEADING ONESELF’ MEAN?

In this chapter I try to create an understanding of what leading oneself means.

M Teachout (2013, 19 April) stated in a personal conversation the following: “I don’t think you can lead others or be effective until you really understand and know yourself well. Too many people don’t do that”. JL Vallejo Garcia (2013, pers. comm. 19 April) ponders about leading oneself and states that “if you are not clear what you want to be or what you want to get, how can you help other people to get what they want to get?”. Similarly argued L Mayrhofer (2013, pers. comm. 23 April, author’s translation) “only if you are able to lead yourself, you can say that you have the ability to lead others. If you are not balanced and in harmony with yourself, when you cannot control your thoughts, words and behaviour, you cannot lead others. Because you simply cannot give them anything.”

Noda (2004, p. 17) argued in his article “Leadership Begins with Leading Oneself” that leading oneself is the exact starting point of leadership”. And I fully concur with him in this issue as I see ‘the Art of Leading Oneself’ also as the first level of leadership. Furthermore I believe that it applies to any person, whether or not a management position is hold. When speaking with G Keil (2013, 18 April) he also states, when it comes to leading oneself, “every person should do that – leader or not leader”.

Drucker (1999, pp. 19-22) also mentions the necessity of knowing and leading oneself as he argues that only when a person operates from a combination of strengths and self-knowledge, a true and lasting excellence

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can be achieved. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2005, p. X) are also referring to the fact that leading oneself is the starting point of leadership when they are stating that “for leaders, the first task in management has nothing to do with leading others; Step one poses the challenge of knowing and managing oneself”. Ultimately I want to state Maslow (1970) when he was truly philosophical while conveying that “musicians must make music, artist must paint, poets must write if they are to ultimately be at peace with themselves. What humans can be, they must be. They must be true to their own nature” (Maslow 1970, p. 22).

Scholars are saying that without followers there are no leaders (e.g. “It is a truism that a leader cannot exist without followers” (Gardner & Laskin 2011, p. 34) or “[…] leadership exists only with the consensus of followers” (Bennis 2007, p. 3)). When we are talking about leading oneself, we have to consider ourselves as our own followers. We need to follow ourselves – and therefore we need to also trust ourselves and believe in us. Because if you are not following yourself, you are lost. Picasso must have seen it similarly when he was stating: “When you come right down to it, all you have is yourself. Yourself is a sun with a thousand fires in your belly. The rest is nothing.” (Pablo Picasso, n.d.)

Bennis and Nanus (2007) are dealing within their book ‘leaders’ with the question how an individual can manage him/herself in order to lead others. In this very respect the authors distinguish sharply between leaders and managers (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 20) and I fully concur with them as I think that an individual can be appointed as manager, but not as a leader.

Shamir and Eilam (2005, p. 397) state that “authentic leaders are originals, not copies” and I strongly agree with the importance of that statement. For this reason I want to discuss the necessity of personal heroes in a developmental stage of leadership. Grande, Mandela, E. Roosevelt and Mother Theresa were the main heroes of the baby boomer generation (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 47). I do not think that having a specific person
as a role model and to somehow copy this person from top to toe is desirable. What if that specific person has a negative trait or an unflattering behavioural pattern? What if the personal hero is condemned of a crime committed in the past (such as S. Berlusconi or L. Armstrong). Some of the new generation leaders concur with my opinion as they list for example their parents as their heroes or state that having a personal hero is not considered as relevant (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 80, p. 159). Furthermore the actions of someone should not be imputed too much importance. Martin (2010, p. 34) states that moves and actions done by heroic leaders (such as Jack Welch or Larry Bossidy) are contextual and it would make little sense to just blindly copy and apply them in any other situation. One has to be aware of not to overemphasize or adore this ‘hero’. I would rather agree with Shamir and Eilam (2005, pp. 404-407) and call them role models. Furthermore they conclude that an individual should not copy a certain person but learn from positive and negative role models accordingly in order to “create their own legends and become the authors of their lives in the sense of creating new and improved versions of themselves” (Bennis 2003, p. 334, cited in Shamir and Eilam 2005, p. 407). Shamir and Eilam (2005) are addressing the importance of role models. I want to – in this respective – invite the reader to take a small digression with me and to discuss the negative aspect of role model attribution with respect to the leadership context.

**Digression on the topic of role model attribution**

Being authentic is equally important for either males or females. Perhaps it is even more relevant for females as they are facing disadvantages when it comes to the attribution of role models. The source of the evil is the mode of thought that has indoctrinated us during years and years. Whereby some sort of wrong beliefs were created and directed people to believe that roles in society should be corresponding to certain gender. For example, if a woman is successful in an area, which is typically reserved for men, she is perceived as less socially appealing (Heilman et al. 2004, p. 417). In the same way a women can be labelled as “bitch” [sic] when she is behaving in a very
assertive way (Toegel & Barsoux, n.d., p. 2). I fully disagree with those assumptions and perspectives, and rather would suggest the opposite: females should be authentic and should really behave how they feel and how they are.

The root of this gender role attribution lies within the self-sealing loop of status hierarchy and prejudicial norms, which we covered during our lecture at Linnaeus University. The ‘starting point’ of this loop is the prototypical alignment. This prototypical alignment is described in Hogg’s (2001, pp. 185-187) study of the social identity theory of leadership and shows that social identity is responsible for creating social categorization, thus leads to prototyped-based depersonalization. As a result, the person who best exemplifies a prototype is the pre-elected leader of a group.

According to Ayman and Korabik (2010, p. 159) the social structural perspective emphasises on different roles of men and women in society. Hence it is concluded that men’s attributes are more congruent with the leadership role as those of women. Furthermore, the implicit leadership theory indicates, that the image of a leader is strongly associated with masculinity (Ayman & Korabik 2010, p. 161), and male behaviours, such as assertiveness, self-confidence or task-focused (Toegel & Barsoux, n.d., p. 1). Hence, female executive leaders are – according to the research stated-above - deviant and do not go along with the group norm. These research implications show us that the role model attribution is already advanced also in the leadership area. I personally strongly disagree with the role model attribution as I think that leadership or management is totally gender blind. These association and role attributions, which have occupied our minds needs to be revised.

The self-sealing-loop continuous as long as the prototypical leader stays in power and contributes to the group. The social identity is defined by the prototypical leader and gets thereby strengthened even more. Hogg (2001, p. 196) advises nonprototypical leaders to lower solidarity and cohesion. In addition to that women are strongly advised to not internalize those wrongly
adopted prototypical perceptions and are instructed to instead ‘silence the critic within’ (Toegel & Barsoux, n.d., p. 4).

In order to eliminate this problem, one has to understand the self-sealing-loop of prototyping and the necessity to eradicate the root of the problem – the development of cognition that expects and supports role model attribution. The problem needs to be addressed already at an early stage, as research shows that this role model attribution develops already in kindergarten (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 174). It is therefore crucial to understand that in order to change this situation, one has to start at the primary stage of education and eliminate the attribution of certain role models with respect to gender. Moreover institutions and educational program, which are focusing on leadership should address this topic and make sure that leadership is not perceived as the predefined area of men (Ayman & Korabik 2010, p. 175).

To come back to the main topic of the thesis, I strongly emphasise on the importance, that leadership is strongly related to only one thing – to the truthfulness of oneself – no matter if man or woman – one should never pretend to be somebody else.

Napoleon once stated that “everything that is not natural, is imperfect”4 (Napoleon, n.d. cited in Schopenhauer 1849, p. 620, author’s translation) and Schopenhauer (1987) “warned for any kind of affectation as it will result in disrespect because it is firstly considered as deception, that is dastardly, because it is based on fear; secondly as a self-damnation through oneself, in which one pretends to be something better as one actually is”5

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4 Original French quote: „tout ce qui n’est pas naturel est imparfait [Alles, was nicht natürlich ist, ist unvollkommen]“ (Schopenhauer 1849, p. 620)

5 Original German quote: „Darum sei hier auch vor aller und jeder AFFEKTATION gewarnt. Sie erweckt allemal Geringschätzung: erstlich als Betrug, der als solcher feige ist, weil er auf Furcht beruht; zweitens als Verdammungsurtheil seiner selbst durch sich selbst, indem man scheinen will was man nicht ist und was man folglich für besser hält, als was man ist.“ (Schopenhauer 1849, p. 620)
(Schopenhauer 1849, p. 620, author’s translation). A leader should therefore thrive to be as authentic as possible.

Shamir and Eilam (2005, pp. 398-399) summarize the attributes of authentic leaders as follows: (1) The self-concept contributes to the fact that they achieve a high state of person-role merger as they define themselves as leaders per se. They also have an adequately high level of (2) self-concept clarity as they lucidly internalized their clear defined and consistent beliefs. Next, their goals are (3) self-concordant as they represent their passion as well as their core values and beliefs. In this context they are also referring to the internal motivation of this kind of leaders, which reminds me on McGregor’s Theory Y. As final attribute they consider their (4) behaviour, which should be consistent to their self-concept.

To expand and hone those attributes Shamir and Eilam (2005) stressing the importance of their development. They believe that authentic leaders are more effective than inauthentic leaders because in times of setbacks and severe frustrations, an authentic leader has the ability to come back to his/her inner strength (to the personal compass) and regain stability and navigate out of the crisis. With regard to the effectivity they are also mentioning the importance of followers and the positive effects on them.

While equating the concept of authentic leader to authentic leadership they strongly insist on the perilousness of seeing also toxic leaders (Lipman-Blumen 2005) as authentic leaders. Since those individuals also have a ‘honest’ self-delusion and hence a devotion to their truly held (wrong) beliefs. Thus they are excluding such instances from their definition and attach to the attributes of the leaders also the attributes of their relationship with their followers. The latter is also relevant in the context of creating and maintaining the relationship between followers and leaders in an authentic way, as followers’ trust is an irrevocable precondition for leaders. In addition to that, Shamir and Eilam (2005 p. 408) are also referring to the social identity theory of Hogg (2001) and explain the aspect on how followers judge the prototypically of a leader according to his/her life-story.
Malik (2006, p. 145) is also stressing the importance for leaders to be authentic and true. According to him, effective leaders are not playing some kind of role but rather are true to – not only themselves – but also to their employees. Hence, leaders should acknowledge their weaknesses and should ‘own’ their personality. This can be achieved through proper self-knowledge and the awareness of the values an individual holds. Carroll (2007, pp. 176-177) is referring in this context to the inner authenticity as a construct of primordial confidence with an unshakable enthusiasm, which arises when an individual is synchronized. This means that this very individual is free from fear, arrogance and greed and is open to the world and stays to his/her values.

In the same instance, Carroll (2007, p. 179) is also addressing the paradox of the so called ‘straight shooters’ – of people which are speaking their mind honestly and not mincing matters. Hence, he thinks that only on the surface such people seem worthy, sincere and authentic, but it can also mean that these individuals are just being stubborn. It could mean that this ‘straight shooter’ is not adapting to the needs of the respective situation. Therefore authentic and mindful leaders have to also consider the wider context of a situation and take into consideration the different types of issues and problems and acknowledging diversity. Future leaders have to understand that each and every situation may require different styles and approaches.

I find the analogy to Aristotle's term eudaimonia matching and useful and want to conclude herewith this chapter:

“being true to one's true self” (Aristotle, n.d.)

That shows us that a person acts and behaves in total congruence with his/her deeply held values (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). In my opinion, that perfectly describes and summarizes why it is important for every individual to lead oneself. Especially for people who desire to lead others, it is pertinent for them to lead themselves first.
4 WHY IS ‘LEADING ONESELF’ NEEDED?

In this chapter I will try to answer the question why it is necessary in nowadays society to lead oneself. The general trend from a ‘command and control’ leadership attitude towards a more open, inspiring and convincing approach was already mentioned in De Pree’s book “The Art of Leadership” (De Pree 1990, p. 46). Through expert interviews and extensive literature review I discovered some major forces, which changed the necessity of perceiving leadership in a completely different way. I tried to answer the following question: What are the crucibles that made this reflection ‘leading oneself’ as an important one for the leadership development in general?

4.1 Misuse of Shareholder Value

Europe faced one of the worst financial crisis in the last few decades. The top executives, who were responsible for the major companies during this time were facing difficult times. Some experts suggest though, that those top executives were not the victims but rather the culprits (Boschert 2011, Mayrhofer 2010). Boschert (2011, p. 14) argues that top leaders changed their leadership principles as well as their personal attitude and values constantly and showed therefore no consistency at all. These leaders had no clear long-term vision where they want to go. They had no sustainable and long-lasting values which they stuck to. The only value it seemed they had was to make money and not consider the impact of their behaviour. It might be argued that there were other factors, which contributed to that crisis; but in my opinion, this deficiency and this lack of self-knowledge and self-visualization was (or still is) a big part of the problem.

Boschert (2011, p. 29) furthermore argues that also leadership is facing a major crisis nowadays. Through the shady dealings and the inconsistent crisis management, the leaders of many companies lost their credibility, and employees as well as customers lost trust in them. Furthermore he criticises
the focus of companies to increase the shareholder value. This development started with the deregulation of the financial markets in the 80ies under Reagan and Thatcher and ended with the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008 (Boschert 2011, p. 30). During this time, the importance of the stock-exchange markets increased and leaders and managers were busy pleasing the capital providers and just concentrated on equity capital growth. Rappaport (2006, p. 1) argues though that “the reality is that the shareholder value principle has not failed management; rather, it is management that has betrayed the principle”, because an orientation towards shareholder value per se is nothing bad – just the short-term orientation, which a lot of leaders and managers of big companies did before the financial crisis – is not desirable and toxic. Not only for the companies, but rather for the whole society. The main purpose of the company was also reduced to the maximization of the short-term shareholder value. Consequently, there was not much time or space for leaders or managers to develop their employees or even create a sustainable long-term vision for the company.

The same situation can be observed in the European political system. The country leaders have somehow lost focus on what is really important for their country and for their people. When shifting billions of Euro to a different country to just help a corrupted banking system staying alive and not concentrating on the single individual is in my opinion not the right way to do politics. In this complex construct of different transfers and power structures, it is more than ever important to have a strong inner vision, solid values and beliefs to overcome this epic crisis times.

Therefore, Boschert (2011, pp. 46-53) concludes that leadership in general is currently facing a redefinition. He thinks that the consideration of all stakeholders within an organization will gain importance over the pure shareholder value. The employees for example will be seen again as the most important stakeholders and will therefore be fostered and developed. It is crucial for future leaders to provide their followers a consistent and sustainable vision. Equally important though, is also to understand the
needs of the employees and to understand their frames of references so to say. A leader needs to give sense to the followers in order to align them and to create somehow a common understanding of the long-term vision a company wants to achieve. Furthermore, Boschert (2011, pp. 49-53) states that for future leaders it will be very important to have a strong and authentic personality which is not changed constantly and stays the same – based on the respective values the leader holds. Hence, this will lead to build trust between the leader and the stakeholders.

This perspective shows us that it is of major importance for future leaders to have a strong vision, solid values and give sense to employees. Scharmer (2009, p. 2) goes even a little further and states, that the current crisis reveals even a dying of an old social structure and a way of thinking. Similarly is M Berger (2013, pers. comm. 30 April) arguing while discussing the necessity of leading oneself that “this would mean in the very essence, that the society would also be changed. A high quality of leaders would mean a high and sustainable quality in the society.” (author’s translation)

Hence, these activities subsume and describe one essential part of leading oneself. Therefore it is concluded, that if a future leader excels in leading oneself and identifies his/her vision and values, crisis times can be led accordingly.

4.2 Wrong MBA-Programs

Malik (2006, p. 69) is arguing that MBA-Programs are just focussed on ‘Business Administration’ and not on Management per se. He states that the majority of universities are lacking the necessity to distinguish between management and the respective specialist areas to which it is applied.

6 “Das würde in letzter Konsequenz auch die “Gesellschaft” verändern. Eine hohe Qualität von Führern, wirkt sich nachhaltig auch auf die Qualität der Gesellschaft aus.” (M Berger 2013, pers. comm. 30 April)
Hence, one could think that graduates of MBA-Programmes, which are heavily educated in Marketing or Accounting are in the same time specialists in Management. This however, is not true (Malik 2006, p. 377). Boschert (2011, p. 39) argues that the American originated MBA-concept is usually shareholder-oriented and therefore supporting the misuse of the shareholder value concept.

Furthermore, Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002, p. 105) are criticising that within “standard MBA-programs, there is little to no attempt to enhance emotional intelligence abilities”. Therefore, the importance of the development of the personality and the necessity of self-reflection is widely neglected. Scharmer (2009) shares this idea as he states, that “we haven’t been able to create schools and institutions of higher education that develop people’s innate capacity to sense and shape their future, which I view as the single most important core capability for this century’s knowledge and co-creation economy” (Scharmer 2009, p. 3).

Within this discussion I also would like to address the question if leadership can actually be learned and taught in a university setting. Several authors and researchers (e.g. Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 25, p. 223; Doh 2003) are arguing that leadership can be learned and consequently also taught. Malik (2006, p. 61) concludes that it can be learned but in the same time it needs practice; but everybody can - to some extend - acquire certain knowledge and skills to become a highly effective leader. Likewise Boschert (2011, p. 22) is saying that authentic leadership can be acquired. With regards to self-leadership, Manz (1986) argues that it is usually conceptualized as learned behaviour rather than a fixed trait. M Teachout (2013, pers. comm. 19 April) perfectly concludes: “You can learn from taking a leadership class, but learning is not doing”. I also had a very interesting discussion about that topic with JL Vallejo Garcia (2013, pers. comm. 19 April) where he gave this fitting illustration: “Are musicians born? No. They are probably born people with a talent of playing an instrument, but if they never learn how to play that instrument, they will never become a musicians.”
In this context I would like to state the restaurant critic of the Pixar movie Ratatouille (2007) when he was ultimately confessing that “[...] not everyone can become a great artist; but a great artist can come from anywhere [...]”. In other words, there are no such things as born traits or hidden DNA-codes, which are premises to become a good leader. However, the crux is to understand that there is also no recipe or predefined manual on how to become a leader. It is rather about the individual itself and the willingness of learning to not only learn but also to be taught and to consequently realize it is not about “how to do” but rather “how to be” (P Daudi 2012, pers. comm. 12 September).

Within the course of the literature review, I discovered that some MBA-programs were changed or set-up accordingly and are now dealing already with the importance of management and leadership. The first module of the executive MBA which was founded by Henry Mintzberg (2002, p. 91) for example, is titled “Managing Self: The Reflective Mindset” and deals entirely with the idea of Plato and the leadership of oneself.

4.3 Generation Maybe

The aspect of appreciating the unpredictability of certain things is in my opinion perfectly relevant for the new generation of leaders, because “in the uncertainty lies the very freedom we have been seeking all along” (Carroll 2007, p. 102). Some newspapers are referring to the current youth as ‘Generation Maybe’ and describing them as a generation without any major characteristics, with high education but without any plan or courage for the future (Jeges 2012, online). Especially for this generation it seems to be important to have confidence in themselves, to have trust that they are fully capable of doing whatever they want and to develop some kind of enthusiasm. In this very respective, the multinational tobacco company Marlboro launched a widely discussed marketing campaign where they are
stating ‘Don’t be a maybe’. To a certain extend (I leave out intentionally the negative notion of pursuing and trying to manipulate young people to buy the product) this campaign perfectly describes the necessity in nowadays generation. Within this fast changing world it is even more important for young people to know themselves – to know their values and beliefs and to also inherit and embody them in every day life; it is important that they believe in themselves and that they pursue their vision which consists of their deeply held desires and dreams and consequently it is important that they excel in leading themselves in order to ‘not be a Maybe’.

Boschert (2011, pp. 20-21) is convinced that only those leaders, which are building trust through authenticity and which have a sustainable and long-lasting leadership principle will be successful in the long run. However, he argues that there is no need for new definitions, concepts or theories of leadership. Buzz words or concepts à la ‘Authentic leadership’ or ‘Emotional Intelligence’ are in my opinion all based on the concept of leading oneself. Therefore I believe, the only thing which is really necessary in nowadays society and world is, that individuals change their perception of leadership and recognize that leadership starts inside themselves – they have to understand the art of leading oneself!

I want to close this chapter with a quote of Carroll (2007, p. 51): “For if we intend to lead and inspire the best in others, we must first trust the very best in ourselves – permitting ourselves to be fully who we are – permitting ourselves to be fully human”.
5 POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF LEADING ONESELF

In the course of the next chapters the quest of the identification of possible elements of leading oneself is described. With the use of theoretical frameworks, conversations with experts as well as interviews of leaders, the most common approaches are presented and elaborated. It is paramount to understand that this is no comprehensive list of approaches. Nor should it be considered as some kind of recipe – because there is no such thing. It should rather be considered as an attempt to inspire the readers of this work and give them a rough sense of what the literature and experts in the field suggest regarding leading oneself. The readers have to understand that it is their – and only their – responsibility to actively decide and aspire to lead themselves. The methods and techniques which are presented in this chapter will guide them though, to identify their own way and will ultimately help them to draw their own ‘painting’ of ‘the art of leading oneself’.

The summarized findings, which aroused out of the analysis which was done for the third research question in this master thesis can be seen in Figure 3 Grounded Matrix.

**Figure 3 Grounded Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster / Chapter</th>
<th>Thoughts / Models / Theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **5.1 Make sense** | • Understand the ‘mental models’ (Senge 2006)  
  • Sensemaking (Weick 1995, 2001)  
  • Downloading, Seeing (Scharmer 2009) |
| **5.2 Have a vision and an underlying value system** | • Create shared meaning (Bennis & Nanus 2007)  
  • Human Brand (Berndt 2009)  
  • Inspire yourself and others (Pottruck 2002)  
  • Create mission and inspire others to join them on that mission (Bennis 2007)  
  • Attention through vision (Bennis & Nanus 2007)  
  • Followers need to connect to a vision on a deeper and emotional level (Kotter 2002)  
  • Personal mastery (Senge 2006) |
5.3 Reflect regularly
- Future oriented self-reflection (Keil 2013)
- Theory U, Presencing (Scharmer 2009)
- Importance of life-story (Shamir & Eilam 2005)
- Dialogue with the Self (Boschert 2011)
- Self-talk (Manz & Sims 2001)
- ‘Transparency’ (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee (2002)

5.4 Open up and learn from failures
- Acknowledge Crucibles (Bennis & Thomas 2010)
- Mindful mediation (Carroll 2007)
- Break away from dependencies (Malik 2006)
- Adapt to uncertain situations (Conger 2002)
- Integrative thinking (Martin 2010)
- See failure as friend (Jose-Luis 2013)
- Rethink and question existing rules (Smircich & Stubbart 1985)
- Adaptive capacity (Bennis & Thomas 2010)
- Acknowledge the ‘unknown unknowns’ (Rumsfeld n.d.)

5.5 Give Consistent Sense
- Management of Meaning, Sensegiving (Smircich & Morgan 1982)
- Embodiment of vision (McKinnel 2002, Gardner & Laskin 2011)
- Lead by example (Ashby & Miles 2002)
- Storytelling (Gardner & Laskin 2011, Berndt 2009)
- “One needs to mean, what he is saying – and act accordingly” (Malik 2006)
- Provide consistent message (Kerr 2002)
- Goal structure (Cyert 2010)
- Aesthetic leadership (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007)
- Leadership is a language game (Pondy 1978)

Source: Author’s table

And now I invite the reader to lean back and enjoy the exhibition “The Art of Leading Oneself”.

5.1 Make sense

An individual needs to be aware of the concept of sensemaking in order to know how his/her personal mental map, the individual frames of references so to say, looks like and how it was shaped. Only with that knowledge about him/herself, the individual can make sense of his/her environment and can understand why he/she is behaving or thinking in a certain way. Senge (2006, p. 8) describes this phenomenon as ‘mental models’ that are deeply held assumptions and generalizations that influence how individuals understand the world and on which layers the actions are based upon. However, the problem with mental models is not grounded in the question whether they are right or wrong, it lies rather in the fact that individuals often act without being aware of them (Senge 2006, pp. 163-173). In the Foreword of Scharmer’s (2009) book ‘Theory U’, Senge (2009, p. xiv) also refers to the necessity that individuals need to recognize “their own taken-for-granted assumptions and start to hear and see things that were not evident before”. Senge (2009, p. xiv) believes that this ability is the beginning of all learning and a key for individuals to decipher significant changes in their environment. Scharmer (2009, pp. 5-7) suggests that ‘seeing our seeing’ requires the intelligences of the open mind, the open heart and the open will.

In my opinion, sensemaking is the root of leading oneself. Individuals who want to acquire self-knowledge and self-concept clarity need first to understand how they are thinking and how sense is generated. They also need to be aware of the limiting effects of sensemaking and know the danger of relying too much on the long-learned habits and beliefs. In the course of the next chapter the overall concept of sensemaking and their limitations will be described.
5.1.1 **Understand the concept of sensemaking**

To understand and describe this fundamental model of Karl Weick, I want to invite the reader of this paper to look at the painting of Picasso’s Weeping Woman (Femme en pleurs) of 1937.

**Painting 1 Picasso’s Femme en pleurs, 1937**

![Picasso's Weeping Woman](source: Picasso 1937, Photo: © Tate, London 2013)

If an individual with no further understanding and knowledge of Picasso and his works would go into the Tate Gallery in Liverpool and look at this painting, it would might be perceived as a horrible, too colourful portrait of a
- not necessarily human – woman which is totally out of touch with reality and has absolutely nothing to do with art or whatsoever. One might even go so far and say that this painting is totally meaningless and that it would not make any sense to him/her.

A different person however, also visiting the same museum and looking at the exact same painting would say that this is one of the most magnificent paintings which sparks something within the viewer, transcends time and has a profound and well thought-through meaning. This very person would look beyond the idea of what a realistic illustration of a weeping woman looks like and understand the underlying meaning. The centre of the picture would be perceived as if the flesh would have been peeled away by corrosive tears to reveal hard white bones. The handkerchief would be considered as a shard of glass, which she is stuffing into her mouth (Jones 2000). The knowing person perceiving that painting would be set back to the 26th April 1937, where Guernica was bombed on behalf of Franco in the Spanish civil war, and would instantly feel the pain and the raw violence this picture is emitting.

But why is that so? Why are people making such a different sense of the exact same painting? Why do they perceive it completely different? Karl Weick (1995, 2001) is giving the answer with his understanding of sensemaking. Sensemaking is basically an ongoing social process where people are extracting certain cues out of a constant stream of experience in order to place them into a frame of reference to ultimately create cognitive maps of their environment, and even enacting and creating their own reality (Weick 1995, 2001). Hence, meaning is created if people succeed in constructing a plausible relationship between the cues and the frames of references.

To be more specific, when making sense, people (1) pay attention (also referred to as bracketing (Weick 2001, p. 193)) and (2) extract a particular cue. This process may also be called punctuation (Weick 2001, p. 189) and means that the stream of experience is chopped into smaller pieces. After

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that, the sensemaker (3) connects these cues with well-learned or developed cognitive structures (also referred to as frames of references) that clarify the meaning of the cue (Muhren 2011, pp. 3-5). If this connection cannot be made - if the person cannot connect the cue to a frame of reference - it does not make sense. If the connection was successful though, the cue then (4) alters the more general idea to which the cue was linked on an earlier moment (Weick 1995, p. 4). The altering of the more general idea can either mean to reaffirm or change the original frames of references (Weick 2001, pp. 13-15, p. 24). Through the above-mentioned processes, an (5) environment is enacted and the reality of the beholder is ultimately created and shaped (Weick 2001, p. 190).

This understanding of sensemaking suggests therefore, that sensemakers notice some cues and not others. Cues can be seen as puzzling pieces and simple portions of experience that are extracted from a stream of experience through means of bracketing and parsing (Weick 2001, p. 189). Cues can also be seen as seeds, from which people will develop a larger sense of what they may mean (Weick 1995, pp. 49-55) or to which extend they may alter their frames of references.

The connoisseur in our example would see in the painting of Picasso not the deformed woman, but would rather punctuate the more subtle cues this picture is emitting. Take for example the woman’s right ear. One can see that it has turned into a bird, sipping at her tears as a sign of new life. One could also bracket the hair, which is flowing like a river or the flower in her hat. These cues could be connected to a more optimistic faith, to a prosperous ending and a better development of the future.

The choice however, which cues we are deciding to extrapolate affects the choice of what the action or the situation means. Furthermore according to Weick (1995, p. 26) “both choices are heavily influenced by the situational context”. Sensemaking is influenced by both individual preferences for certain cues as well as contextual conditions that make certain cues more salient (Weick 1995, p. 51, Weick 2001, pp. 8-10). We can easily relate that
statement to our example. Mark Leithauser, a senior curator at a National Gallery, assumes that if he would hang a very famous and expensive painting (he gave the example of an Ellsworth Kelly, worth $5 million) into a restaurant and put a price tag of $150 on it, hardly anybody would notice it (Weingarten 2007). If we change the context, in our example the place of the canvas, an individual would hardly punctuate the cues of the famous painting in the enormous stream of experience in the restaurant surrounding. The person will rather concentrate his/her attention to more relevant cues and portions of experience in the very context. If cues are not noticed, they are simply not available for sensemaking (Weick 1995, p. 52).

When talking about sensemaking it is also important to consider the past and recognize that sensemaking is retrospective (Weick 1995, pp. 24-30). “Environments enacted on previous occasions can constrain contemporary enactment” (Weick 2001, p. 189). This means that the activity of bracketing and therefore recognizing a cue is highly influenced and affected by the present stream of experience as well as by environments that have been enacted on previous occasions (Weick 2001, p. 189). Anyhow, the result of an episode of sensemaking is an enacted environment (Weick 2001, p. 187, p. 189, p. 190). This enacted environment can also be seen as a causal map (Weick 2001, p. 186), which will serve as future frames of references and other enactment processes (Weick 2001, p. 182). This suggests that frames of references are primarily shaped by past experiences and are grounded in the identity of a sensemaker (Weick 1995, pp. 18-24). In the same time however, frames of references can also derive from ideologies or paradigms, religion or traditions, as well as from stories (myth, folklore) or collective cognitive structures (such as industry recipes (Deephouse 1999, p. 152)).

It is obvious that in the example I stated in the beginning of this chapter, the famous painting of Picasso and two individuals who are not concordant about the artistic value of such, the two frames of references from the individuals look in this very respect (artistic value) completely different and may consist of different cognitive structures. The person who does not know anything about the paintings of Picasso, hence does not have the same
frames of reference as the other person. This very person may therefore interpret that painting as not artistic at all and would never consider it as a masterpiece of contemporary art (enacting his/her own environment/reality and therefore his/her own perception of the situation). In this very example one could also refer to the infamous saying: Each to their own. And that it depends on taste. But is not taste also a product of our enactment process and should be seen through the concept of frames of reference? In this aspect we have to ask ourselves how our taste was defined; Which environments did we enact when we developed our taste? Was it driven by parental influence or simply by scholastic education?

To translate the importance of sensemaking into a business and leadership setting, it is to be said that an individual needs to be aware of the concept of sensemaking in order to know how the personal mental map looks like and how it was shaped. Only with that knowledge about him/herself, the individual can make sense of his/her environment and can understand why he/she is behaving or thinking in a certain way. Being aware of the individual frames of references is also crucial when it comes to the management of meaning and the necessity to translate and transport the own ideas and vision to other people – in a leadership perspective - to the led.

The importance of such an awareness is also mentioned by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002, p. 40). They are referring to it as ‘self-awareness’ and describing it as the ability to have a deep understanding of one’s emotions, the strengths and weaknesses as well as the limitations of the hold values and motives. Scharmer (2009, p. 119) refers to the necessity of knowing the underlying habitual patterns and thoughts as ‘downloading’. This activity constitutes the beginning of Sharmer’s Theory U, which will be described in detail in chapter ‘5.3.3 Presencing’.

5.1.2 Limiting factors of sensemaking

The result of an episode of sensemaking is an enacted environment (Weick 2001, p. 187, 189, 190). This enacted environment can also be seen as a
causal map (Weick 2001, p. 186), which will serve as future frames of references and other enactment processes (Weick 2001, p. 182). In other words, these frames of references are serving thereafter as reference point for the next episode of sensemaking and will trigger which cues we are later on bracketing and punctuating and will ultimately steer how we connect those cues to create meaning. However, in the process of sensemaking, some limiting factors can be found. I refer to them as ‘Icarus paradox’ and ‘Equivocality in organizational life’.

**Icarus paradox**

The sum of all frames of references can be seen as the enacted environment an individual is creating over the entire lifetime. This causal map is organized as a hermeneutical pattern and helps the individual to parse cues much faster (Weick 1995, pp. 30-35). This can be seen as an advantage as a person with different frames of references can (1) process and parse cues in a faster way and (2) also prioritize those cues in a way that allows focusing on the most important ones. In the same time, this assimilation can also have a limiting effect as the search for alternative solutions and perceptions of a problem may be reduced. Furthermore, things can become taken for granted (Weick 1995, p. 35) and the high risk of facing the Icarus paradox can occur, as one can lose the ability to question the own solutions and behaviours, and fly too close to the sun. Again it seems that Picasso also had that insight when he was stating that “success is dangerous: One begins to copy oneself, and to copy oneself is more dangerous than to copy others. It leads to sterility” (Pablo Picasso, n.d.).

If the existing frames of references direct our attention more to what we already know, rather than to the unexpected and to what we do not know, the frames of references have a reinforcing effect. If there are well-developed cognitive structures, it is harder to think differently. Deephouse (1999, p. 150) claims that companies and organizations in general should be different, as firms with different strategical plans may face less competition for resources. In the same time Deephouse (1999, p. 162) argues that
companies should also have a moderate amount of strategic similarities, because that would increase their performance. Deephouse (1999) concludes that a company should therefore thrive for strategic balance where a “firm benefits from reduced competition while maintaining its legitimacy” (p. 162). To give a possible practical implication on an individual level, a business leader should thrive to rethink and question existing rules (Smircich & Stubbart 1985). I consider the rethinking of the existing rules as an integrative and fundamental element of leading oneself and will elaborate on that in chapter ‘5.4 Open up and learn from failures’.

Equivocality in organizational life

Another obstacle of sensemaking is the equivocality in organizational life (Weick 2001, pp. 9-11). As people are engaged in different projects and are constantly exposed to a massive amount of cues within a constant stream of experience, it might happen that there is too much information to process. Hence, “it makes no sense at all, but because it makes many different kinds of sense” (Weick 1995, p. 27), which is also referred to as equivocality (Weick 2001, p. 10). It is crude to understand that the problem in this context is not about uncertainty (Weick 1995, p. 27), but rather about the qualitative aspect of the information itself (Weick 2001, p. 10). “Information richness is defined as the ability of information to change understanding [...] to overcome different frames of references or clarify ambiguous issues to change understanding in a timely manner [...]” (Daft & Lengel 1986, p. 560 cited in Weick 2001, p. 10). Weick (1995, p. 28) also concludes, that in this situation, values, priorities and clarity about preferences may help the person to finally make some sense of what an elapsed experience means and how this individual should bracket and parse the cues in that constant stream of experience.

Goleman (1998, p. 3) thinks that self-awareness is the first component of emotional intelligence. This means to have “a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives” (Goleman 1998, p. 3).
In my understanding, sensemaking serves as the first step of creating a sound self-awareness, because with sensemaking, one can clearly discover the emotions, needs and drives. Goleman (1998, p. 4) further argues, that people with a high degree of self-awareness will recognize how their feelings affect them, other people and their job performance. If individuals thrive to excel in leading themselves, they first have to know where they come from in order to understand how they perceive certain things. The next step in leading oneself and gaining self-awareness and knowledge is to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses as well as the values and vision, which are important in one’s life. Therefore I suggest, having a vision which is based on an underlying framework of values, which in turn are grounded on one’s frames of references.

5.2 Have a vision and an underlying value system

To start this chapter I want to invite the reader to look at the masterpiece of Delacroix ‘La Liberté guidant le peuple’ (which means ‘Liberty leading the people’) which was painted in 1830. In this allegorical interpretation of the July Revolution of 1830, Delacroix shows a woman, which is personifying ‘liberty’. This allegorical goddess-figure leads the people forward over the fallen bodies, out of the canvas and into the space of the viewer. She is bare-foot and bare-breasted and holds in one hand the tricolour, the flag of liberty. In her other hand she holds a bayonetted musket, “to spear the enemies of freedom at close quarters” (Jones 2005). Next to the complex interaction between brightly reflective and adjacent areas of dark shadow which result in vivid contrasts and awakes a sense of movement and energy, this picture perfectly shows us the importance of having a vision in life. The people who were leading the July Revolution in 1830 were driven by the vision of liberty and freedom. On that day, the people changed history in Paris. “Students rang the great bell of Notre Dame, work stopped altogether and people fired at soldiers from windows high over narrow streets. Crowds built up, shouting: ‘Down with the king!’” (Jones 2005) Thanks to its sheer
visual impact ‘Liberty leading people’ makes us all conscious of our role in democracy as spectators and makers of our own history.

**Painting 2 Delacroix’s La Liberté guidant le peuple, 1830**

Source: Delacroix 1830, Photo: © Louvre, Paris 2013

Bennis and Nanus (2007) are stating in one of their strategies to lead oneself to create ‘Attention Through Vision’ (Bennis & Nanus 2007, pp. 26-30, pp. 80-101). Within that concept, they are explaining the goal structure and describing the necessity of a leader to generate a vision as well as to create focus on it. In order to conceive the vision, a leader must be a good listener as well as a good asker and establish formal and informal channels of communication to address the very specific needs and requirement of the organization. They believe - and I fully agree – that “individual behaviour can be shaped, directed, and coordinated by a shared and empowering vision of
the future” (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 85). Kotter (2002, p. 48-50) concurs when he is saying that followers need to connect to a vision on a deeper and emotional level. To do that however, a leader needs to transport and deliver the respective vision to the followers and also needs to know the vision first. In this aspect, the followers are to be perceived as the most precious ingredient (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 30), because leaders can just lead people as long as they allow leading them. Hence a leader should pay attention and listen to the needs and desires of the followers. But as followership is not within the scope of this thesis, I am not further elaborating on this essential part of leadership. Thus, I will concentrate on the importance of having a vision and a compelling value system in order to gain an inner direction and drive.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) describe authentic leaders as individuals who have a high knowledge of themselves as well as a clear sense about their core values and their personal meaning. They narrow the term even further and state that authentic leaders do not fake their leadership and that moreover they lead out of own conviction and value-based cause. This reflects on the consistency of what they are saying and what they believe.

Similarly, Senge (2006, p. 7) in his concept of the fifth discipline, is arguing, that the first discipline – personal mastery – constitutes the continuous clarification and internalisation of the personal vision, setting focus towards our energy, develop patience and ultimately seeing reality objectively. Consequently Senge (2006, p. 8) states, that people with a high level of personal mastery are able to consistently realize those results which do matter most to them.

Schopenhauer (1987) mused about this topic while stating that a person should “of course start with knowing himself, and that he also knows what he actually, first and foremost, wants and what is most important for his luck; furthermore he should recognize what as a whole, his occupation, his
role as well as his attitude towards the world is”\(^7\) (Schopenhauer 1849, pp. 584-585, author’s translation).

As I think that a vision should be based on the personal value framework, I want to first address the importance of defining and incorporating personal values in life. One possibility to gain awareness of the individual framework of personal values could be to develop a human brand. Within the next chapter strategies of marketing are used and translated to the human personality.

5.2.1 **Create an individual ‘human brand’**

As I am also a student of ‘Marketing and Sales’, I thought of possible concepts which are widely used in the marketing area and which could be connected to leading oneself. I discovered that the processes and models of branding and brand management – how to build an organizational brand – have significant similarities to the respective topic of creating and maintaining a value system. Berndt (2009) is dealing in his book ‘The best brand is you!’\(^8\) with the interesting topic of ‘human branding’. Berndt (2009, p. 14) draws an analogy between the pertinence of the uniqueness of an organizational brand and a human being. He argues that the major éclat of a successful product or organization derives from the brand itself. Hence he states that a human being can also make use of the methods of modern brand management and apply it directly to create a distinctive ‘human brand’. In the same time he is also sensitizing the importance of respecting the ‘soul’ and the own will of a human being and thus, paying extra attention to the cautious building and nurturing of a human brand.

\(^7\) Original German quote: „Freilich gehört auch dazu, daß er einen kleinen Anfang in dem γνώθι σαυτόν [Erkenne dich selbst] gemacht habe, also wisse, was er eigentlich, hauptsächlich und vor allem Andern will, was also für sein Glück das Wesentlichste ist, sodann was die zweite und dritte Stelle nach diesem einnimmt; wie auch, daß er erkenne, welches, im Ganzen, sein Beruf, seine Rolle und sein Verhältniß zur Welt sei.” (Schopenhauer 1849, pp. 584-585)

\(^8\) Original German title: “Die stärkste Marke sind Sie selbst!”
With the creation of a human brand individuals can accurately visualize their core values and desires and can therefore perfectly describe what they stand for. Furthermore it serves as a clear positioning and explicit perception of the respective individuals with regards to the outer world. It is also elementary to understand that every single human being has his/her own value system and thus a unique brand to create (Berndt 2009, p. 16). Therefore there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution. According to Berndt (2009, pp. 22-23, p. 176), the human brand should be developed for a period of at least 15 years and should therefore cover the future path and also the vision of an individual. Nevertheless, the brand can and should be adjusted regularly wherein the core values are re-evaluated. However, it is important to just have one brand identity and not create multiple (e.g. for private and business life) (Berndt 2009, p. 67). This may lead to cognitive dissonances and schizophrenic behaviour (if the defined brand values are deviating from each other).

**Brand Triangle**

The creation process of the human brand starts with the ‘Brand Triangle’ (see Figure 4 Brand Triangle) (Berndt 2009, pp. 76-83). In the middle of the triangle is the ‘Self’ or ‘I’ and on the corners are the three main questions. The first step within the creation of a brand is to find out the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of a product. In the human brand management process the USP would be translated as accentuation\(^9\) or unique feature of an individual and is referring to the qualities of the same (Berndt 2009, p. 77). The second step is to know the ‘competition’ or better said the surrounding or environment and discover the respective strength and the competitive advantage. The last step of the triangle constitutes the outlining of the contribution to the society and to define the relevance within the societal system. Berndt (2009, pp. 82-83) argues that all corners of the triangle have to be balanced and somehow equally strong. Because he

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\(^9\) In German: ‘Herausstellungsmerkmal’ (Berndt 2009, p. 77)
thinks that the best feature or accentuation is worth nothing if it is not relevant within the society (Berndt 2009, p. 83).

**Figure 4 Brand Triangle**

![Brand Triangle Diagram](image)

Source: Modified after Berndt 2009, p. 76

**Brand Identity**

The next step in the development process of the brand is the creation of a brand identity. In the German language it is referred to as ‘Marken-Ei’, which means literally translated ‘Brand Egg’. However, there was no evidence found that the term ‘Brand Egg’ is used in the English language, thus I will use ‘brand identity’. The German wording refers to a metaphorical visualization of the brand identity. It is illustrated as an egg, where the core of the brand is depicted as yolk of the egg and the supporting brand values comprise the egg white, which constitutes the nutrition of the core. According to Berndt (2009, pp. 86, 92) the brand core should consist of ideally just one word, which is stating the ultimate personal value. This value should be instantly connected with the person and should also stay in
mind and constitute therefore the recognition value\(^\text{10}\). As an example, I state the brand identity of an international car manufacturer (see Figure 5 Example: Brand Identity of BMW). The core of the brand BMW is ‘Joy’. As soon as people see a product of that company, they should feel joy. This feeling is furthermore characterized and interpreted by the three values: dynamic, challenging and cultured. As soon as a product of this company is launched, all marketing and public relation activities build upon the core and the values.

**Figure 5 Example: Brand Identity of BMW**

The human brand should therefore also consist of a core and supporting values. It is not that important how many values are defined, thus Berndt (2009, p. 97) suggests keeping it simple in order to extract and visualize the essence of an individual.

\(^{10}\) Brand recognition value is a marketing term and is roughly the value, to which extend the product/service is recognized within the market, as a result of specific attributes.
To conclude it can be said that the concept of the creation of a human brand can help to develop and discover the core values of an individual. Nevertheless, the term ‘creation’ of a brand might be misleading. It is not meant that a desired image or perception of an individual is created, but rather to identify the inner self of a person. As Berndt (2009, p. 46, author’s translation) states “it is only working, if the inner picture of the person is the same as he/she is conveying it to the environment. If the person is authentic so to say.” With this statement he is underlining the importance of not making something up, but rather discovering the true values, which are deeply held within an individual.

Based upon these core values, a personal vision should be created and formulated in order to have a general direction where an individual will move in the future.

5.2.2 **Having a personal vision**

According to Scharmer (2009, p. 20) the real sense for an individual in the world today is not about the choice of who one is or want one wants to be or where one wants to take the world to where one lives in, but it is rather about answering the question “What are we here for?” (Scharmer 2009, p. 20). This is in my opinion perfectly described and done within a personal vision. One should therefore try to answer the following questions: ‘What is your contribution to the society?’ and ‘Why are you here?’.

Covey (2009, p. 122) states, that in order to begin with the end in mind, a personal vision is needed. Through discovery and clarification of the deeply held character value, life goals are defined. Furthermore he states that the ideal characteristics should be envisioned and expressed for each role and relationship in life.

11 German quote: „Das gelingt, wenn der Mensch innen so ist, wie er nach außen vorgibt zu sein. Wenn er authentisch ist.“ (Berndt 2009, p. 46)
To make the connection to chapter ‘5.1 Make sense’, an individual should know their very personal mental maps (i.e. frames of references) in order to know (1) where he/she is at the moment, (2) where he/she came from and – most applicable within the formulation of a vision – (3) where the individual wants to go in the future. If an individual is just focusing on one of the above-mentioned dimensions, he/she will often spend too much time coping with problems along the path and hence, only have a vague idea of what is really important to him/her (Senge 2006, pp. 129-131).

Senge (2006, pp. 139-143) claims that the juxtaposition of a vision and the clear picture of the current reality of an individual generates ‘creative tension’. This gap of current reality and desired vision constitutes a source for creative energy. If there would be no gap between the reality and the vision which has to be achieved, there would also be no need for any action whatsoever. He argues furthermore that there are two possible ways of dealing with creative tension – either lowering the expected vision, or increasing the current reality. If people understand the power of creative tension and if they allow it to operate by not lowering their vision, this vision becomes an active force for the origination of creative energy. He consequently states, that learning how to generate and sustain the creative tension is the very essence of personal mastery. According to Senge (2006, p. 132) individuals who excel this activity, have a special sense of purpose and see the current reality “as an ally, not an enemy” (Senge 2006, p. 132).

“Personal vision comes from within” (Senge 2006, p. 136). The personal vision should be based on the values and the brand identity (see ‘5.2.1 Create an individual ‘human brand’) of the respective individual and should serve as a very personal constitution whereon all future decisions are based upon (Covey 2009, p. 145). Covey (2009, pp. 148-151) is stating various methods on how to create such a vision. However, the core is to open the mind and visualize the desired future state. He advises to also use as much emotions as possible and also to incorporate all five human senses (see also Aesthetic Leadership in chapter ‘5.5.3 Aesthetics in leadership’). Furthermore all two hemispheres of the brain should be used (left: logical,
verbal; right: emotions, visual). In the same time it is crucial to understand that the visualization of a vision is not a one-time activity, but rather a continuous process whereby the whole vision and the values are internalized and regularly re-assessed (Covey 2009, p. 14).

Hansen, Ropo and Sauer (2007) are describing in their concept of aesthetic leadership, that “leaders must provide followers with a sense of what life will be like if the vision is enacted” (Hansen, Ropo und Sauer 2007, p. 549). I would like to refer to Steve Jobs and his mastery ability to create such a prophecy and envision it not only to his employees but also to the whole world. Hence he and his organization succeeded because he was able to show them how their work and products contributes to a worthwhile future (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 85).

To conclude this chapter I want to share the wonderful lesson my grandfather taught me when I was young. He was not a man of great words, nor had he held any graduate degree or published any articles or books; he was just a normal worker and thus taught me from the very beginning important lessons regarding sensemaking, values and the importance of a vision. He emphasized on the significance of having a purpose in life, which is mainly build on my core values. These core values, he told me, I have to create, shape and ultimately envision in my everyday life and behaviour and - most important – obey to them whoever I am or whatever I do.

5.3 Reflect regularly

Again I want to invite the reader to look at the painting of Picasso with the obvious title ‘Girl before a mirror’ which was painted in 1932. This painting shows Picasso’s young mistress Marie-Thérèse Walter standing in front of a mirror and looking at her reflection. When viewing and studying this painting, various possibilities regarding its interpretation can arise. One could possible interpret that when a women looks at her mirror image, she
sees herself as an old woman, with a discoloured and darkened facial features. She sees that her young body has changed and gravity has taken its rightful place.

**Painting 3 Picasso’s Girl Before a Mirror, 1932**

![Picasso's Girl Before a Mirror, 1932](image)

Source: Picasso 1932, Photo: © Museum of Modern Art, New York 2013

This interpretation refers to the interdependency between the historical beauty and the current reality. This is telling us, that we have to consider our life-story when we are looking into the mirror. We see where we came
from – and what formed us. I think the following quote of Schopenhauer (1987) is also quite fitting to this possible interpretation: “The character of a human is EMPIRIC. Through experience alone one gets to know him, not only on others, but also the very own. This is also the reason why one gets disappointed when discovering that a certain trait as for example justice, altruism, courage is not inherited as to that extend one is expecting it.”12 (Schopenhauer 1849, p. 246, author’s translation)

Another possible interpretation is, that the young Marie-Thérèse sees through her high degree of self-consciousness all the flaws in the reflection that the outer world does not see. This interpretation shows us, that only we know who we really are when looking at our reflections.

A constant re-evaluation of the value system and the personal vision is crucial when it comes to leading oneself. Senge (2006, p. 8) is referring within his concept of the five disciplines to the necessity to work with mental models (the deeply ingrained assumptions and generalizations) and to turn the mirror inward: “learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny” (Senge 2006, p. 8). Senge (2006, pp. 260-262) refers to this process as ‘reflective openness’ and suggests that it starts with the willingness to challenge the own thinking and to recognize that any certainty an individual may hold is, at best, a hypothesis about the world. Furthermore he argues that reflective openness lies in the attitude and the avowal of an ‘I be wrong and the other person may be right’. It involves therefore not just examining the own ideas, but also considering what others are thinking. M Teachout (2013, pers. comm. 19 April) says that “successful people not only learn from mistakes but they consistently reflect on their experience; they reflect on their activities”. Within this statement he meant that it is pertinent to understand that one can learn from every opportunity and every activity.

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12 Original German quote: „Der Charakter des Menschen ist EMPIRISCH. Durch Erfahrung allein lernt man ihn kennen, nicht bloß an Andern, sondern auch an sich selbst. Daher wird man oft, wie über Andere, so auch über sich selbst enttäuscht, wenn man entdeckt, daß man dieses oder jene Eigenschaft, z.B. Gerechtigkeit, Uneigennützigkeit, Muth, nicht in dem Grade besitzt, als man gütigst voraussetzte.“ (Schopenhauer 1849, p. 246)
Boschert (2011, p. 68) suggests that this regular questioning of the deeply held beliefs and values can be achieved with the help of reflection. In the sense of having an “unbiased and open view in one’s innermost self”¹³ (Boschert 2011, p. 68, author’s translation). But how can one get in contact with one’s SELF?  

5.3.1 **Dialogue with the ‘Self’**

To understand Boschert’s understanding of reflection one has to consider that he is generally distinguishing between the ‘I’ and the ‘Self’ within an individual. The ‘I’ refers to the surface of a person and is merely found on a conscious level. The ‘Self’ on the other hand, is dealing with the unconscious level and is rooted deeply inside an individual and constitutes the personality and character. Boschert (2011, p. 70) states that within a dialogue with the ‘I’ and the ‘Self’ a certain attitude towards oneself is developed. Within this dialogue an individual should actively listen to the inner Self and try to feel what he/she really stands for and how he/she really is, and also find out the strength and weaknesses as well as the general goals and purpose in life (Boschert 2011, pp. 70-71). This attitude constitutes the basic perception of how one perceives him/herself and also how one is/wants to be perceived from the outer world. It serves furthermore as a basis for the thinking process and general behaviour of an individual (Boschert 2011, p. 70, p. 108). Besides that he claims that with a strong sense of self-knowledge and a sound dialogue between the ‘I’ and the ‘Self’, self-confidence is built and maintained. The process of creating and maintain this attitude is – in Boschert’s understanding – referred to as self-reflection (Boschert 2011, pp. 69-71).

The notion of building self-confidence and to trust in yourSELF is in my opinion really interesting and again highly relevant and connectable to the

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¹³ Original German quote: „Das heißt, unvoreingenommen einen offenen Blick in sein tiefstes Innerstes zu wagen“ (Boschert 2011, p. 68).
title of the thesis, because: **How can you trust others, when you do not trust yourself?**

He connects this outcome of self-reflection – the inner attitude – with the outer attitude, which is composed and perceived by the outer world. Thus, he concludes that only if inner and outer attitude are aligned and somehow equal, an individual will be perceived as authentic (Boschert 2011, pp. 82-85). Sparrowe (2005, p. 423) also came to this conclusion when he was stating that “consistency is the result of self-awareness and self-regulation working in concert: authentic leaders are effective in leading others because followers look for consistency between their leaders’ true selves - as expressed in values, purpose, or voice - and their behaviours”.

Manz and Sims (2001, p. 112-113) are referring to the inner dialog as ‘self-talk’ and have affirmed the potential of the same as a mean for improving the personal effectiveness of employees and leaders. To the same conclusion came Neck, Nouri and Godwin (2003) when they researched how self-leadership (in the sense of knowing oneself and having an aligned attitude towards oneself and the outer world) affects the goal-setting process.

If the two dimensions of attitudes are not aligned however, or if the inner attitude is maybe not developed (e.g. through the lack of self-reflection) it might result in (1) a lack of self-confidence (which will be covered with stubbornness or exaggerated harshness), (2) a lack of self-esteem (which leads to subordination and blind following) or even (3) a lack of self-discipline (which will result again in exaggerated harshness and unpredictable behaviour) (Boschert 2011, p. 86). Furthermore, self-reflection will also lead an individual to a state where he/she discovers and acknowledge his/her frames of references. An individual can therefore use self-reflection as a mean (compass) to navigate through the mental maps (frames of references) of his/herself (Boschert 2011, p. 98).

Boschert (2011, p. 106) concludes that self-reflection is the most important mean to lead oneself. Therefore it is of major importance to develop a sound understanding of the inner attitude through regular reflection.
Sydänmaanlakka (2004, p. 1) argues similarly when he is saying that leading oneself is an enabling process whereby individuals gain a better self-understanding of themselves in order to be able to steer their lives in a desired direction.

5.3.2 **Develop a Life-story**

Berndt (2009, p. 150) states the importance of knowing where one comes from in order to assess and to know the personal values. He states that it is important to also consider ones roots and heritage and to not try to hide that behind a false façade as this may lead to an inauthentic perception. Shamir and Eilam (2005) are introducing a very interesting concept which is exactly dealing with the necessity of knowing where one comes from – the life-story approach. On the one hand the life-story serves as essential element in defining and developing authentic leaders. On the other hand it also gives the followers the opportunity to assess the leader’s authenticity. Hansen, Ropo and Sauer (2007, p. 550) counter that “it seems implausible that followers will judge whether or not leaders are ‘being themselves’ from any objective criteria, yet people are incredible adept at sensing when someone is being fake, when what the individual is projecting is not ‘the real me’. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002, pp. 45-50, p. 254) are referring to this necessity in their self-management model as ‘transparency’. They are arguing that leaders, which are transparent are showing an authentic openness to others concerning their feelings and beliefs. Hence they are admitting openly mistakes and faults and are also blowing the whistle when they discover unethical behaviour.

As a first step, an individual who aspires to lead him/herself has to understand his/her personal life-story in order to achieve self-concept clarity. Accordingly it manifests life experiences into a ‘gestalt structure that establishes connections’ (Shamir & Eilam 2005, p. 402) and allows to create a meaning system in order to provide the leader with knowledge and clarity about their values and convictions. Shamir and Eilam (2005, pp. 403-406) determine that a leader’s life-story is organized around four major themes:
The first is leadership development as a natural process and contains ‘born leaders’ as well as ‘late boomers’ whose leadership was either evident at a very early stage or discovered a little later. I strongly disagree with this explanation, as I do not believe that there are such things as ‘born leaders’. Even though they meant maybe the situation when a person is born into a family which background is affected by historical circumstances and is thereby prone to become a leader. One has to consider though that the personal development begins with the family and that each person experiences the possible traumas associated with their early childhood (Zaleznik 2001, p. 8).

Nevertheless, the second theme suggests that leadership development arises also out of struggle and refers to the concept of Bennis and Thomas (2007) of the crucibles, which is described in chapter 5.4.3 Acknowledge the Crucibles. Leadership development as finding a cause describes the identification with a movement in which an individual can find a sense of direction. These movements have usually a political or ideological outlook. The last theme - leadership development as learning from experience - reflects the creation of meaning in a life-story through a series of learning and training experiences, which were predominantly extracted from positive and negative role models.

With the help of the themes mentioned above, future leaders can select distinctive elements of their very personal story to create meaning and to generate an individual life-story which reflects their self-concepts, reveals their strengths and weaknesses, explains the core values and ultimately states the convictions and vision for the claim of a leadership role. This process involves also highlighting certain participants and situations in one’s story and ignoring others.

To conclude, Shamir and Eilam (2005, pp. 395-417) believe that the self-defined meaning, which arise out of the individual’s life-experience can be used in a leadership context do define authentic leaders. Furthermore the life story approach gives deep insight in the leader’s vision and values and
can therefore be used for sensemaking and to answer the ultimate question of: Leadership for what? Additionally it will help individuals to develop their self-regulation, which is “the process through which leaders allign their behavior with their true selves” (Sparrowe 2005, p. 432). The life-story can help leaders and individuals to develop such a self-regulation through which they can make their true selves transparent to the followers.

Gunhard Keil, a consultant and expert in organizational development, suggests to actively practice future-oriented reflection. One main trait or ability for a leader is according to G Keil (2013, pers. comm. 18 April) to “[...] actively reflect what one does; a future oriented reflection, not a past oriented. Instead of asking ‘What have I done?’ one should rather ask ‘What do I do and how could I improve that?’” This means to not ask ‘Why’ and going to the root of the problem but looking into the future and define what could be done better, and how this could be done better. In the conversation with Keil I found this idea already interesting. In a later discussion with L Mayrhofer (2013, pers. comm. 23 April), another expert and author in the field of leading oneself, I deepened that understanding and the necessity of looking into the future. Thereafter I found Otto Scharmer’s (2009) Book ‘Theory U. Leading from the Future as It Emerges’ and came to the conclusion, that this is also one element when it comes to leading oneself. Hence I will further elaborate on the core – the presencing – in the next chapter.

5.3.3 Presencing

To start with this chapter I want to come back to Picasso’s Girl in a Mirror and provide a third – and my personal favourite – interpretation:

“It is also a complex variant on the traditional Vanity—the image of a woman confronting her mortality in a mirror, which reflects her as a death's head. On the right, the mirror reflection suggests a supernatural x-ray of the girl’s soul, her future, her fate. Her face is darkened, her eyes are round and hollow, and her intensely feminine body is twisted and contorted. She seems older and more anxious. The girl reaches out to the reflection, as if trying to unite her different ‘selves’. The diamond-
patterned wallpaper recalls the costume of the Harlequin, the comic character from the commedia dell’arte with whom Picasso often identified himself—here a silent witness to the girl’s psychic and physical transformations.” (The Museum of Modern Art, 1999, p. 161)

Looking at the future and accepting her fate, trying to unite her different ‘selves’ and go through a psychic transformation is to some extent described in Scharmer’s (2009) concept of presencing – where one has to look at the future – at the inner most Self – in order to get clarity about him/herself.

Scharmer (2009) argues that all theories we know about learning and organizational development focus on the learning from the past – ‘how we can learn from what that has already happened’. In his Theory U, which he describes in length in his Book ‘Theory U’, he emphasizes on the importance of also learning from the future as it emerges. “Learning from the future is vital to innovation, [...] involves intuition [and requires from the individual to] embrace high levels of ambiguity, uncertainty, and willingness to fail. It involves opening ourselves to the unthinkable and sometimes attempting to do the impossible” (Senge 2009, p. xvi).

The underlying reason for Scharmer (2009, pp. 21-56) to develop Theory U was to discover possible blind spots when it comes to leadership. He draws a – with my thesis design – perfectly fitting analogy to the painting process. There are three ways a person can look at the process of painting: Either one focus on the (1) product that results from a creative process – the finished painting so to say. A second possibility is to focus on the (2) process of the painting – how it is created and which techniques are used. Or in a third way, one can (3) observe the artist before the creation begins as he/she stands in front of a blank canvas. He is translating this analogy into the leadership area and argues that the question regarding (1) What and (2) How leaders do things, was extensively researched over the past fifteen years. The question regarding the ‘Source’, which leaders are actually operating from, is still open though (Scharmer 2009, p. 7). To find this source, Sharmer is introducing the concept of presencing which constitutes the core of Theory U (see Figure 6 Otto Scharmer’s Theory U).
Sharmer (2009) is roughly dividing the concept into three parts: Opening, Stillness and Actualization. Scharmer (2009, p. 38) explains that within the first part, an individual moves down the U through cognitive spaces of downloading, sensing and prescening (see Figure 6 Otto Scharmer’s Theory U).

**Figure 6 Otto Scharmer's Theory U**

![Otto Scharmer's Theory U](source)

Source: Scharmer 2009, p. 45

Downloading starts with the awareness, that all the actions which individuals are undertaking, are based on habitual patterns and thoughts (Scharmer 2009, p. 119). This is in my opinion connected to the process of sensemaking – those individuals have to be aware of their frames of references in order to understand their actions and to move on and open their minds. The process of sensemaking is in chapter ‘5.1 Make sense’ further described.

In the second phase of the Theory U – the seeing - Scharmer (2009, p. 184) is referring to the necessity to open one’s mind and let go of “everything that isn’t essential” (Arthur, n.d., cited in Scharmer 2009, p. 184). I will elaborate on this element of leading oneself in chapter ‘5.4 Open up and learn from failures’ more. The third step in Theory U is ‘sensing’.
There he suggests to open the heart and listen to the emotions and feelings (Scharmer 2009, pp. 143-147).

To understand the process of presencing, one has to accept Scharmer’s view (2009, p. 41) when he is stating, that every human being is incorporating two selves; the self and the Self (the latter is written intentionally with capital letter). “One self is the person or community we have become as a result of a journey that took place in the past. The other Self is the person or community we can become as we journey into the future” (Scharmer 2009, p. 41). The core of presencing is the capacity of oneself to move from the current self to the future Self (Scharmer 2009, p. 163). It is the very personal capacity to access the authentic self so to speak. The essence of presencing is to investigate the space of nothingness between the self and the Self, which is defined as the highest future possibility (Scharmer 2009, pp. 162-170). These two selves are usually not well connected. Presencing helps to connect them and to access the authentic Self.

This connection and this awareness constitutes a deeper source – the source of who one really is and why one actually is here (Scharmer 2009, p. 13). Theory U constitutes a framework that allows individuals to communicate about that deep level of experience and knowledge. It is a methodology that helps to be more effective in operating from the inner space. “This deep connection has been described by different names in various wisdom traditions: the presence of Source (Daoism), natural state (Buddhism), Brahman (Hindu traditions), Yaweh (Judaism), Allah (Muslim traditions), God, Christ, The Holy Spirit (Christian traditions, or The Great Spirit (Native traditions))” (Scharmer 2009, p. 190); ‘Dreamtime’ – is in my understanding - what the Australian Aboriginal People refer to when speaking about that inner connection. The third core part is called ‘Actualizing’. The logical next step after presencing is referred to as envisioning and contains the process of crystalizing. This method is based on the deeper place of knowing the Self and means to clarify a vision and intentions to form the highest future possibile (Scharmer 2009, p. 192). Within the step of embodiment, Scharmer (2009, p. 215) is referring to what I called in my thesis ‘giving
consistent sense’. I will come back on that in chapter ‘5.5 Give Consistent Sense’.

To conclude must be said that it is important to regularly reflect and create a self-awareness as well as a self-regulation capacity. In the same time it is also important not to stand still and to develop further. It is very necessary to accept and know the own life-story so to say. But we should thrive to not just live in the past and also look forward – into the future. In the next chapter, I am addressing the importance of opening up and learning from failures in order to create a better future.

5.4 Open up and learn from failures

To start with this chapter I want to invite the reader to look at the partly covered painting of Salvador Dali (Painting 4 Dali’s ‘Covered Painting’).

**Painting 4 Dali’s ‘Covered Painting’**

Source: Dali 1937
When looking at that painting one would perceive Dali’s surrealistic virtue and see three elephants standing next to each other. In this chapter I want to emphasize on the importance an open mind when it comes to leading oneself. Scharmer (2009, p. 184) said: “When you start to suspend your habitual ways of operating and your attention is grabbed by something that surprises or interests you – something concrete, specific, and unexpected. When that happens, you begin to access your open mind”. When we – after considering this quote – open the curtains and also our mind, we will see a completely different scene.

Painting 5 Dali’s Swans Reflecting Elephants, 1937

Source: Dali 1937

This painting was created during Dali’s Paranoiac-critical period and contains one of the famous double images. The main focus of the painting is the bizarre reflection of swans in the pond on which they float, which resemble elephants. The reflections of the swans in the sea in front of the bleak, leafless trees depicting a delusive double image.
This image shows that it is of major importance to open up and also perceive other things and subtler cues when approaching a topic and forget about possible psychical limitations. Malik (2006, p. 164) argues that every person – especially top sportsmen/women – know that their limitations are first and foremost in their head. They furthermore know that those limits can easily be shifted or even eliminated. Malik (2006) basically states that it is also important for managers and leaders to free themselves from dependencies and open up to new experiences and methods to consequently shift their limits. Carroll (2007) is basically also stating the same and suggests a method how this can be achieved. The core of this chapter is to be open towards the new and changing environment. In the current environment we are living, change is omnipresent, and therefore every individual should not be fixated on the current state or the current way of thinking but rather be curious about what is happening around him/her. In this respect we can learn from children and their behaviour. Because Gardner and Laskin (2011, pp. 26-27) state, that the mind of a five-year-old “exhibits and adventurousness, a willingness to entertain new possibilities, and an openness to unfamiliar practices that is most attractive and that older individuals are well advised to try to maintain – in the way that the Picassos and Einsteins among us seem able to do”. Senge (2006) is having the same thought while stating the following thought.

“The learning process of the young child provides a beautiful metaphor for the learning challenge faced by us all: to continually expand our awareness and understanding, to see more and more of the interdependencies between actions and our reality, to see more and more of our connectedness to the world around us. We will probably never perceive fully the multiple ways in which we influence our reality. But simply being open to the possibility is enough to free our thinking.” (Senge 2006, p. 160).

In order to lead oneself in a fast changing environment, it is advisable to make change the best friend, because change means to get rid of old patterns of thoughts, beliefs, values and fears which no longer serve one but
may even restrict one in a certain way. Therefore it is paramount to open up and re-evaluating one’s values and frames of references on a constant basis. Senge (2006, p. 186) suggest to constantly ask “What is the ‘data’ on which this generalizations are based upon?”; and in a second step ‘Am I willing to consider that these generalizations may be inaccurate or misleading’. The first question can be answered within the concept of sensemaking (see chapter 5.1 Make sense). To answer the latter question, I will give further insights on the importance of opening up and learning from failures, which can be achieved for example with the help of mindful mediation.

The importance of integrative thinking – of combining two different fields or problems – and to develop the adaptive capacity to further learn from failures and acknowledging one’s crucibles is also important when it comes to leading oneself.

5.4.1 Mindful mediation

Carroll (2007) is arguing that the instinct to inspire the best in others - which is continuously practices by the so called ‘mindful leaders’ - is totally natural and constitutes the heart of being a leader (Carroll 2007, p. 18). The primary act to do this however, is according to Carroll (2007, pp. 19-21) to ‘open up’. He argues that this fundamental human gesture has to happen before a leader can guide the way for others. With this statement he is in my opinion referring to Plato’s aphorism ‘leading others comes through the art of leading oneself’. Scharmer (2009, p. 129-140) is referring to this action as ‘seeing’ within his concept of Theory U.

To actively practice the process of ‘opening up’, a leader has to “step beyond the boundaries of what is familiar and routine and directly touch the very people and environment he or she intends to inspire” (Carroll 2007, pp. 19-20). It requires that a leader first opens up to the world around him/her to become available to what is actually going on. The concept of ‘opening up’ helps the respective leader to really see how things are instead of how he/she wants them to be. To connect this thought with Weick’s (1995) concept of sensemaking, an individual has to understand that it is somehow
necessary not to stick to the frames of references too closely and to also consider other things – which might be ‘out of the frame’ – as useful and necessary and in some instances maybe also more real than others.

“There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; there is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don’t know we don’t know …” (Rumsfeld, n.d. cited in Carroll 2007, p. 167).

This quote of the former U.S. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld illustrates perfectly the need to be open and to embrace the fact that there are unknowns that we do not know yet. Carroll (2007, pp. 167-169) suggests therefore that a mindful leader should be open to and aware of the surroundings and actively seek clarity, call for feedback, listen to and work with criticism and consider new angles and viewpoints. Boschert (2011, p. 116) is suggesting also to be open towards the future and future goals. He argues that within the mind of a person a certain depiction or conception of the future is already manifested. With the concept of ‘open up’ it is therefore also necessary to question this conception and maybe also be prepared to alter it in a certain way. Weick (1995, pp. 54-55; 2001, p. 180) is also referring in this context to the phenomenon of the self-fulfilling prophecy, whereas he says that almost any point of reference will stimulate the cognitive structure, which consequently will lead people to act more intensely towards an outcome.

While doing this, it is also required to somehow accept that someone is vulnerable and lowering the need of defence (Carroll 2007, p. 27). This – Carroll called it “lead from a place of total exposure” (Carroll 2007, p. 27) – will ultimately contribute to the perception of the leader as being authentic.

Carroll (2007, p. 37) is also mentioning the need to distinguish between ‘praise and blame’ and ‘success and failures’. He argues that in the majority of cases, successful employees are often criticized whereas those who fail are often praised. But he rather suggests to give praise to others and shoulder
criticism yourself in order to inspire the best in others and not to demotivate them.

The key statement in Carrol’s book ‘The Mindful Leader’ is that a leader who thrives to become more open, authentic and who really wants to know him/herself better should practice “the art of sitting still” (Carroll 2007, p. 52) and practice mindful mediation. He suggests to sit still for 15-30 minutes every day and listen to one’s thoughts and to just be. This method can be used to ultimately find out who one is while mediating. Because according to Carroll (2007, pp. 56-57) it is not about constant improvement but rather about finding out who you are – “we are not interested in improving ourselves or becoming happier; rather, we are interested in being who we already are – we are interested in discovering our basic sanity” (Carroll 2007, p. 56). Scharmer (2009, pp. 402-405) is also giving the advice to pick a practice that helps one to connect with his/her source and states as an example the ‘morning practice’ where one should take 10-30 minutes in the morning and visit the inner Self.

In the course of his book, Carroll (2007, pp. 61-137) mentions several talents a leader can achieve while practicing and actively doing mindful mediation. The most important in my opinion are the following: ‘Simplicity’, which means the necessity to overcome resistance. It deals about the importance of an individual to break out of his/her comfort zone and get things started. ‘Poise’ means reaching inner harmony with oneself and reveals the inner capability that an individual can rely on his/her intelligence and basic humanity (Carroll 2007, pp. 68-73). Within the area of ‘respect’ he is mentioning the importance of developing a sense of self-respect and acknowledging one’s strength and weaknesses. Mental leaders also need the ‘courage’ to stand to their values and be who they are (Carroll 2007, p. 87). According to him, a leader first has to neglect the need for security and step out of his/her comfort zone in order to do what is descent and right, to ultimately be seen as authentic and brave. He repeatedly is stating the necessity to open the mind and free oneself from one’s frames of references and mental maps in order to be free from the fixed mind:
“Mindful leaders express courage by not holding on to fixed views, wielding credentials, or stubbornly insisting on a position” (Carroll, p. 89).

Another very useful talent can be discovered and honed while mindful meditating: ‘Patience’ (Carroll 2007, pp. 106-114). Sitting still for at least 15 minutes and thinking of who and where we are, helps us to break out of the perpetual rush hour and slows our mind and feelings down. This will consequently help us to deal with each circumstance patently in order to live in the here and now and be present in any given minute.

In a nutshell it is to be said that opening up to new quests is essential when it comes to leading oneself. Another – and in my opinion – connected thought is the one of integrative thinking.

5.4.2 Integrative thinking

Martin (2010, pp. 33-40) highlights within his article the importance for leaders to excel at integrative thinking, which is a learnable characteristic that enables exceptional business people to juggle two contrasting ideas and to creatively connect them. Hence, they are able to generate new and superior options and solutions, which combine the advantages and disarm the disadvantages of both (Martin 2010, pp. 34-36). In order to achieve and foster this trait, an individual has to consider the four stages of decision-making. However, the particular steps are not paramount, it is rather important how an individual approach the stages (Martin 2010, p. 36).

Within the concept of the “opposable mind”, Martin (2010, p. 36) describes the evolitional necessity to constantly train and exercise the trait described previously in order not to be the slave of simplicity and also to avoid complexity and ambiguity. Furthermore, he mentions the frequency of the phrase ‘either-or’-choice in his interviews (Martin 2010, p. 36). With that expression the interviewees intended to illustrate the fact that by rejecting one alternative and saying either idea A or idea B is right or wrong, they would disable the opposable mind at once and would not be able to think in an integrative way.
To explain the desired concept of decision-making he uses a four-stage model and points out the main differences regarding the approach of them. The first step is to identify the key factors and determine salience in order to not only address the obvious factors but also to find the hidden and maybe more relevant features (Martin 2010, p. 37). In order to achieve that, creative thinking can be used to draw a conclusion, which is not necessarily based on sound argumentation and rules but rather on imagination and mental high jumps (De Wit & Meyer 2010, pp. 60-61). Secondly, the integrative thinker discovers multidirectional and nonlinear relationships between ideas and analyses causalities among them (Martin 2010, p. 38). Next, they do not concentrate on the details but rather on the big picture and are envisioning the general architecture of the problem or idea (Martin 2010, pp. 38-39). To complete the process of decision making, the integrative thinkers are not applying ‘either-or’-choices, but generate innovative outcomes and achieve creative resolutions (Martin 2010, p. 37, p. 39). Steve Jobs was apparently a good example of especially the last step of Martin’s (2010) described model. His obsession with perfectionism caused the company to constantly rethink their ideas and innovations in order to get the best out of it (Surowiecki 2011). Martin (2010, pp. 39-40) concludes that integrative thinkers want to change the world for the better. Furthermore, he advises future leaders to apply the method suggested by Thomas C. Chamberlin to test one’s hypothesis through trial and error. This perfectly builds a bridge to the next chapter – acknowledging the crucibles in one’s life and learn from failures. P Elsass (2013, email 23 April) stated the following: “I agree with Bennis and Thomas that a crucible experience is a critical milestone. The problem may be, particularly for young leaders, that the crucible is not easily recognizable. Most of the young leaders today are not (to use Bennis’ example) thrown into war. This is why self-reflection is so very important and why I, and others studying leadership development, argue that it is most important to know yourself.” Therefore I decided to describe the concept of the crucibles further in my thesis.
5.4.3 Acknowledge the Crucibles

Bennis and Thomas (2007) developed in their book ‘Leading for a Lifetime’ a leadership development model where they are basically addressing the importance of acknowledging and valuing the crucibles and defining moments in one’s life.

According to Bennis and Thomas (2007, pp. 10-14, pp. 158-159) the specific and unique leadership development of every individual is significantly shaped and defined within the distinctive periods – a specific place and time, the so called era – the respective person is growing up. These eras are predominantly defined by special inventions (i.e. steam engine, internet, cloud computing, etc.) and ground-breaking incidents (moon landing, 9/11, subprime crisis, etc.) and ‘may occur every twenty years or less’ (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 10).

Nevertheless, era is just one component of the ‘complete leadership development model’ of Bennis and Thomas (2007) (see Figure 7 Complete Leadership Development Model of Bennis and Thomas). Additionally to the era they perceive individual factors as shaping elements of one’s experience and personal development as a leader (Bennis & Thomas 2007, pp. 90-91). I agree with Bennis and Thomas (2007, p. 91) that those individual factors were given too much prominence in the studies of leadership. I also believe that personal traits are rarely in conjunction with personal achievements, moreover those “traits related to leadership are not culturally universal” (Ayman & Korabik 2010, p. 162). The concept of the crucibles, in which an experience or a special setting in an individual’s life acts as a test or a very distinctive turning point, where one’s values and beliefs are examined and put to the touch. With the help of that, a future leader can learn to improve, take the risk and see the unique opportunity in this often also dangerous situation. (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 100, pp. 161-162) Scharmer (2009, pp. 21-50) is referring to that necessity as ‘Bumping Into Our Blind Spot’. He thinks that in order to know who you are and why you are here, one needs to discover the blind spots in his/her life.
Accordingly crucibles can be utilized as means of sensemaking (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 99) to find an answer to the question “Leadership for what?” (Bennis 2007, p. 3) and to ultimately discover and align your own set of values and beliefs. These incisive moments help future leaders not to only survive, but to improve themselves and re-emerge even more strengthened and inspired (Bennis & Thomas 2007, pp. 91-101). This insight implies that future leaders see the necessity to use those crucibles in order to adapt to changing eras (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 93, p. 176), which is referred to as ‘adaptive capacity’ and can also be seen as “learning how to learn” (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 175) or to be a transformational leader in the sense of leading oneself. As a result, this will guide future leaders to their ultimate goal to get out of their comfort zone and see failure as a friend (Bennis & Thomas 2007, p. 176, p. 103). In order to share visions with customers and employees it is also mentioned that lifetime leaders engage others by creating shared meaning (Bennis & Thomas 2007, pp. 134-140). Shared meaning will be touched again in chapter ‘5.5 Give Consistent Sense’.
Adaptive capacity

Bennis and Nanus (2007, pp. 52-79, pp. 175-199) are addressing in their strategy the importance of the deployment of self through positive self-regard and are highlighting the necessity to recognize strengths and compensate weaknesses as well as to nurture skills with discipline in order to obtain the best “fit between person strengths and organization requirements” (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p. 57).

Moreover business leaders should not be afraid of failures. They should see failure as a friend, not as an enemy. Salvador Dali (n.d.) was seeing that similar when he was stating that “mistakes are almost always of a sacred nature. Never try to correct them. On the contrary: rationalize them, understand them thoroughly. After that, it will be possible for you to sublimate them”. Therefore leaders should create a sense of urgency for the importance of learning from failures in order to adapt to uncertain situations (Conger 2002, p. xvii).

As Bennis and Nanus (2007, p. 114) point out that with enough adaptive capacity there are no failures. In other words, as long as one sees the opportunity in any mistake and as long as one is aware not to replicate them on a regular basis, this individual will broaden the knowledge (as in enlarge their frames of references) and learn from the experience. In this respect I want to state a big failure of George C. Marshall (Gardner & Laskin 2011). After Marshall received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953 he was entering his so-called ‘Post war diplomatic career’ in which he was not quite successful. He was appointed to intervene in the Korean War and found a suitable solution. But he was not able to create a story, and consequently failed in his mission. In my interpretation, Marshall failed because he was too stubborn. After a great success (Nobel Peace Prize) one should thrive to rethink his/her story and renew oneself in order not to be trapped in a certain way or behaviour. In a personal conversation with G Keil (2013, 18 April) he also stated that “too many successes often make people lazy and they are not focussed anymore”. In this context I want to use the example of
Eleanor Roosevelt when she showed that it is also important to re-invent oneself after a great failure. Maybe Marshall would have been more successful in negotiation with the Koreans in choosing a different approach.

M Berger (2013, 30 April, author’s translation) also stated in a personal communication that “you constantly have to re-invent yourself. [...] If you encounter a major down-break, you have to stand up”\(^\text{14}\) and learn from it.

To conclude this section I want to state Schopenhauer (1987) when he is referring to Cicero and Aristotle and stating “that the quality, to fully comply with yourself and to be and have everything in yourself is the most beneficial one for your bliss [...]”\(^\text{15}\) (Schopenhauer 1849, pp. 589-590, author’s translation)

### 5.5 Give Consistent Sense

In this section I am showing a drip painting of the abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock (Painting 6 Pollock’s No. 5 1948). I will make the connection of this picture and the chapter later on. As for the moment, I want the reader to enjoy this beautiful piece of art and internalize the ‘management of meaning’.

\(^{14}\) Original German quote: “Man wird sich eigentlich permanent neu erfinden müssen. [...] Du must die Fähigkeit haben nach einer Niederlage wieder aufzustehen.” (M Berger 2013, pers. comm. 30 April)

\(^{15}\) Original German quote: „Sich selber genügen, sich selber Alles in Allem seyn, und sagen können omnia mea mecum porto [All meinen Besitz trage ich bei mir], ist gewiß für unser Glück die förderlichste Eigenschaft: daher der Ausspruch des Aristoteles η ευτυχία ανήκει σε αυτούς που εἶναι αυτόρκεις [felicitas sibi sufficientium est. Das Glück gehört denen, die sich selbst genügen] nicht zu oft wiederholt werden kann.” (Schopenhauer 1849, pp. 589-590)
In this part of my thesis I am departing from the main theme ‘leading oneself’ and come somehow also in conflict with my limitations. However, after an extensive review of the literature and after very intensive talks to experts, I came to the conclusion, that a thesis about ‘leading oneself’ without mentioning the necessity of communication and sensegiving is incomplete. Therefore, I decided to include this closing chapter in my thesis and build a bridge to the next quest – the ‘Art of Leading Others’. However, this chapter should just be seen as a small excurse and not as a full understanding of what is needed to lead others. It deals just with the necessity to also communicate and transport the values, vision and beliefs of an individual to the outer world.

I found support in Louis Pondy’s (1978, p. 95) essay ‘Leadership is a Language Game’ where he is stating, that “the dual capacity to make sense of things and to put them into language meaningful to large numbers of people gives the person who has it enormous leverage”. He is therein
addressing the importance of not only making sense of a certain situation or issue, but to also transport it to the audience. Therefore, I will discuss in this chapter the necessity for leaders to also give consistent sense to the audience.

5.5.1 **Management of meaning and sensegiving**

“Leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others” (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 258). The key challenge of leadership lays within the management of meaning in a way that evokes implied action towards desirable outcomes (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 262). Within the concept of management of meaning (Smircich & Morgan 1982) a leader tries to create a point of reference, which stipulates direction and provides the followers with a sense of organization and order. M Teachout (2013, pers. comm. 19 April) says that “someone who leads but has no real formal position over people, but he/she does it through his/her compelling ability to move people emotionally or for some greater purpose and aligns people into a common direction to make change happen. That’s what a good leader does”. He used examples like Mahatma Ghandi or Martin Luther King. Sinclair (2007, p. XIX) likewise states that “leadership is [...] constructing meaning and purpose”. In a formal setting, where a leader is officially and formally appointed, the followers in an organization give up their power and accept and interpret the reality which is communicated by their superior (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 259). This means consequently that the leader gets power over the definition of the reality of the led. This also shows the importance for followers to practice how to lead themselves. Neck and Houghton (2006, p. 283) state that “individuals who are not actively practicing self-leadership may become dependant on external influences from traditional leaders to guide their actions, becoming increasingly incapable of independent thought and action”. A similar thought persuaded the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm when he proposed a fourth personality type - which was a logical extension of Freud’s personality types from 1931 – with the name ‘Marketing Personality’ (Fromm, n.d. cited in Maccoby 2003, p.
Individuals which are inhabiting this marketing personality, are governed by their need to be valued by others. Consequently they are becoming exactly like the people they happen to be around with. They are furthermore motivated by a “radarlike anxiety that permeates everything they do [and are consequently] personalities [that] excel at selling themselves to others.” (Fromm n.d. cited in Maccoby 2003, p. 95)

At the beginning of the overall process is sensemaking, which means, that (1) the leader brackets and ongoing flow of experience, parse the cues within the frames of references and creates an enacted environment for him/herself. The leaders must first turn to themselves and look at their actions and inactions in order to get explanations for their situation (Smircich & Stubbart 1985, p. 729) and to be aware of what they do (Weick 1979, p. 152, cited in Smircich & Stubbart 1985, p. 729). First, the leader is so to say responsible to make sense of the situation and the overall organization (Tomas & McDaniel 1990, cited in Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, p. 434). In a second step, (2) a vision is formulised (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, pp. 434-435). The actual process of sensegiving begins in the third step, where the leader (3) tries to transform the maybe complex and ambiguous vision into something more concrete with a specific pattern of meaning (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 261). Within this step, the sensegiver is trying to influence others to adopt his/her interpretation or understanding of his/her respective reality as their own. This step can also be referred to as ‘framing experience’ where the leader creates a focus of attention within the stream of experience, which will accordingly serve followers in the next step as basis for their interpretation (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 262). In this step the leader defines which cues within the stream of experience will be transported and offered to the followers. Understanding this also means, that the leader has total control over which cues will be bracketed by the led, which constitutes an important source of power for him/her (Weick 1995, p. 50). Step four happens entirely within the followers, as they are (4) making sense of the stream of experience, which was provided by the leader.
The overall process of sensegiving can be seen in Figure 8 Process of Sensegiving.

**Figure 8 Process of Sensegiving**

Framing Experience (Stream of experience, contextualised vision)

Source: Referring to Weick 1995, 2001; Smircich & Morgan 1982, author’s graphic

In this context, I also want to address a – in my opinion - main responsibility of a leader, and this is grounded in the motivation of his/her followers. When followers are lost, and even leaders are not sure where to go, it is crucial for the leader to understand that he/she has to give the followers some sense of confidence and get them moving in a general direction (Weick 1995, p. 55). The leader has to make sure that “they look closely at cues created by their actions so that they learn where they were and get some better idea of where they are and where they want to be” (Weick 1995, p. 55).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that the attempt to create ONE shared vision within an organization is deemed to fail. What a leader can do is to start an attempt to transport and create a common understanding of the overall vision. Thereby, the leader is trying to justify and legitimize his/her vision towards the followers. However, if the vision is taken over and internalized by the followers lies not at all in the hand of the leader. It is merely dependant on the follower itself.
A vision within a company setting can also be used to steer the future of the institution towards a specific direction and to therefore pursue a specific strategy. Cyert (2010, pp. 501-505) is elaborating on that respective topic and points out the essential need for a leader within an organization is to develop and pursue a compelling vision of the desirable direction in which the company should move to.

Digression on the goal-structure

Cyert (2010, p. 501) addresses the wide discussed difference between managers and leaders. Hence he specifies three functions, namely organizational, interpersonal and decisional, a leader should comply with. Furthermore, he sets the concept of attention focus in connection with the above-mentioned functions and thereby shapes implications on how this concept plays together within an organizational context. Attention focus can be understood as a planned and coordinated steering and leading of employees towards a desired goal or outcome. With the help of attention, allocated to a certain topic, a leader can effectively assign specific focus, which is also vital to the organization. It is crucial though that the employees do not get the impression that they are forced to do what they are told to, but rather to envision them ‘what they are expected’ to do. The definition ‘how it should be done’ should be left to them (Goffee & Jones 2007, p. 79). He argues that this task is one of the core duties of leadership. Equally important is that this attention allocation is done continuously and with the necessary emphasis and clarity. (Cyert 2010, pp. 501-502)

The organizational function deals with the organization as a whole and defines the formal structure as well as the internal and external information flow within. Furthermore, it determines the goal structure, which is a depiction of the leader’s vision of the leader and of the organizational members itself. Applying the concept of ‘Attention Focus’ in this respective function would mean to change the organizational structure with respect to the factors, which affect the basic desire of the members. Accordingly, employees will allocate their attention to the desired outcome. In addition,
the interpersonal function of a leader acts as a moral compass and creates a social architecture for the employees within the company, thus applying attention focus in this function means to address the staff in a way that will engage them to work together on the desired goal structure. The decision function is on the executional level and comprises the making decision in order to stick to the predefined vision. ‘Influencing the allocation of attention [in this respective function] tends to reduce uncertainty’ (Cyert 2010, p. 503).

In addition to the attention focus, Cyert (2010, pp. 501-502) mentions the perilousness of subgroups and the affection of creating their own goal structure, which can potentially be in conflict with the overall goal of the organization. This implies that leaders should not tolerate such diverging circumstances and should therefore engage their employees to share one common vision instead. He also puts emphasis on the methods how the described model can be transmitted to the employees. Besides a clear sense of how to communicate the message towards the employees, he also advices leaders to act as a role model and to actively live the vision. Furthermore, a reward system could be introduced in order to reinforce the priority system, which was pursued with the respective attention allocation. Cyert (2010, p. 504) concludes that the goal structure as well as the items on which the attention is allocated, change over time. Hence a leader must have sufficient knowledge to precisely discover and alter the attention.

As Weick (1995, 2001) suggests that sensemaking and the whole enactment process depends highly on (1) each individual’s decision about which cues will be bracketed and parsed, (2) which frames of references has reciprocally developed within that individual and (3) in which context the situation is perceived, a variety of interpretations can arise out of this step (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 262). These enacted environments of the followers are either in concordance with the initially communicated information/vision of the leader, or not.
If the interpretations are diverging, counter-realities can arise (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 262). The counter-realities are also highly visible in the underlying case study ‘Operation June 30’, which Smircich and Morgan (1982, pp. 263-268) are dealing with. The president of the company wanted to achieve with OJ30 a highly focused and future-oriented program. He wanted to create a sense of teamwork in order to solve the symptoms. The staff-members on the other hand perceived the operation as useless as they did not have the feeling that the real problem was addressed accordingly and the conflict was repressed. The staff members did not understand the vision, which the president wanted to transport to them, correctly. Hence, the president failed to create a shared vision and consequently to communicate it to his followers.

To avoid creating counter-realities, a leader should thrive therefore to consider the different frames of references of the followers and to be careful when it comes to the overall wording of a strategy or objective. Furthermore, a leader should make use of other means, such as body language or symbols, in addition to the spoken or written words, which can be used to suggest meaning to the led. In this respect it is crucial though that all those means are aligned and unambiguous.

5.5.2 Dealing with counter-realities

In an organizational setting, followers play a major role, as they are most commonly the majority in a company. Furthermore, followers are actually the persons who are evaluating the performance of the leader. Thus, special attention should be given to these individuals. When it comes to sensemaking and followership, followers should be perceived as imaginative consumers of a leader’s vision rather than passive receptors (Bryman 1997, p. 286). I want to draw the attention to the available choices a follower has when he/she is facing counter-realities, as I see this as a critical point when it comes to construction of meaning within an organization.

When it comes to counter-realities, the followers are not able to make exactly the same sense out of the experience being bracketed by the leader.
The followers consequently bracket different portions of experience, which are based on their own sensemaking, and creating therewith their own enacted environment. This may not be in concordance with the environment the leader wanted the led to perceive. This could lead to tension and is referred to as a creation of counter-realities (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 262).

To end this state of incongruent realities, the followers have basically three possibilities. The most obvious and maybe most toxic possibility is (1) to live with the counter-reality and continue ‘business as usual’. As shown in the Case Study of Operation June 30 (Smircich & Morgan 1982, pp. 265-269), this possibility can also lead to malperformance and a decrease in productivity. This possibility could also lead to dissatisfaction on the followers’ site and cause – in the most dramatic case - serious medical consequences, such as burnout or depressions. Considering this, it is advisable to take the other two possibilities into consideration when facing counter-realities. They can either (2) alter their frames of reference and align them to those of their leader or (3) try to change the vision as a whole and therefore the frames of reference of their leader (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 262, Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, p. 434, p. 444). With the third possibility the followers are starting an episode of ‘reverse sensegiving’ and becoming somehow leaders of themselves (Baker 2007, cited in Lundgren 2013, p. 9).

The three possibilities also remind me on the English saying: ‘Love it, change it or leave it’. This means that either followers adapt to the circumstances and revise their frames of references, or they start an attempt to change the frames of references of their supervisor, or worst case, they are not interested in neither of both and are just giving up.

One could argue that the above-illustrated possibilities are also highly dependant on the fact that the follower is actually aware of that he/she is facing a counter-reality within this organizational setting. I fully concur with this fact, nevertheless, I see the responsibility to recognize this lack of knowledge clearly on the leader’s site. Therefore the leader should, in my
opinion, regularly assess if there are counter-realities in his/her company. Dependant on the outcome, the leader may rethink his/her sensegiving approaches or address the affected follower accordingly.

In these two chapters it is indicated that the management of meaning and the consideration of counter-realities are very important when it comes to the transportation of the inner Self towards the audience. Hansen, Ropo and Sauer (2007) are suggesting though, that there is more to consider when it comes to sensegiving.

5.5.3 Aesthetics in leadership

Aristotle wrote in his Book VI of his Nicomachean Ethics that one has to distinguish between different ways of a human soul to grasp the truth. Scharmer (2009, p. 16) argues that the primary focus of the modern sciences is limited to episteme (science). Similarly is Hunt (1999, cited in Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007, p. 554) when he is stating that “too many surveys [...] attempt to quantify leadership”. He further suggests, that researchers broaden their view and also “include the other capacities to grasp the truth, including applied technologies (techne), practical wisdom (phronesis), theoretical wisdom (sophia) and the capacity to intuit the sources of awareness and intention (nous)” (Scharmer 2009, p. 16). One possible development towards that suggestions can be found in the research on Aesthetic Leadership.

Hansen, Ropo and Sauer (2007, p. 545) are stating that aesthetics is not to be confused with ‘art’ or ‘beauty’, but rather means the “sensory knowledge and felt meaning of objects and experiences”. Furthermore, they are saying that aesthetics involves the constructed meaning, which is based on feelings and arise out of experiences via our senses. These experiences can generate a different type of knowledge and understanding of a respective process. They are basically saying that everything can have some sort of aesthetics. If we start to think about aesthetic as more than just something that is beautiful or more than just something that is a piece of art, we can notice that everything has particular quality to it, which can evoke an emotional
reaction. If we are reconsidering Pollock’s No. 5 (see Painting 6 Pollock’s No. 5 1948) in that way, we may say that Pollock actually reached that greater understanding of aesthetics and put the major focus in this painting on evoking emotions and appealing to the aesthetics in his purest sense of meaning. Referring to the greater meaning of his drip paintings, Jackson Pollock (n.d.) states the following: “I want to express my feelings, not illustrate them”. In my understanding, Pollock is referring thereby to the aesthetics in his paintings. He is furthermore stating, that “the modern artist, it seems to me, is working and expressing an inner world in other words – expressing energy, the motion and other inner forces” (Pollock n.d.). And he is ultimately saying that: “New needs need new techniques. And the modern artist have found new ways and new means of making their statements; the modern painter cannot express this age, the airplane, the atom bomb, the radio, in the old forms of the Renaissance or of any other past culture.” (Pollock, n.d.). In the same way, Plato and Aristotle also agreed on the fact that art works play a crucial part in the overall experience and evoke emotions (Schaper 1968, p. 142). Similarly Van De Windt (2004, p. 10) is saying that “arts act as a mirror on the world and reveal inner emotional and sensuous experience that cannot be communicated in any other way”.

Considering this interpretation and understanding, one can say that aesthetics includes also the sensory assessment of how an individual feels about anything (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007, p. 546). When followers make sense of a given stream of experience, they will also implicitly consider their feelings they have about the respective contextualized experience and thus produce aesthetic knowledge (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007, p. 551). Aesthetic knowledge contains various sensuous experiences, such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, which are lived in and through the human body (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007, p. 554).

Hansen, Ropo and Sauer (2007, pp. 549-550) further demand that visions must appeal to the aesthetic senses of the followers and give them a sense of what it is like to live in the respective vision in order to stimulate feelings
and emotions which consequently might inspire the enactment of the vision within the followers. The aesthetic leadership approach consists of two major components (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007, p. 553): (1) the stimulation and integration of the senses as well as (2) the focus on the experiential. Furthermore it is not only concentrating on the cognitive faculties of leaders, but rather embracing a multidimensional view of the skills and competencies of the followers. “Aesthetic practices include language skills, listening, gazing, touch, and treating emotion and feelings as important as sources of knowledge” (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007, p. 553). Moreover the authors are stressing the importance that aesthetic leadership requires direct experience in order understand ‘what it is like’ on a tacit level. Aesthetic leadership is therefore merely happening on the follower site. Leaders may be perceived differently due to their appearance and their body language when they encounter followers. But aesthetic leadership goes beyond that understanding and includes also the general comportment – the way they engage with other people.

Boschert (2011, pp. 16-17) concludes that, when it comes to leading oneself, intuition, flair and feelings play an important role (Boschert 2011, p. 106). He equalizes those necessities with art and music and states Albrecht Dürer who said that “how often I see great art and good things while sleeping, whereas I would never be aware of while awake” (Dürer, n.d. cited in Boschert 2011, p. 106, author’s translation). Scharmer (2009, p. 100) also acknowledges the importance of aesthetics when stating that “unless we rediscover our senses as gateways to the living field around us, we will never resolve the environmental crisis”.

5.5.4 **Multi-channel communication**

A leader can use sensegiving and sensemaking to justify the messages he/she wants to convey. This can become a powerful and important source

for the creation of social structures, culture and norms within an organization (Weick 2001, p. 7). Bryman (1997) sees the construction of a strong corporate culture as one of the most important activities a leader within the ‘New Leadership approach’ should pursue and suggests, that “strong cultures were seen as providing organizational members with a sense of their distinctiveness, a sense of purpose and the ‘glue’ which binds the people together” (Bryman 1997, p. 284). However, meaning is suggested by much more than just words, texts or situations. Thereafter, leadership should be seen as an organizational activity, which requires leaders to convey and transport their messages and visions through various means of communication.

A similar strategy by Bennis and Nanus (2007) is describing the importance of the creation of shared meaning, which can also be transmitted through communication (Bennis & Nanus 2007, pp. 31-40, pp. 102-140). In order to achieve that, the vision must be repeated over time and has to be incorporated in the social architecture of the company. The negative example of Jager, the former CEO of Procter & Gamble shows us the significance of this scheme. In 1999 he tried to change the organizational culture and decided upon a plan without communicating it thoroughly within the whole organization. Hence, he was not able to engage others and to create shared meaning to transmit the vision to his followers. Consequently he publicly failed and eliminated 15,000 jobs due to employer resistance. (Bennis & Thomas 2007, pp. 134-135). Jager would most probably have succeeded by following the guidelines Bennis and Nanus (2007, pp. 131-140) are giving, namely after creating the new and compelling strategy he should have had developed commitment among the employees in order to institutionalize the new vision.

Smircich and Stubbart (1985, p. 730) suggest that clever leaders utilize - next to language - also metaphors and stories to transfer their messages. Furthermore the use of rituals and myths are also highly recommended, because through words, images and gestures, “leaders can structure attention and evoke patterns of meaning that give them considerable control
over the situation being managed” (Smircich & Morgan 1982, p. 263). My
colleague and dear friend, Mehdi Moktari, was writing in his master thesis
about the importance of non-verbal communication in a leadership context.
In his work, with the title ‘The puzzle of non verbal communication: Towards
a new aspect of leadership’, he developed a model to decipher the meaning
of non-verbal signs which leaders are emitting. Carroll (2007, p. 164) is
arguing that it is absolutely necessary to send unambiguous messages
within an organisation. This means that all the above mentioned forms of
communication need to be aligned and need to be transported to the
employees in a consistent and unmistakable way.

Various scholars and experts (e.g. Gardner & Laskin 2011, p. 37, p. 274;
Berndt 2009, p. 158) suggest that one of the key elements to leadership is
the effective communication of a story to convey a message to the outside.
Gardner (2011, p. 274) states that a story should not only provide overall
information and background about a given topic, but should above all help
group members to frame future options and possibilities. Leaders should
also consider the importance of the embodiment of their vision (Gardner &
Laskin 2011, p. 37, p. 277) and should therefore lead by example (Bryman
transportation of the message with the help of stories and their embodiment,
will strengthen the perception of the leader itself, thus he/she will be seen
as entrepreneur of meaning and will therefore be perceived as authentic and
visionary.

Next to the rhetorical aspect, non-verbal signs, the logos and symbols and
the embodiment of those (McKinnel 2002, pp. 33-36; Gardner & Laskin
2011), a leader should also consider other aspect, such as the differences
within audiences, the critics of the very same or the staging itself. Staging,
costumes and properties are also main considerations in a theatre setting
(Hatch & Kostera & Kozminski 2005) and should therefore be translated and
used on an organizational set because as Weick (1995, p. 26) already
concluded, “context matters”. Nevertheless, a leader should not overdo it.
Khurana (2003, p. 4) is for example dealing in his study with the dangers of
charisma in leadership. Thereby he is referring to the ‘fundamental attribution error’ which Pettigrew (1979) already mentioned in his studies. He even goes so far to say that charismatic leaders can destabilize organizations. He concluded that charisma is not an individual trait is but rather socially constructed, as it is highly dependant on respective context, such as religion, governmental or the industry (Khurana 2003, p. 11).

However, to avoid the creation of counter-realities all the above mentioned means of communication which a leader can use to suggest meaning to the led, should be aligned and unambiguous and should result therefore in an consistent act of giving sense (Kerr 2002, pp. 79-85).

To conclude this chapter I want to state Malik (2006, p. 149, author’s translation), when he is saying “one needs to mean, what he is saying – and also act accordingly”\(^{17}\). Additionally one should also consider Plato’s idea of ‘sofros’ and doing things cautiously and without excessive exaggeration.

\(^{17}\) Original German quote: „Man muss meinen, was man sagt – und so handeln.“ (Malik 2006, p. 149).
6 CONCLUSION

“Oh my god. Look at that painting. It shows a half-naked woman who is standing on a pile of dead bodies; and furious soldiers are trying to rape her.”

“Yes you are right, that is an awful piece of ‘art’. Look at that – it is a painting of elephants which are somehow captured in the water and can not escape. Or this painting which I consider as an outrage of a psychopath, who was dripping 100 litre of colour on a canvas and labelled it as masterpiece. Ridiculous!”

This could be a typical dialogue of people looking at the exhibition of leading oneself. These persons however, were not able to break free of their cave. I started with Plato and I also want to conclude with Plato. Therefore I will use the – in my opinion – wonderful allegory of the cave, which he described in his book Politeia around 370 BC (Bertram ed. 2012, p. 159).

In there he describes within a dialogue between Sokrates and Glaukon a situation, were individuals are captured in a cave. Those individuals are living there since they were born and are chained up so that they can only face one direction. The cave is constructed in a way that behind them, a big fire is lighted. Between the fire and the individuals, a path is located where ‘free people’ are walking through and also carrying various tools and statues of humans and animals alike. The chained people in the cave just see the shadows of the people and the things they are carrying around. Thus they perceive only the shadows they see as real and form therefrom their factive reality.

If one captive would break free of his/her chains and would walk behind the fire and along the path outside the cave, this individual would then see – after a period of ‘acclimatisation’ – the real things which were the reason for the shadows. This very person would finally “see the sun, which is the cause
of all things, after looking at the light of the moon and stars in the night” (Shim 2008, p. 518).

This allegory implies multiple insinuations. The first one is that individuals should thrive to break free of their chains and restrictive thinking. These individuals should furthermore try to not only see the shadows of things but should also see other possibilities and understand the reason behind them. “Human beings start from the darkness of ignorance, but some of them can realize their own ignorance and finally come to the light of truth through a gradual process of understanding” (Shim 2008, p. 518).

Another learning out of this allegory is that persons cannot be forced out of their caves. They have to understand that the cave is just a superficial imagination and a huge shadow of a greater world, which lies outside of the indoctrinated thinking. However, no external entity or leader can force a captive to go this way. The leader should therefore act as a guide and a mentor to show this individual that there is a different world. Shim (2008, p. 519) argues similarly when stating that “the role of teachers is required to lead learners to change their direction – that is, from ignorance or distortion to the reality of the truth”. The captive has to decide for him/herself if he/she wants to break free and discover the world which lies outside of the cave and this (on shadows based) reality.

This master thesis should therefore just be perceived as a source of inspiration for captives who desire to break free of their caves.

Résumé

The art of leading oneself is in nowadays society and world more needed than ever before. Through the misuse of the shareholder value and the resulting financial crises, a dying of the old social structure as we know it can be observed. The educational institutions are also not focusing on the importance of developing emotional intelligence and self-awareness in their students. They are fixated on the obsessive need to increase the short-term shareholder value and therefore just teaching financial tools and methods
which are helpful for that. Another essential reason why leading oneself is becoming even more important is the current generational conflict we are living in. The Generation Y (1985-now) are living in a world full of opportunities and options. For the majority of them it is a burden though to have such a great array of choices. For these children and young adults, an inner vision that is based on core values is necessary to navigate through the stormy waters of options. The problem of having too much information and also too many concepts which are - in their very core - dealing with the same thing is also a major flaw our current ‘knowledge’ society encounters. There is no need for new definitions, concepts or theories of leadership. Buzz words or concepts à la ‘Authentic leadership’ or ‘Emotional Intelligence’ are in my opinion all based on the concept of leading oneself. Therefore, I believe that the only necessity in nowadays society and world is, that individuals change their perception of leadership and recognize that leadership starts inside themselves – they have to understand the art of leading oneself!

In my very personal understanding, leading oneself starts with the acknowledgement of the personal frames of references in order to understand them and to know why and how one is behaving in a certain way. In a second step, it is necessary not to stick to the frames of references, to constantly question them and to define what is really important and what really makes sense in one’s life. There I am suggesting to have a strong vision and stick to the deeply held value system one is holding. Senge (2006, p. 7) put this so nicely when he was saying that people with a high level of personal mastery approach their life as an artist would approach a work of art – becoming committed to their own lifelong learning. In the same time it is also paramount to regularly reflect and to have an inner dialogue with one’s ‘SELF’. Within that reflection it is helpful to create a individual and personal life-story to get deep insight into one’s history. This requires an open mind and the ability to learn from failures. If an individual excels in that, the inner Self – the key to the authentic Self is deciphered and an individual can build upon that and align all future activities upon it.
When leading oneself, it is also important to be aware of what one transports to the outer world - which sense is transmitted so to say. With the help of the aesthetics and all the senses available, the followers should be addressed accordingly. The whole comportment plays an essential role. Ultimately one has to understand that sensegiving constitutes a multichannel communication.

**To conclude about the art of leading oneself, it is paramount and absolutely necessary to understand that the ability to lead oneself will and can never happen without a sincere desire and a concerted effort of the very individual who is trying to achieve it.**

*Business recommendation*

A recommendation towards the business world is to embrace leading oneself also among the followers so that they actively know what they want and therefore develop self-clarity. This should be included in all departments of an organization – R&D, marketing, account – even in the recruiting area in order to achieve a natural person-organization fit. This means that values, attitudes and beliefs are aligned with and communicated to the respective future employees and the organization. That does not imply though to hire just think-a-likes, but rather go for be-a-likes. Being and thinking is in my understanding something different. The behaviour may be based on the values of an organisation or individual – but not the generation of the ideas.

*Limitations*

In the course of this master thesis, and after deeply reflecting on the topic of leading oneself, I came to the conclusion, that within this topic one can not really prove anything. There is no theory or concept which can be refuted. Perceiving it retrospectively, the choice to apply Grounded Theory was therefore the wrong choice, as Grounded Theory aims to – in my opinion – look at the world as factual world and is trying to deductively prove a hypothesis. I rather used the interviews I conducted as some kind of pre-understanding in order to gain a general overview of the topic and to get
information what people think about that topic. That though proved as extremely helpful, because some conversations were really insightful and I gained a lot of knowledge regarding leadership in general and leading oneself in particular.

Learning

And now I have reached a point where I can say that I have acquired extensive knowledge and insights about how I should be in order to lead myself. I have gathered some useful approaches and activities, which I can stick to and further develop. I personally have the feeling that I know what it needs to lead oneself – especially – what I need to lead myself. Hence, I can say that I escaped from the cave and reached a little summit in the hike of my life through the big word. The next journey though, which I think I am ready to take on now, will have a much higher and a much more difficult goal. The name of this summit is ‘leading others’. Because if one has reached the summit of leading oneself, if one has excelled in that and knows what it needs to lead oneself – only then it is possible to lead others. In my opinion, leading oneself is already very complicated because it needs to be understood that every individual has a different approach towards leading himself/herself, every person has his/her own goals, values or frames of references. It is already very difficult to understand the own individuality and the inner Self – what you want, why you are here – your desires and goals. And now imagine, when you are leading others – it could be that you might lead up to 20 people or more - you have to know and decipher 20 different individualities and personalities. And that is in my opinion the most difficult thing to do when it comes to leading others. Leadership has to consider that every person has his/her own individuality – his/her own value system and frame of references, vision and goals. You as a leader are asked to understand them, to acknowledge them, but in the same time somehow also to align them in order to go into one direction. And this understanding and this acknowledging of the different individuals – that you are really aware of them and that you can make sense of them – I think that this is my next summit which I am going to crest.
Personal recommendation

This is a very personal recommendation I would want to give to you. While writing this master thesis I discovered the core of leadership – and even somehow – to say it in Schopenhauer’s words – the right way of life. Whatever you do, wherever you go in life, stay yourself. Be who you are and do not fake anything. Stay to your flaws and characteristics, accept your history and your life-story, learn from the crucibles you may encounter and create out of your innermost Self the future you want to achieve. On this journey to your future, always keep in mind to trust and believe in yourself.

Because, if you do not follow yourself, you are lost.
“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility”

Eleanor Roosevelt
7 REFERENCES


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8 APPENDIX

8.1 Structure for expert conversations

The semi-structured conversation guideline is presented. Furthermore are underlying assumptions and reasons of the respective questions stated. It is crucial to say that this structure served as rough guideline. I did not ask the respective questions in the exact same way all the time. The meaning was the same though. Where it was necessary I dived further into the answer and clarified the meaning of certain theories or aspects, which were mentioned by the interviewee.

8.1.1 Leadership in general

- How do you define leadership? (What are the frames of references of the conversation partner?)
  How does he/she understand leadership? In this stage it was decided to not give any hint regarding the topic of ‘leading oneself’ as it is tried not bias the conversation partner in a sense that he/she will alter his/her primary understanding / definition of leadership

- What is your approach towards leadership? How would you describe yourself as a leader? (Explore which kind of leader the conversation partner is. How is he/she treating his/her employees?)

- What are the main abilities / traits / ingredients a great leader needs to successfully lead a company/organization? (Determine if the conversation partner is going into the direction of external or internal traits. Does he/she think that leadership derives from yourself or is he/she in the ‘old’ trait approach thinking.)

- Do you use ‘managers’ and ‘leaders’ synonymously within your company/organization? (Do you think there is a difference between ‘managers’ and ‘leaders’ within a company?) (Is there a distinction
between managers and leaders made within the overall understanding of the conversation partner? The second questions is only asked if the first is answered accordingly. Otherwise the conversation partner would be biased.)

8.1.2 Leadership development

○ What do you think are important milestones when it comes to leadership development? (How is the conversation partner approaching the topic regarding leadership development in his/her company? Which trainings/seminars are offered for leaders within a company?)

○ What prior experience has helped you to develop your leadership style? Which were your ‘defining moments’ in your career? (Talk about the ‘crucibles’ of the conversation partner. Look if he/she has a ‘life-story’)

○ What role has failure played in your life? (Investigate upon the conversation partner’s general understanding and treatment of failure in general.)

○ Do you think leadership can be taught in a class room? (executive MBA, MBA-programme, Master, Bachelor)

8.1.3 Leading oneself

○ Plato Quote “Leading Others Comes through the Art of Leading Oneself” – Please comment on that.

    ▪ What does Leading Oneself mean for you personally?
    ▪ Why do you think it is necessary?
    ▪ How can you achieve it?

○ Do you think self-understanding / self-reflection (or knowledge about yourself) is fundamental to be a good leader? To which extend do you practice self-reflection?
o Do you see leadership as science or art?

o Which advice would you give executives/young people aspiring to a leadership position?

8.2 Conversation partners

This chapter serves to give an overview of my conversation partners which helped me to pre-understand the respective topic even better.

Stéphanie Pech

Stéphanie is currently Marketing Manager at Delta Lloyd Life in Belgium. The conversation was held via telephone on 25.04.2013.

Priscilla Elsass

Priscilla is currently Associate Provost/Dean of Graduate Studies in the US. Because of availability issues, she filled out the semi-structured conversation guide by herself on 23.04.2013.

Gunhard Keil

Gunhard is a Consultant at Partner 5p Consulting GmbH in Austria. The conversation was held personally on 18.04.2013.
Susan Howard

Susan Howard is currently the director of program development and planning at the Holland college in Canada. She filled out the semi-structured conversation guide by herself on 29.04.2013.

José Luis Vallejo García

José Luis is Professor of International Management at Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico. The conversation was held personally on 19.04.2013.

Mark S. Teachout

Marks is an Associate Professor at the University of The Incarnate Word in the US. The conversation was held personally on 19.04.2013.

Lothar Mayrhofer

Lothar is an independent consultant and keynote speaker from Austria. He was former CEO of the Austrian subsidiary of Basel Insurances and CEO of the Austrian subsidiary of Polariod. The conversation was held personally on 23.04.2013.

Manfred Berger

Manfred is a Consultant at Neusicht.at in Austria. The conversation was held personally on 30.04.2013.
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On 1 January 2010 Växjö University and the University of Kalmar merged to form Linnaeus University. This new university is the product of a will to improve the quality, enhance the appeal and boost the development potential of teaching and research, at the same time as it plays a prominent role in working closely together with local society. Linnaeus University offers an attractive knowledge environment characterised by high quality and a competitive portfolio of skills.

Linnaeus University is a modern, international university with the emphasis on the desire for knowledge, creative thinking and practical innovations. For us, the focus is on proximity to our students, but also on the world around us and the future ahead.