THE NECESSARY LEADERSHIP

By Oscar Motomura

We need protagonists in our organizations. We need people who are engaged, committed, self-motivated, guided by the highest standards of responsibility and accountability. People animated by a strong "business ownership" spirit. Actually we need leaders everywhere, in all positions and settings.

However to what do we expect these leaders direct their attention? Shouldn't they be leading in every front needed to improve our country? Leading in what is actually requisite?

Any reasonably well informed Brazilian citizen is aware of the chronic problems the country faces in education, health and crime rates. Problems that are the root cause of countless dysfunctions found in our economy and society.

We know these are the most critical problems. Then why haven't we been able to solve them? Where are the leaders who can make a difference in eradicating them? If these leaders exist, then why aren't they doing what they're supposed to do?

In this article, we will think over these and many other quandaries to seek insight on what may lead us to effectively solve the equations that we as a society must solve, in our benefit as well as in benefit of future generations.

We start this reflection with a classical puzzling Brazilian paradox: *Brazil is historically one of the ten largest economies by GDP yet is ranked in nearly 100th place in the Human Development Index (HDI) among 200 countries.*

What explains this paradox? Too many leaders focused exclusively on maximizing the country's GDP? Shortage of well prepared leaders working in areas that

improve the welfare of the people, in which there are age old problems? Leaders that are blind to the most acute needs in the country? Or leaders that are uncreative, superficial and even negligent in addressing society's needs?

After all what would be our country's requisite leadership to eradicate the root causes for this and so many other paradoxes that have assailed us for so long? What leadership are we referring to? Which needs should we outstandingly fulfill to provide the necessary balanced development for all?

A good starting point is to differentiate *our most obvious needs* (those readily perceived by most of the people) and subtleties around them from *our less evident needs*, largely invisible even to persons that hold top leadership and power positions in Brazil and from *our pseudo needs* that command a lot of resources and energy from protagonists and leaders in spite of being often artificially created.

> *"We have been focusing only the most visible and apparent needs. Our cultural barriers make it difficult for us to notice more subtle needs."*

1 | ON THE MOST OBVIOUS NEEDS

These are the needs that most easily surface from our thinking. We talk a lot about them. Formally, at meetings and informally, among co-workers, friends, and family. But we are used to approaching them superficially rather than in depth. We seldom touch on their more subtle, less obvious aspects. In this part of the article, I propose a reflection on these needs taking into account these more subtle aspects that often go unnoticed by most people, including our leaders.

The need for ethics and trust

"Without ethics the economy cannot be optimized." This quote perfectly epitomizes the interview given to me by Jeffrey Sachs, then professor of Economics at Harvard Government School and today director of Columbia University's Earth Institute in charge of the Hunger Project dedicated to eradicating hunger worldwide. We know that Sachs' statement is correct. But, in Brazil and elsewhere, we witness economies operating far below their full potential exactly because their public or private sectors are far away from the rule of ethics and trust. In fact, it is the opposite: everything is based on mistrust, as a crude guess at the cost of controlling things in Brazil or in our own organizations readily shows.

We apprehend the idea behind Sachs' statement because it resonates within us. We wonder what our country would be like if there were no corruption and everyone behaved ethically and everyone trusted everyone (including trusting our institutions), if no one took advantage of each other, and if we entered into agreements where both par-

ties won and society as well. I mean, if we simply tried to live our everyday life aiming at improving the whole and the welfare of all citizens in the most inclusive way possible.

I like the definition of ethics that comes from philosophy: "making choices for the common good." It is a simple definition, but leaves no doubt. If the decision, negotiation, or solution is not for the common good, then it is not ethical.

When it comes to ethics, even the very definition of common good is controversial. "Common good" in whose opinion? To what extent is this definition shaped by culture rather than something universal? The first public discussions on this issue took place during the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. How do the peoples of the Earth define the common good? Based on their vision, the Earth Charter was drafted addressing the theme of common good in a most inclusive manner by taking into account not only human beings but all living beings and life in its broadest sense. Therefore, the Earth Charter seems to be the best framework for the balanced evolution of the planet and for ethical decision making – in government, in business, in civil society organizations, and in the daily life of ordinary citizens. This definition of common good goes beyond partial views, cultural and doctrinal boundaries. The Earth Charter was born to be universal with the participation of citizens, of the Earth peoples. It was not written by governments, hence its legitimacy and universality.

Points to ponder: If ethics is making choices for the common good, what would be considered unethical in our everyday life? Would it be unethical *not* to act for the common good due to difficulties and uncertainties? Omitting proposals, ideas and actions for the common good so as not to antagonize the majority? Staying in the comfort zone of doing what is feasible rather than trying to make the seemingly impossible feasible? Conforming to the letter of the law instead of fighting for the spirit of the law? Failing to put an idea into practice for fear of

not being recognized as the author of such idea? "Playing the game" pretending not to notice the manipulations that are taking place? Leaving everything as is since the way to the common good is complex and difficult to implement? Keeping silent and letting fear prevail? Aren't the omissions by the "silent majority" something clearly unethical?

Wouldn't the root cause of the most prevalent forms of corruption in Brazil lie behind these less obvious aspects? Aren´t these aspects also the way to eradicate corruption? As corruption is eradicated and ethics is restored in all segments of society, wouldn´t we be solving from the root the problems of inequality that plague our country, i.e., hunger, poverty, squalor housing conditions, poor access to basic public services, and lack of opportunity for personal growth and improving quality of life?

Need for good education for all

In this priority area, levels of aspiration have been dismally low. We should aspire to forming citizens that are aware of their rights and responsibilities, citizens who are empowered with critical thinking skills and less prone to any sort of manipulation. We should strive for the education of human beings for integrity and character, people who value life and respect their fellow citizens. We need and education based on values and ethics that promotes a culture of peace and nonviolence and enables every citizen to take charge of their body-mind-spirit balance and to create meaningful work for themselves and for others, while contributing to the evolution of the whole on a daily basis.

Points to ponder: Isn't education a responsibility for society as a whole? Isn´t it clear that this basic need can only be met if all leaders from all sectors of society take together the responsibility for the education of all, in-

cluding the education of future generations? Shouldn't we also create a conducive social context for each citizen to actively participate in their own development and seek his or her constant evolution? Shouldn't solidarity and mutual support be at the core of education in our country? Wouldn't the simple principle of "The one who knows, teaches others", if applied by everyone (from children to retirees), have the power to quickly change the state of education in this country?

Need for health and wellbeing

Similarly to what happens in education, the level of aspiration for health and wellbeing in is also very low, leading to equally unsatisfactory results spawned from to the eternal struggle for more money, doctors, drugs, hospitals and medical centers. Yet the need for health and wellbeing requires more than the mere provision of care for the sick. Shouldn´t we aim to entirely eradicate disease from society? Wouldn´t it be wiser to educate the population to prevent diseases through a natural and balanced diet, healthy habits, and hygiene practices? A simple, deliberate decision to avoid risky behaviors and seek preventive approaches, i.e., in certain Brazilian regions boiling water before drinking it, would be enough to help improve health conditions in our country. .

Points to Ponder: Wouldn't this kind of reinvention be only possible through conscious collective participation and joint efforts from government leaders, the business community and civil society? Wouldn't the ideal healthcare situation be achieved only if the population actively took active part in the process and avoided habits that increase the risks of disease? Wouldn´t leaders from all industries have to review their attitudes, values, beliefs, theories, and the very purpose of their organizations to free themselves from the pitfalls presented by conflict of interest situations

"Our problems are systemically interconnected. However we are socially organized to solve them in a fragmentary way. Hence, the chronic nature of our ills…"

which are responsible for allowing their companies to deliberately go against integrative and preventive solutions for the common good in the health sector?

Need for peace and nonviolence

In the area of public safety the main goal seems to be curbing crime rates. This is clearly not enough. Our biggest challenge is related to education (values, ethics, and respect for all forms of life) and the building of a culture of peace and nonviolence, empowering people to resolve their conflicts in a respectful, peaceful, constructive way for the benefit of all living beings. This would entail a mega cultural change, i.e., the transfor-

mation from a culture of violence (starting from our own vocabulary to the way we deal with conflicts in the professional and domestic realms) into a culture of peace and harmony, in which whenever we were attacked or intimated, we wouldn't "pay back in the same coin" and would instead propose reconciliation. Furthermore, the need for nonviolence is systemically associated to other factors, such as lack of social and economic justice, excessive competition, individualism, fragmentation of life and other issues that lead to different, more subtle types of "war." In short, we can only meet the need for public safety if we act creatively towards what lies at the root of the culture of violence prevailing in Brazil today.

Points to Ponder: To what extent have our leaders been prepared to deal with cultural change, which is a relevant and refined management skill? Can today's leaders be persuaded to change so that they won´t become a bad example? To what extent should they change their own culture and their mental models to avoid creating a culture of violence by making decisions based on old-fashioned notions of leadership and management, on mechanicist views of command and control, top-down hierarchy and even moral harassment? Will successful leaders in this type of culture only change when top talents leave their organization, or when they lose support from society, or when they enter disaster zones? Is it possible to make them awaken and evolve towards a culture of peace with emphasis on cultural change to engage them as parents, family members and responsible citizens?

Need for meaningful work

The concepts of "job and income" also need to be reworked. What people really need is dignifying and meaningful work, in which they can express their creativity, while also contributing to the common good. Few organizations seek innovative ways to make work more rewarding, stimulating and less mechanical and exhausting (long hours, working under pressure, attainment of double digit growth targets every year). On the other hand, as education evolves and moves closer to the ideal, there will be an increased demand for better workplace environments that feel more like communities, for quality work relationships and more meaningful jobs. Companies that make superfluous products will tend to have more difficulty hiring good employees, since conscious professionals will prefer better quality employment with greater potential to contribute to the greater whole. It should be emphasized though that organizations supplying useful products and services to the population are not a guarantee of meaningful work. The way those organizations operate in the market and internally defines the quality of the jobs they offer.

Points to Ponder: Who and where are the leaders capable of making the transition from "jobs and income" to meaningful work with participation of employees in the design of their job, i.e., more balanced and rewarding tasks? To what extent can evolution in education, healthcare and public safety generate more meaningful jobs? Will better trained and more conscious professionals tend to build more sophisticated networks working collaboratively with other networks? Will they become the organizations of the future? Would this already be taking place within the vast internet network? Accordingly, won't this natural, organic, biological process of creating more meaningful jobs generate a sustainable context of "full employment" (given the pace at which emerging needs are biologically met in a process of self-organization), away from artificial top-down approaches fostered by governments and large private organizations based on outdated "mechanicist" mental models?

Need for growth

As environmentalist Lester Brown says, people everywhere seem to be seeking "unlimited growth in a finite world". Take as an example most companies' obsession for double-digit growth on a yearly basis or bonuses tied to growth targets, which put severe pressure on the entire workforce. And we have the gall to call this "professional management"! The same happens with Brazilian government institutions. We dream of GDP growth in the same range of the Chinese's GDP growth. We are proud of hearing about the so called BRICs' GDP growth. No doubt the consumption standards of Brazilians have improved over the years. This is good, but only to make the GDP grow and not necessarily to improve the population's wellbeing and happiness. Our HDI rates are decisively low and we are definitely not the world's seventh largest economy when it comes to education, health and crime rates. It is no accident that we are not able to maintain a sustainable growth path. Our "growth" lacks balance. We seek what the rest of the world seeks, without thinking whether this growth obsession wouldn't actually be a sort of "cancer", capable of triggering a collapse. The signs are all around us: successive crises of all kinds, economic, environmental, political and social. They are still perceived as "episodic", but there is plenty of evidence that they are part of a major systemic crisis prone to spawn many other unwanted effects.

Points to Ponder: Is there healthy growth and sick growth? Won´t growth be more beneficial when it is created by an "integrated strategy for the country" that is well structured and systemically interconnected, capable of ensuring a balanced evolution of the whole? Wouldn´t this strategy have to be tied to the country's cultural vocations (based on the traits of its population, its ecological assets, etc.)? What would be Brazil's unique contribution to the evolution of global society? What is Brazil's ultimate purpose? How can leaders from different sectors discuss the country's purpose and strategy in an ethical manner, detached from personal interests and focused on the common good? Won't the "strategy for the country" only make sense when it is the outcome of a wide-ranging, inclusive, genuinely democratic, and non-hierarchical dialogue? Isn´t it obvious that growth can only be healthy when it is driven by a vision of the future that will serve as a guide for organic, biological, and self-organized evolution with full participation? Doesn´t the root causes of Brazil's erratic growth lie precisely in the lack of vision and of integrated strategies?

> *"Deep down, we all want to make a difference by helping to improve things around us for the common good. We want to participate, contribute, help. We want to feel useful members of the community."*

2 | ON THE MORE SUBTLE NEEDS

Beyond the most obvious needs, which we often talk about (albeit superficially and without reflecting on how we can contribute to meet those needs), there are other more subtle needs whose relevance we just *intuitively perceive*. Because they are so subtle, they rarely figure in the agenda of formal meetings, in business, government or Congress. We very seldom allocate energy and resources to address these more subjective needs, and there are virtually no leaders dedicated to addressing them. Here are some examples of subtle needs that, once met, will ensure the general wellbeing of society and a more consistent evolution of the whole.

Need for participation

This is the need to contribute to the evolution our context, to do something together, to build something bigger and to make a difference. The need to participate in establishing the " rules of the game", i.e. the very laws that govern relationships between people – rather than be only subjected to them. The need to assist the improvement of the laws that define what is fair. To improve enforcement of these laws through the spirit that inspired their creation rather than through the interpretation of their letter, thus transcending the pitfalls created by bureaucratic procedures. The need to participate as equals in the quest to eliminate social inequalities. Can we increasingly achieve direct democracy (rather than representative democracy) in these times when the internet allows a level of participation never imagined before? Isn´t direct participation not only desirable but

increasingly necessary, since it is a direct exercise of citizenship that goes beyond the ballot box, an obsolete and reductionist form of participation?

Need for interconnection and a sense of community

This is the need for affection, love, friendship and positive relationships. To what extent do isolation and loneliness affect our health? Wouldn't it be critical to restore our sense of community that is disappearing as cities grow, in order to increase the wellbeing of individuals and the country's level of happiness? Wouldn't it be equally important to view Nature as the essence of communities? To view human beings as part of Nature? How can we value and preserve what still exists in smaller towns and in local communities in the suburbs? How might restoring our sense of community lead to the recovery of the democratic spirit and the concept of "society that takes care of itself" with outstanding results for children's education (who may be educated by their community), for the population's health (everyone caring for each other) and for the development of a culture of peace (full cooperation, mutual help and solidarity)?

Need for awareness raising

This is the need that people have to seek wisdom and understanding of life in its broadest and deepest sense. As people begin to understand their society, and how the "game" of the economy, business and politics work, they begin to understand themselves and the Game of Life. From this broader understanding, they begin to find more meaning in everything they do, in the workplace or in their private life. Therefore, people can naturally become leaders

and contribute to society. Making feasible this awareness raising requires an education for a more refined understanding of how humans can achieve their full physical, mental, emotional and spiritual potential by living their everyday life in a constructive and ethical manner, while serving the wellbeing of the greater whole. Would it be an education that goes beyond the merely logical and rational and that only humanities and the arts can provide?

Need for fulfillment of the essence

The need that every human being has for spiritual self-actualization that transcends the ego's needs for social status, power, glory, rewards, and recognition. This need is a yearning of our essence to do good for the sake of good, to cultivate the true values of life, to relate with others in a spirit of generosity, solidarity and compassion. This need is integral to every human being, but is clouded by myriad of other more immediate needs, many of them created by an artificial way of life unwittingly created by ourselves. It is also covert by a fragmentation of life: work that is disconnected from personal life, community life, religion and the processes of self-knowledge and spiritual evolution; thought disconnected from emotion and intuition; science that seeks explanation as opposed to philosophical thinking that seeks understanding. The need for fulfillment of the essence usually remains hidden throughout life and may only become apparent later in life, when all that our ego has longed for becomes small and irrelevant.

Need for leaving a legacy

This is the need that every human being has to leave a legacy, no matter how small and symbolic, not only for their children, but also for future generations. It is a notion of "intergenerational responsibility" inherent in every human being. This legacy is often expressed in material form (donations to charity, NGOs, museums, schools, universities, etc.). More importantly, however, is that this legacy contributes to the evolution of humanity (scientific discoveries, inventions, curing diseases) and enables better living conditions (freedom for all, elimination of inequalities) or makes people's life more dignifying (the cultural change brought about by deep ecology). This is also the case of community leaders who devise a long-term evolution plan built collectively. Leaders who fight corruption and root it out from their community. Mothers who leave behind to their children the example of a life lived as a fair, honest and ethical person. These are legacies that no money can buy.

Points to ponder: To what extent is the pursuit of power, social status and material goods fueled by various forms of social pressure stifling these subtle needs of our essence? Doesn´t the obsession with consumption ultimately affect our wellbeing and happiness? Doesn´t the need to consume lead us to seek ever greater financial gains and run into excesses of all sorts, causing stress, anxiety, depression and a feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness? Isn´t precisely the satisfaction of non-material and more subtle needs, mentioned here that can give meaning to everything we do in our lives and provide a framework capable of guiding our evolution towards what is most essential and true? How important is it to our evolution as a country to radically change the drivers that define "success" in our culture? Wouldn´t the replacement of quantitative criteria (GDP) by qualitative measures connected to the needs discussed above be a driver for success? Wouldn´t it make more sense if society, and each one of us, sought the welfare of all living beings in a sustainable manner? As our mindset change – from quantitative to qualitative – so does this new con-

cept of success that will change everyone's way of looking at it simply because happiness is not something that one can accumulate, stock or pile up. It grows as it is spread.

Will we have to seek this change in our own mindsets to meet our country's deepest needs? Can we still be guided only by what is objectively measurable? To what extent does this mental model cause us to ignore more subjective variables (such as wellbeing, integrity and trust) while we define our goals? To what extent does it make us wait for government approval, regulators, etc. to adopt wellbeing as the driver for our actions? Can´t leaders from all sectors start using qualitative measures to drive their actions? If they did so, wouldn´t they naturally become more compassionate, humane, empathetic and efficient, also because they would be happier and more focused?

"We live in some sort of delusional state as we create artificial needs and new businesses in non-essential areas at the same time in which our society and biosphere are crumbling".

3 | ON "ARTIFICIAL NEEDS"

Besides the more obvious needs and other relevant but not so evident needs, there is a kind of need that, if unmet, doesn´t make society worse. Quite the opposite, society would actually improve provided that the resources, talents and leaders allocated to meet these needs were massively directed towards fulfilling the essential needs. These are the so-called "artificial needs" because they are the byproducts of psychological induction or conditioning. This is the case of overconsumption of products (even good ones). Or the "need" to consume beverages and foods with no nutritional value or substances that are harmful to one's health. This is the case of legal and illegal drugs, films and video games that glamorize violence (including bullying and all sorts of harassment), and also of weapons and the practice of extreme violence.

There are extremely talented people and leaders creating these artificial needs, or taking advantage of them to increase the bottom-line. What drives them to create artificial needs? Could it be to satisfy their ego's needs (social status, power, "success") and their ability to generate profits for investors seeking increasingly bigger returns? Aren´t precisely these artificial needs that lead to the creation of speculative "bubbles", a euphemism for what used to be called "white collar crime"? The last bubble to hit the U.S. economy – and thereafter the world's economy – was the 2008 subprime crisis caused by the practice of extending mortgage loans to people who lacked the income to meet their monthly payments. Formerly, we used to call this a "pyramid scheme", a scam that involves a fake business model promising participants payment or services in which someone always end up "paying the piper." (In this case, a few banks and

governments; in reality, the great mass of taxpayers)

Points to ponder: Do we have too many leaders devoted to the unnecessary? Would deterioration of values and doing things out of self-interest with no concern for the common good be the root cause for this? Could it be because leaders who are in the limelight are too concerned about meeting superfluous needs or even providing harmful products and services serve as role models and are glorified by the media perpetuating the vicious circle in which we are stuck? Are our universities and executive education programs still forming leaders who are oblivious to the distinction between the necessary and the unnecessary and even to what is harmful to society? Have conscious leaders from all sectors given up their values and yielded to pressures for growth and results? Or are they aware of what they do however keep doing it for fear of lowering the standard of living they achieved? Are they tied to the obsession to maximize results for shareholders at the expense of

every other stakeholder (including society at large and Nature), whose needs would necessarily have to be met with high ethical standards and balance? Might the solution in fact lie in education through the training of conscious citizens? Might actions aimed at restoring essential values and a simpler way of life help leaders actually meet the most necessary needs of society?

LEADERSHIP FOR WHAT IS TRULY NECESSARY

Where are the leaders from all segments of society who would be willing to contribute to building the collective vision for Brazil's future as well as the country's macro strategies? How can we make sure that leaders give seeking their personal or commercial interests only, but are also actively contributing to the development of the country? How to ensure that our institutions (government, trade unions, industry federations, confederations, NGOs and civil society) are not the only protagonists although they at the center of the development process? How to ensure broader participation of the population in public debates using available 21st century technology and social networks? To what extent should leaders from different sectors of society discuss the theme "integrated strategy for the country" whenever they prepare their short and long term strategic plans, which might lead to issues beyond the scope of the organization and contribute to broader dialogues, ultimately involving the whole society and even the government? Where are the "statesmen leaders" from all sectors of society who might not only be catalysts for those dialogues, but might also ensure that the interests

"We can only see the whole and concrete ways to true evolution by raising people's level of consciousness. Our biggest challenge is cultural evolution. Information and knowledge alone won't suffice"

of the country and the greater whole always came first?

If we take into account the shortcomings that still remain in the Brazilian educational system, we can conclude that we are not training leaders with sufficient quality and quantity in Brazil. However formal education will not develop the necessary leaders. As a matter of fact, our current formal educational programs tend to stifle the development of natural born leaders by taking away their spontaneity and especially their creativity. Formal education makes these leaders more conservative and dependent external approval, cookie-cutter solutions, worn-out systems and "standards", even regarding their own way of being. Some end up being mere "replicators of best practices" and lose their ability to venture into the unknown, challenge their limits and take risks. By contrast, leaders who have graduated from the school of life assume the risk of figuring things out for themselves and often evolve in a chaotic and unstructured way, but become much less stifled and are, therefore, more free-thinking and innovative.

No, we are not short of leaders. But where are they? Could they be at the service of personal interests or "causes" that run counter to the common good? Just as technology is neutral (it can be either used for the good of society or for wars and unethical causes) could leadership, as a human talent, be neutral as well? It can be placed at the service of the common good or used for selfish purposes. Talented leaders can even turn into "robots-mercenaries" making their skills available to whomever pays more. But even the coldest mercenary can have a crisis of conscience and change his life by his own will.

At its core leadership is decision-making. You may decide to lead a project ... a movement ... a cause ... a cultural change in your country. You may decide to engage in the process of eradicating the corruption that plagues your area ... you may decide to lead a radical change in your lifestyle. Leadership is an act of will. It is not something you teach or learn. It is not something purchasable. It is something that is already within you. It only needs to be awakened, released. When we are freed from the fears and constraints defined by the mental models to which we are confined we are able to lead anyone in any context.

Everyone has the potential to be a leader. From the blue collar worker to the president of the company, from the teenager to the veteran, from the volunteer to the professional. The key is to decide whether or not one wants to use this leadership potential. And once this decision is made, to find out where to use this mobilizing power. For what purpose? And for whom? Only to your own benefit or to help build a better world for all?

THE SOLUTION TO BRAZIL'S CHRONIC PROBLEMS

As we have seen, the needs we currently have in our society will only be met – giving birth to the evolution we have always dreamed of – when all of us, current and potential leaders decide to actively take part in solving Brazil's chronic problems. This should be done in an integrated way, rather than in a fragmented or isolated way. The most critical and thorny problems in our society are systemically interconnected. Attempting to solve them through isolated actions has not worked. In fact it has only worsened them. Therefore we need to seek systemic solutions in our daily lives, in every realm of activity, and in every community. And we have to do it collectively rather than in isolation. Striving to fulfill real needs rather than artificial ones.

If you work in an area that is in desperate need of good solutions such as education, health, and public safety my recommendation is that you take immediately the initiative to do what is actually needed, even if this requires completely restructuring your work routine to focus on what actually contributes to the attainment of end results. If you work in other areas my recommendations is that you start to think like a truly engaged citizen and do everything possible (and even the "impossible" applying your competence to create radical innovations) to champion solutions to the chronic problems of our country.

If you work in an area that directly or indirectly is delaying the solution to society's chronic problems, I recommend that you assist in promoting the "healing" of this area leveraging you leadership power to make it less damaging and transforming it to a benign part of society.

In every situation we always have the choice of making changes and changing ourselves in the process. And thus keep evolving as professionals and human beings.

> *"Couldn't a broader and deeper public debate – made feasible by today's technology – pave the way to raising everyone's level of consciousness? Wouldn't that mean the reawakening of the true spirit of democracy?"*

FINAL THOUGHTS

In this article, we sought to imagine a society in which everyone act like a leader, especially a leader of him or herself. A society that is an authentic democracy, in which everyone takes part in the evolution of the whole as full citizen with rights and responsibilities. Ultimately, a society in which every individual is part of a body of leaders that makes the whole evolve at the pace and quality that we all require and deserve. An *esprit de corps* that encompasses everyone and expresses a concept which, in our hierarchical and separatist culture, may seem like a strange paradox – "collective leadership".

Unusual as it may seem, isn´t the idea of collective leadership more attuned to the true concept of democracy? To what extent have the distortions, flaws and vulnerabilities embedded the design of the systems that implement representative democracy led to fake representation? (Under the influence of political marketing we elect representatives only to find out later, when they are already in charge, whether they deserve or not the votes we cast.

In this article, we envisioned participatory democracy as an effective way to solve the chronic problems of the Brazilian society. We also envisioned it as the way to a society less prone to inequalities, in which the entire population enjoys an ideal standard of living without any exclusion. This is a path that can make possible the seemingly impossible. But that requires a lot from each one of us – exercising full citizenship, high levels of participation and commitment, noble values.

A utopian vision? Yes. We are seeking the best for everyone. A mindset that propels us towards the common good. That grounds everything we do. But it is also a vi-

sion that requires a "way of being" based on the awareness that we are one big living organism, fully integrated and interdependent.

To reach and stay at this level of consciousness everyone has to contribute to the redesign of the larger context which spawns the assumptions that define our way of being as citizens. Our biggest challenge seems to be the evolution of our culture, of our collective way of being. And as we tried to in many ways show throughout this article, there are many ways to materialize this much needed cultural transformation. However all of them start off from our own personal decision to lead.

This article – an essay to be continuously improved with everyone's help – aims to encourage our readers-leaders to deeply ponder on the kind of leadership that is requisite in our country today and to imagine new ways of giving meaning to life and moving towards the future as protagonists who make a difference on a daily basis. It is not intended for a quick read-through. It is meant to be read many times and to trigger, every time it is reread, new insights. Thus it is meant to foster robust dialogues within our organizations, communities and families. Dialogues on engagement. Dialogues on, on how to participate constructively in the world we live.

And thus lead.
By the whole. For the whole.
Always. ■