

At the World Economic Forum's 2003 Summit for its Global Leaders for Tomorrow (GLTs), held in Geneva last September, Klaus Schwab outlined a three-dimensional model that captures the essence of leadership.

Each dimension represents an essential facet of character that gives rise to qualities prized by great leaders and their followers alike. The three dimensions are *Mind*, *Heart* and *Soul*. Professor Schwab characterizes them as follows:

*Mind* connotes the professionalism necessary to master expertise and lead a field, as well as the measure of respect merited by and accorded to consummate professionals. Great leaders command such respect.

*Heart* connotes the passionate engagement with cause, duty and service, as well as the emotion of love awakened in a following, which is attracted to and energized by intensity of passion. Great leaders engender such love.

*Soul* connotes the commitment to a mission and the values necessary to fulfil it, as well as the trust earned through navigating by a moral compass (as opposed to an expedient radar screen). Great leaders inspire such fidelity.

Deep philosophical foundations undergird this leadership model. Let us briefly explore them.

*Mind* produces *reason*. The means of *reason* include logic, mathematics, critical thinking, theoretical and experimental science, engineering and allied technologies – and thus the capacity to build, develop and maintain the infrastructures that sustain the global village itself.

Without the continuous exercise and refinement of *reason*, man would subsist in a Stone Age – with a life expectancy of 30, and a lifestyle described by Hobbes as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”.

*Reason* is also a means to an end. According to Aristotle, that goal includes fulfilment in individuals (which he called *eudemonia*) and stability of organizations. The goal is attained by harnessing the engine of *reason* to the vehicle of *virtue*.

*Heart* produces *passion*. Properly guided, the means of *passion* elicit love, empathy, goodwill, and all constructive dispositions. Improperly guided, *passion* elicits hatred, indifference, ill-will and all destructive dispositions.

According to Buddha, the goal of *passion* is individual peace and group beneficence. That goal is not attained by extremisms of indulgence or denial. It is reached by channelling passions to flow creatively and helpfully, through the practice of *virtue*.

*Soul* produces *spirit*. The means of spirit are literally inspirations, which are also cognate with respirations (cycles of breath), perspirations (signs of effort) and even expirations (natural ends of things).

To inspire people means to give them breathing space, to encourage them to work well and to appreciate the cyclical nature of all mundane endeavours. According to Confucius, the goal of *spirit* is security and prosperity of persons and organizations.

That goal is attained by regulating and harmonizing relations between and among people

# The ancient art of modern leadership

To discover the essence of leadership in the modern world, we must go back to the ancient philosophers. Without virtuous leadership in every sphere of human life, there can be no order and no progress, no security and no prosperity. **Lou Marinoff** offers an ABC guide to virtue ethics

in familial, social, professional and political contexts, through the practice of *virtue*.

Thus the three most influential philosophers of the ancient world – Aristotle, Buddha and Confucius – taught the ABCs of virtue ethics. Together, they laid the foundation not only for identifying “best practices” of leadership and governance, but also for applying these practices to the daily lives of individuals and organizations. Their application is increasingly vital to the functionality of our global village.

For Aristotle, the exercise of any virtue consists in finding a “middle way” between its two related extremes of vice. For example, courage is a virtue lying between the polar vices of cowardice and rashness.

Before 9/11, Americans flew rashly, heedless of security. Immediately after 9/11, Americans were afraid to fly, despite heightened security. I boarded a Virgin flight to London in November

2001, and was greeted by Richard Branson in the cabin of his own aircraft.

He shook everyone's hand, thanked us for flying Virgin and flew along with us. He couldn't guarantee absolute security for his passengers, but was willing to share our risks.

Courageous leadership is vital in wartime. It galvanizes the combatants, in this case civilian travellers who are also front-line troops in the war on terror. They take heart, and find their courage too. As Socrates knew, the instrument of virtues is like a lute; plucking one string makes others resonate as well.

And what would Buddha say about leadership in wartime? Ask the Tibetans, whose peaceful Buddhist nation was subject to unprovoked invasion and brutal occupation in 1951. The Dalai Lama was exiled, monasteries were desecrated, monks and nuns were murdered, Tibetan culture was suppressed.



**Aristotle's message:**  
 the means and  
 ends of reason  
 Means: logic,  
 science and virtue ethics  
 Ends: individual  
 fulfilment and group  
 stability

**Buddha's message:**  
 the means and  
 ends of passion  
 Means: theory  
 and practice of  
 empathic ethics  
 Ends: individual peace  
 and group prosperity

**Confucius's message:**  
 the means and  
 ends of spirit  
 Means: theory  
 and practice of  
 systemic ethics  
 Ends: individual security  
 and group harmony

The Tibetans suffered greatly. And what was their response to the west's indifference to their plight? Did they hijack airplanes, murder Olympic athletes or teach their children to become suicide-bombers? No.

What did they do instead? They built universities, published books and taught yoga. They gave us great and enduring gifts of their mind, heart and spirit: the individual peace and group beneficence of Tibetan Buddhism. There is a culture of leadership by virtue.

The Buddha's Middle Way has also been adopted by millions of Japanese people, who shifted from imperialistic warfare to vibrant economic productivity.

Practices of Japanese Buddhist virtue, so conducive to peace and prosperity, are disseminated worldwide – for example, through president Daisaku Ikeda's leadership of Soka Gakkai International, and the enlightened educational

humanism that Soka universities epitomize.

And what of Confucius? His influence in Asia is greater than Aristotle's in the west, and with good reason. Underpinned by the very Tao (the Way) itself, Confucian systemic ethics teach that individual security is a reciprocating function of group harmony.

In any group, as long as one's relations with others are appropriately balanced – as determined by station and duty – then the entire group is a beneficiary of a structural harmony that both accords with nature, and is amenable to nurture. Consequently, it long endures. This applies with equal force to families, corporations and communities of nations.

But in far too many neighbourhoods of the global village, such relations are not appropriately balanced. In the most dysfunctional and least productive cultures, elemental relational imbalances can become so discordant with

nature and resistant to nurture that their captive constituencies become bereft of constructive possibility – and so are led to affirm the values of hatred over love, vengeance over reconciliation, and death over life.

The decline of the west can likewise be viewed as a manifestation of flagrantly anti-Confucian vices. In America, the wholesale deconstruction of the cultural order from within, during the past 30 years, has left the polity as structurally prone to implosion as the Twin Towers.

The values of western civilization have themselves been hijacked by a congeries of collectivist counter-cultures, each advocating a special interest for its constituents – which at the same time undermines the possibility of pluralistic alliance and shared vision in the polity.

Harmonious conceptions of station and duty, rooted in nature and stemming from the Enlightenment, have been variously post-mod-



**Lou Marinoff speaks during the session “Café Philo” at Davos in 2003**

ernized, relativized, nihilized, scandalized and demonized by a pot-pourri of entrenched but myopic causes – whose adherents are agitated to seethe with perpetual discontent at decontextualized shards of a fractured reality. The result is an absence of the Middle Way, and increasing polarization along many axes.

Sovereign governments wield hard power – that is to say, coercive might. But cultures can wield what Joe Nye calls “soft power” – that is to say, attractive force that flows from their human values.

Hard power is more tangible but less enduring than soft. This is why the Tao is attentive to balance, but often defers to yin over yang. Teeth are hard, yet brittle. They are prone to fracture and decay. Lips are soft, but durable. They last a lifetime. The deeper point of this simile is that the lips also protect the teeth. Similarly, soft power can protect hard power, and can also obviate its use.

At “A Taste of Davos in New York” in November, the nightcap discussion was led by Republican congressman Christopher Shays and Michael Elliott, the editor-at-large of *Time* magazine.

Elliott contended that the coming decade will be shaped by answers to three questions. First, how do most Americans now construe 9/11? Second, is there still a moral majority in America? Third, will America’s economy continue to recover and grow?

We all agreed that economic predictions are unreliable. At the World Economic Forum’s East Asian Economic Summit 2003, in Singapore, it was asserted that America’s economy is the main engine driving Asian development.

Then again, China will probably become the world’s leading economic power during this century. Even so, Asian leaders like Goh Chok-Tong maintain no illusions about the necessity of continued American strength. He lauds the American eagle and its transcendent flight.

On the second question, Elliott believes that America’s “moral majority” is alive and well. I disagree. I find contemporary Americans alarmingly ignorant of history, appallingly

incognizant of geopolitics, increasingly innocent of culture and thus abundantly ill-prepared to navigate by any moral compass.

On the first question, Congressman Shays construes 9/11 in a sharp light: an attack reminiscent of that on Pearl Harbour, a declaration of World War III on the entire global village by pan-Islamic forces determined to destroy it.

I share his view – 9/11 was an epoch-defining and life-altering event. I witnessed it from my rooftop, and shall never forget it. However, Elliott also correctly observes that many Americans either have forgotten it, or fail to perceive its relevance to their lives.

Twentieth-century wars were far more comprehensible, and Americans were consistently willing to pay the price for defending their and others’ liberty. But the war on terror is opaque to many Americans – disadvantaged as they are by the deconstruction of their culture by domestic anti-realists, who were indoctrinated in the universities and equally determined to bring America down, albeit by softer means.

Major US media are also culpable for failing to observe and report the truth about America’s meta-paradigmatic shift from a sophisticated written tradition (which safeguards the blueprints for civilization) to an instantaneous visual tradition, which obliterates the capacities to process language, to sustain attention span, to acquire culture, to understand values and therefore to exercise soft power itself.

The current generation of Americans is woefully ill-equipped to guide their eagle’s flight. The demise of Pax Americana will not bring greater security and prosperity to the global village. No one wants the eagle to fly blind.

The unfortunate rift between America and Europe will continue to widen as the cold war recedes into history – and as Europe capitulates politically to its growing unassimilated Islamic populations.

Many European leaders appear unwilling to grasp how intolerable terrorism is to the American way of life. They seem unable to admit their nations’ share of historical responsibility for fomenting the Middle Eastern conflicts to which America is heir. And they appear indifferent to the rising tide of anti-Semitism that their

Let each nation and region strive to practice their respective virtues, but let each also assume responsibility for identifying and remedying their respective vices, instead of blaming them on others

appeasements of untruth have emboldened.

Then again, many American leaders seem equally unwilling to understand why the phrase “American culture” is an oxymoron to Europeans. They appear unable to learn from the hubris preceding the fall of empires past. And they seem oblivious to America’s international image as the most ill-educated affluent society on earth.

The ABCs of leadership by virtue must be taught and applied globally, so that the excellence of each person and the greatness of each people are encouraged to emerge. Otherwise, leadership by vice will continue to engender mediocrity in individuals and extremism in groups.

Let each nation and region strive to practise their respective virtues, but let each also assume responsibility for identifying and remedying their respective vices, instead of blaming them on others.

Leadership by virtue can reduce Asian corruption, counteract Islamic fanaticism, restore European humanism and temper American hedonism. And while applied philosophy is not a panacea for humanity’s discontents, it is an essential ingredient in any workable recipe for improving the state of the world. **GA**

**CV LOU MARINOFF**

Lou Marinoff is associate professor of philosophy at The City College of New York. He is past president of the American Society for Philosophy, Counselling and Psychotherapy, and founding president of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association. He is a fellow of the Institute for Local Government at the University of Arizona, and a fellow of the World Economic Forum. He publishes regularly on decision theory, ethics and philosophical practice. He is the author of *Plato Not Prozac* (HarperCollins, NY, 1999), an international bestseller published in 21 languages. His latest book, *The Big Questions*, is published in English by Bloomsbury (New York and London, 2003) and in many other languages.