Chapter One

The Postmodern Condition

THEME:
What are the paradoxes, whip lashing contradictions and dizzying changes of our world made of?

> ***I cannot remember exactly when I first encountered the term postmodernism. I probably reacted to it in much the same way as I did to the various other "isms" that have come and gone over the past couple of decades, hoping that it would disappear under the weight of its own incoherence or simply lose its allure as a fashionable set of 'new ideas.' But it seemed as if the clamour of postmodernist arguments increased rather than diminished with time. Once connected with poststructuralism, postindustrialism, and a whole arsenal of other 'new ideas,' postmodernism appeared more and more as a powerful configuration of new sentiments and thoughts.***
>
> **David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity**

As leaders we are entering a changing world of relationships and ideas. It is often called "the postmodern revolution." The postmodern world is in the midst of being born. It does not yet have clear definition, other than its origins in and difference from the *modern* era. Hence the name *postmodern*. It is still defined with reference to its mother (modernism) rather than having broken off as a free and independent movement or set of ideas and images with its own distinctive name. Even though postmodernism is young and therefore still filled with superficial, facile and often internally contradictory analyses, it cannot be dismissed, for these analyses offer insightful and even essential perspectives and critiques regarding an emerging era.

In the postmodern camp there is neither the interest in the systematic building of theory, nor the interest in warfare between competing paradigms. Rather everything is *pre-paradigmatic,* i.e. there is an attempt to live and function without the scaffolding of paradigms of thought. One of the reasons for such a divestiture is seemingly the sheer impossibility of "knowing." Tom Peters acknowledges that in the early 1980s he knew something about how organizations achieved excellence. By the late 1980s, he discovered that he was mistaken. Many of the excellent organizations of the early 1980s became troubled institutions by the late 1980s.

Other theorists and social observers have been similarly humbled by the extraordinary events of the 1980s and 1990s. They just haven't been as forthcoming (or opportunistic) as Tom Peters.

"Postmodernism at its deepest level," notes Andreas Huyssen, "represents not just another crisis within the perpetual cycle of boom and bust, exhaustion and renewal, which has characterized the trajectory of modernist culture." Rather, the postmodern condition "represents a new type of crisis of that modernist culture itself." Many futurists (especially those who focus on the environment) similarly speak of a crisis-of-crises. This crisis-of-crises and the ambiguity, the paradoxes and the irony that accompany this era of grand questioning are founded in the interplay between globalization and localization and, even more fundamentally, in the interplay between order and chaos as we are beginning to understand them.

A Fragmented, Paradoxical Image: Globalization and Localization

According to the postmodernists, our world is becoming progressively more global, while it is also becoming progressively more segmented and differentiated. Though many of the postmodernist theorists spoke of this contradictory trend in our world at least ten to fifteen years ago, it is remarkable how contemporary this perspective seems to be, given the developments in Europe (and elsewhere in the world) over the past decade. While

European countries are moving toward a unified common market and community, we also see the movement (particularly in Eastern Europe) toward increased nationalism and factionalism among specific national, ethnic and racial groups.

Globalization is Alive and Well

From one perspective, globalism thrives. Corporate executives world wide share values and language more common to them than to the nations they hail from. Western business culture is studied and emulated in the remotest of regions, playing out the value systems of the first world with great commercial success. And studies show that the world by and large likes the prospects of individual prosperity that globalization seems to hold out hope for.

We are increasingly successful in saying a few things that are universal for all people. Walter Truett Anderson suggests a list of "ordinary ideas" that are held by most people in the world:

> ***The commonality arises in part from shared experiences, which in turn are the product of the electronically-mediated global community of which Marshall McLuhan spoke prophetically over thirty years ago. We can create world-encompassing computer-based models that predict the flow of resources, the growth of population and the decay of our ecology with frightening accuracy. Similarly we can now trace worldwide trends in fashion, movies and other expressions of popular culture. This point is vividly confirmed in the specter of a young man in China or a young woman in Iraq, wearing a T-Shirt with a picture of an American sports hero or comic character, trying to either defy or defend a culture that is radically different from our own. We now have global life styles and many more intersect cultures that readily cross and borrow from many different societies and social values. The bohemian, international society of Paris during the 1920s was replicated in the 1990s in many urban settings, ranging from Hong Kong and Singapore to London and even Moscow.***

At a much deeper level, there is even the possibility (or is it only a hope?) that countries with differing levels of economic development are drawing closer. On the one had, there is a growing awareness in at least some Western countries that "cultures, non-European, non-Western cultures, must be met by means other than conquest and domination." In the Nonwestern world on the other hand, there is growing recognition that issues of ecology and the environment are not just capitalistic or imperialistic artifacts, nor primarily a matter of politics. There is a deepening sense that the ecological perspective itself offers a penetrating critique of the modern way of life which the developing world both wants and does not want to embrace.

Localization is also Alive and Well!

The picture gets more complex – and fragmented. New ways to divide the world are springing up. Robert Barnett is developing a cult following both among "the flags" (generals) and C-SPAN viewers, the crowd who gets its news "straight" and doesn't like what they perceive as the spin of other channels. Barnett sees the world breaking into "core" and "gap" countries, the first being largely democratic and not warring with each other, and the second representing countries with lower levels of education, GDP, women's rights and overall political participation. Are these two groups inevitably fated to collide in a "war of civilizations," as Barnett asserts and Samuel Huntington prophesied before 9/11?

Thomas Friedman similarly described the simultaneous strengthening of a global, high technology society (symbolized by the "Lexus" car) and a resurgence of nationalism and local traditions (the "Olive Tree," the nurturing and nourishing symbol of belonging]. He suggests that the contemporary political conflicts and threats of terrorism throughout the world can be attributed in the final analysis to the tension between these two contradictory forces, often played out within the same community and even one

individual. Think of the global manager, who speaks English all day, video-conferences with colleagues all around the world, manages resources for the profitability of the firm, and then spends his evenings and vacations speaking his native tongue, participating in religious and ethnic communities that think and judge life from a very different perspective than his day-time environment.

In recent years, Peter Drucker has tried to make sense of this interplay between globalization and segmentalization by focusing on the "growing incongruence between economic reality and political reality":

> ***(B)usiness—and increasingly many other institutions as well—can no longer define their scope in terms of national economies and national boundaries. They have to define their scope in terms of industries and services worldwide. But at the same time, political boundaries are not going to go away. In fact, it is doubtful that even the new regional economic units, the European Community, the North American Free Trade Zone (NAFTA) or MercoSur, the proposed economic community in South America, will actually weaken political boundaries, let alone overcome them.***

Drucker pushes the image of complexity and even contradiction further by suggesting that there are actually three overlapping spheres in our contemporary postmodern world:

> ***There is a true global economy of money and information. There are regional economies in which goods circulate freely and in which impediments to the movement of services and people are being cut back, though by no means eliminated. And then increasingly there are national and local realities, which are both economic, but above all political. And all three [spheres] are growing fast. And businesses—and other institutions, for example, universities—have no choice. They have to live and perform in all spheres, and at the same time. This is the reality on which strategy has to be based. But no management anyplace knows yet what this reality actually means. They are all still groping.***

Globalization author Stephen Rhinesmith warns that to operate globally, today's executive needs both a very high level of intellectual sophistication as well as an evolved capacity to work across cultures and in matrix structures, with reporting lines and conflict resolution processes that require continuous negotiation between remote teams and individuals.

We see the interplay between globalization and localization played out on a much smaller stage each day around the world. It is played out in the use of language. While English has become the language of global commerce and political debate, local languages have re-emerged in importance in many corners of the world. English is not the first language for most people; rather it is the third language —the first language being each person's local language (e.g. Taiwanese in Taiwan) and the second language often being the formal, national language (Mandarin in Taiwan).

Thus, while the postmodern world is noted for its diffuse boundaries, this new World Order is also composed of a set of discrete, competing entities whose clash of values and priorities will never allow global tranquility to exist. We have seen the reemergence of small nation-states and of nationalities within countries. While efforts are being made to bring people together and to minimize differences—as in the creation of a unified European Community—there is a simultaneous movement toward articulating and even exaggerating differences in religion, politics, culture and language. At the heart of this emphasis on differences and national character is the remembering of values and social purposes at both a national and organizational level. Does this emergence of a clear sense of distinctive intention—rising like a Phoenix from the ashes of the industrial modern era —portend the return to a pre-modern emphasis on the spiritual domain of organizational life?

We find this same interplay between globalism and localism manifest throughout American society. We know of the role of the United States as the single global power in

the world today and of the struggles both within the United States and within virtually all other countries in the world to come to terms with this unique global condition. By contrast, we also know of the movement back to local community and to fundamental religious and ethnic values in contemporary American life.

Robert Bellah and his colleagues write about new forms of community that are to be found in the United States. In the modern world that we are leaving behind, men, women and children lived in small, geographically contained communities (villages, towns, small cities). According to Bellah, we now find the postmodern community in "life-style enclaves." These enclaves are constituted of people who usually don't live near each other (except in the case of enclaves that are age-related, such as singles-oriented condos or retirement communities). Rather, members of the enclave share something that brings them together frequently or on occasion. These life style enclaves may be found in Porsche-owner clubs or among those who regularly attend specific sporting events. They are also found among churchgoers and those who attend fashionable nightclubs. Regardless of the type of enclave that someone chooses, this enclave contributes to the diversity and ultimately the unpredictability of the larger social system of which the enclave's participants are members.

Interlocking Systems

Physical scientists have suggested several different labels for the diverse—diverging, interlocking and unpredictable—systems that Drucker and many postmodernists describe. Many physical scientists would consider these systems to be chaotic. These systems are justifiably identified as chaotic because behavior inside each system and between systems is neither predictable nor readily described. In recent years, however, the term chaotic has been reserved for systems that are much less coherent and structured than the world political/economic system described by Drucker and the postmodernists. The three-

sphere world of Peter Drucker is more accurately identified as a complex or turbulent system in which domains of order (the dynamics operating *within* any one of the three spheres) are intermixed with domains of chaos (the dynamics operating *between* the three spheres). Highly complex systems are perhaps even more difficult to comprehend than chaotic systems, given that they seduce us with moments of rationality and clarity only to dart away into other moments of insanity and confusion, when their orderly subsystems collide with each other.

This recognition of complexity in the contemporary world system—and the accompanying interplay between globalization and segmentalization is perhaps most vividly represented in the attempts that have been made over the past four decades to create accurate computer-models of the economic, political and environmental dynamics of our world. Many of the high powered computer-models of our world (the models developed by Jay Forrester and his colleagues at M.I.T and Dartmouth College) have been highly successful in predicting and describing the general trends in our postmodern world.

They have not been very successful, however, when it comes to predicting the precise impact of global events (such as the availability of food or temperature changes) on specific geographic regions or societies in the world. Global computer-based models have now generally been replaced by models that acknowledge broad worldwide dynamics, while also recognizing that each of these dynamics plays out somewhat differently and at a different rate in each of several geographic regions of the world. While Forrester and his colleagues (notably Donella and Dennis Meadows) attempted to build a unified, world-based model of various ecological dynamics, Mesarovic and Pestel described and modeled a world in which subsystems offer their own distinctive, self-organizing dynamics.

We have been similarly unsuccessful in using global models to predict yet another complex and turbulent system—namely, the weather. We are not much better at making predictions that we were twenty or thirty years ago. Specific, localized aberrations or rogue events (what chaos theorists call the butterfly effect) that can neither be predicted nor adequately described apparently have a major influence on the weather that occurs in other, remote parts of the world. In North America we have seen the influence of El Niño (a small body of water off the western Central America coast), much as we recently witnessed the impact which conflicts in very small countries (Kuwait, Kosovo) or a sexual misadventure (the Monica scandal) has had on the entire world community.

Troubling Ambiguity:
Shifting Boundaries and Multiple Roles

In his penetrating and controversial description and analysis of the postmodern world, Frederic Jameson speaks about the *troubling ambiguities* of the boundaries that exist in this new era. This troubling ambiguity exists at all levels—personal, group, organizational and societal. At the personal level, the postmodern world has helped to produce a sense of rootlessness—a pervasive sense of not quite belonging anywhere. One of the Tarot cards contains a portrait of the charioteer. This person carries his home on his back. He is always in transition and depends fully on the specific context in which he finds himself to determine what he believes and even who he is.

The postmodern charioteer is also without permanent holdings or tangible possessions. She may be wealthy, but her wealth is often quite transitory and based to some degree on smoke and mirrors rather than on anything one can touch and hold. The massive wealth that was made from the sale of stock in new e-commerce companies that had not even turned a profit yet - or the overnight losses in companies' value and their employees' net worth when unexpected bad news is made public - speak to this sense of impermanence,

as do the many "virtual possessions" that people can now buy which are so readily disposable.

The Unbearable Lightness of Postmodern Being

Milos Kundera is often identified as one of the leading postmodern novelists. His perhaps most famous book is titled *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. It describes the new forms of anomie (loss of identity) and alienation (sense of separation from everything and everybody) that was pervasive in Eastern Europe during the Soviet occupation. Many social observers of our time suggest that this novel speaks not just to the Soviet culture, but also to the postmodern culture to be found in many contemporary societies. Projecting this into our new century, Bill Joy would seem to be in support of this conclusion. He has rather cryptically suggested a pervasive weightlessness in our postmodern society:

> ***George Carlin observed humorously that our houses are the places where we keep all our stuff, and that if we didn't have so much stuff we could just wander around. As digitalization [of many commodities] drives the weight of things to zero, we are becoming much more nomadic. . . Physical retail spaces are getting replaced with virtual e-commerce places, eliminating the physical stores between the warehouses and the customer; college campuses for continuing education are being replaced with distance learning, eliminating the classrooms; buyers and sellers can find each other in online auctions, proving much more efficient markets. The encompassing trend is that most complex systems with centralized control are giving way to simple distributed systems. . . .***

Joy further suggests that the new digital revolution not only encourages us to become weightless nomads. It also invades our privacy—further disrupting the boundaries between self and other:

> ***As the wireless network makes us more nomadic, we clearly will have the power to remove bothersome space and time constraints from our lives. Yet the same***

> ***technologies that make possible wireless ubiquity and nomadism threaten our privacy. . . . We are likely to find ourselves living in a world where every action will be watched the way the actions of celebrities are scrutinized today. The vulnerability and anxiety that we feel as our lives become electronic is already the stuff of Hollywood movies like The Net. . . .***

Joy is not very optimistic about our changes of successfully addressing this potential invasion of privacy given our track record during the modern era:

> ***The tendency will be for the new digital landscape to leave its inhabitants too exposed—cell phones ring in the theater, miniaturized Web cameras and microphones observe us clandestinely, data-mining reveals our habits and predilections. Will digital design save us by restoring some sense of privacy and anonymity? History suggests we can botch it badly. The last major man-made overlay on civilization's landscape was the automobile. Even though we love our cars, we did a horrible job with them—they pollute, they isolate, and they have changed the landscape in ways that make them both incredibly frustrating and absolutely essential. If we are to build a new digital overlap on our world, we must do better this time.***

The New Company Town and Neighborhood

We find the same confusion and complexity regarding boundaries inside organizations. Probably the most dramatic instances of this blurring of boundaries are to be found in the new company towns that have sprung up in many high tech environments. Young knowledge workers seem to live-and-breathe their work in these exciting, fast-moving organizations. And the companies have accommodated their all-consuming passion for work by providing everything the knowledge worker needs right on site. Like the old company towns of the coal-mining era, the new company towns provide all the worldly goods.

Unlike the old company towns, however, no one is being forced to buy from the company store. Much more subtle forms of coercion are applied. One demonstrates loyalty to the company by working long hours, which in turn requires (for the sake of one's sanity) the simplification of life away from work. One also finds one's identity and sense of meaning in life and purpose in the organization; and the all-embracing company town offers a constant reminder and reinforcement of the core identity and values being proffered by the organization.

What do these company towns tell us about the diffusion of boundaries in our emerging postmodern society? First, they tell us that the traditional distinctions between work and home are crumbling. Thanks to computers, Faxes and cell phones we are bringing our work home and now, thanks to the company towns, we are also bringing our home into the workplace.

There is a second implication that may be of even greater importance: Our workplace is becoming our new neighborhood. We find our friends at work rather than on the block where we live. We don't invite people to our home or even out for dinner. We now invite them to walk down the hall with us to the company restaurant. New life style *enclaves* (to use Robert Bellah's term) are created: "clubs for chess, genealogy, gardening, model airplanes, public speaking, tennis, karate, scuba diving, charity and the like." We even court and fall in love with our co-workers—a dangerous proposition given the potential for charges of sexual harassment: "The result [of the company towns] can be a weird sort of intimacy."

The third implication may be even more disturbing. Work is now becoming the place where we find our own identity and sense of self-worth. One can thus live and breathe the organization without ever having to confront alternative realities or competing senses of self. We have both coached executives who behaved like compulsive workaholics: unable, even when their career and work conditions allowed it, to tear themselves away

from the office or the computer. Sadly, deeper conversations often revealed how much more complicated and emotionally unpredictable life outside the office felt to them, and how scary. Do we stay at the office to avoid facing an unhealthy relationship, an aging parent or an exasperating ADHD child? Or is it because we spend so much time working (i.e. problem-solving) that we feel unable to handle the more subtle and patient interactions required outside the company town, especially when they won't yield (as work can) immediate visible "success?"

Here is where the company town comes to our apparent rescue. It offers everything for the new knowledge worker (though at a rather substantial if subtle price). The organization in which we work has become our community of reference and the place many of us most want to be. Ilene Phillipson, a Berkeley psychologist recently noted that:

> ***. . . none of the people I see want to spend more time at home, because work has become all sparkly and glittery, and home seems kind of empty and colorless. It's frightening to see what their lives are like. I'm always trying to suggest that they pursue some new interest, that they get in touch with dreams they had as a kid. But they can't think of anything! None of them. It reminds me of the women in the 50s who invested all of their identities in their husbands and then divorced. Where were they? For many women of that era, it was really the end of their lives.***

Blurring of Home and Work

Even if we are not part of the new company towns, we often still don't know if we are inside or outside an organization. Given the proliferation of car phones, home computers, and home-based Faxes, it is often hard to determine if we are at home, on the road or at work. Automobiles become mobile offices that are equipped with cellular phone, pager, dictation machine, laptop computer (for the traffic jam), car fax machine, and cassette player (books on tapes). Given this gadget-filled vehicle, when do I begin work each day? Is my commute a time of day when I can recollect my thoughts, make the transition from home to work, and perhaps even daydream a bit, or is this the start of my busy work day?

The automobile has even become a part of our home. We find some quality time with our children as we transport them to school, or build close friendships with the men and women with whom we car pool. The automobile even becomes a setting for microwave ovens and all of those other remarkable domestic chores that we observe people do while driving—ranging from having breakfast to changing diapers to paying bills by phone, to buying gifts, to putting on their make-up or flossing their teeth.

Even when we are out of town, our motel or hotel room becomes our office—to an extent that the traveling salesman of the early Twentieth Century could not have possibly imagined:

> ***Welcome to the world of bits, bauds, modems, laptops, taxes, E-mail, on-line data services, logon names, voice mail, pagers, cellular phones, and an electronic cornucopia of new hardware. An adventurous breed of top managers and professionals—call them the wired executives—stay on top of business wherever they are, anywhere in the world, with highly portable computers and telecommunication devices that liberate them from the constraints of the office. Universally, these peripatetic executives praise their newfound freedom. More than that, their use of electronic devices has made them enormously more productive and has saved them huge amounts of time in the office, on the road, and at home.***

We must wonder about the long-term consequences of this newly found freedom and productivity. On the one hand, we can individually and collectively achieve more than any generation before us in less time. We enjoy world-wide experiences, friendships and knowledge. We can test our wildest ideas, wield enormous influence, and have great fun! Our needs for achievement and challenge are more than fulfilled, and this gives us a great sense of personal satisfaction. The community we create at work is not just a substitute, it's a genuine crucible of interpersonal growth.

However, when does the executive relax, at the end of a hard day on the road? Not many years ago, we could all relax when we finally settled into our seat on an airplane, knowing that there was little we could do other than read, sleep or jot down a few notes. Now we can bring along our portable computer and can make use of the sky-phones and cell-phones to keep in close contact with our office. Is this a good thing? Is the edginess of the postmodern era a result of continuing confusion about what is work, what is home and what is leisure? What happens to the time that we save with our wonderful new devices? What happens to the time that we take away from our own lives and the lives of people with whom we don't work (our friends and family)? Is the appointment that we are least likely to keep the one that we have made with ourselves? Or don't we even bother to make this appointment, given all of the other demands on our time?

Implications for Leaders

A central tenet of the postmodern perspective regarding leadership concerns the complex, unpredictable and turbulent contexts in which postmodern leaders have to choose, act and define themselves. In this book, we identify a series of themes that describe these postmodern conditions. We do not prescribe a specific strategy for addressing the challenges inherent in these themes, but rather offer a variety of perspectives on each theme, which in turn suggest a variety of different leadership strategies. In a postmodern world of fragmentation and troubling ambiguity, leaders must be open to experiencing and experimenting with their own variations on these fundamental themes.

Given the challenge of providing leadership in organizations that are filled with turbulence, unpredictability and complexity, many leaders have given up on finding a coherent set of answers to the questions they pose. They certainly don't expect to discover a unified theory of leadership. Other leaders have grown cynical of any set of strategies or any theory that purports to tell them how to lead a 21st Century organization. Most postmodern leaders are inclined to dismiss any prescriptive model that identifies a

right and wrong way of operating. Given the nature of the postmodern condition posed in this chapter, they turn instead to more contextually-based models that address the complex dynamics of most organizations.

Abraham Maslow was among the first to recognize that there was no one right way to lead or manage. Unfortunately, he presented this notion in an obscurely titled book, *Eupsychian Management*, that received little attention. Others (such as Woodward, Fiedler and Vroom) also tried to make the point, but were either too academic or located in an out-of-the-way location (such as England!). It really was not until the 1980s, when Hershey and Blanchard coined the term *situational leadership* that the notion of multiple models of successful leadership and management took hold among both the theorists and those who actually practice leadership and management on a daily basis.

At the heart of any contextual model are two concepts: *ecology* and *relationships*. The first concept relates to the relative influence which personality and situation have on the actions of all people—particularly leaders. While traditional models of leadership tend to focus on personal attributes, such as intelligence, honesty and dedication, postmodern models recognize the powerful role played by the complex ecology in which leadership is expressed. This ecology influences not only how a leader behaves, but also how those who encounter this leader interpret her behavior. As many behaviorists have suggested, the actions of any one person is more accurately predicted if information is available about the setting in which action is taking place than if information is available regarding this person's personality or character.

In summarizing this ecological perspective, Malcolm Gladwell states that:

> ***Character . . . isn't what we think it is or, rather, what we want it to be. It isn't a stable, easily identifiable set of closely related traits, and it only seems that way because of a glitch in the way our brains are organized. Character is more like a bundle of habits and tendencies and interests, loosely bound together and dependent, at certain times, on circumstance and context. The reason that most of***

us seem to have a consistent character is that most of us are really good at controlling our environment.

From this ecological perspective, a leader isn't successful because of her inherent talents or personality, or even the styles and skills she has acquired during her lifetime. Rather, she is successful because she creates or moves into ecological settings that are conducive to her display of effective leadership. An ecological analysis would conclude that Jack Welch was successful in running General Electric not because of his leadership skills, strategies or perspectives, but because of the GE ecology (market trends, financial conditions, the company's life cycle, organizational culture, resources and history of the organization, and so forth). The ecologically oriented book to be written about the Welch success story would focus on the organization and surrounding environment, not just the person of Jack Welch.

In turning to the second concept, *relationships,* we begin with an analogy drawn by Margaret Wheatley between quantum physics and organizational functioning: "Nothing is independent of the relationships that occur. I am constantly creating the world—evoking it, not discovering it—as I participate in all its many interactions. This is a world of process, not a world of things." We are always acting as leaders in relationship to the environment in which we find ourselves. There are moments and places within an organization when specific types of leaders are needed; furthermore, each of us can provide certain kinds of leadership functions in specific moments and places.

Postmodern leadership is likely to be effective in an organization if there is a good match between the leader's needs and style at that specific moment and place and the organization's needs and style at that same moment and place. The context for leadership concerns this matching process. A leader may find, for instance, that he must be capable of and willing to shift his style when working with a relatively immature work group or with a group that is highly mature. Within this context, however, and in his working relationship with members of this group, he may help to promote their maturity, thereby

necessitating yet another change in style (which may or may not fit with his own ability or willingness to shift). Similarly, the nature of a task or the processes of decision-making in the organization may change. Leaders must shift gears when entering varying situations. If they are effective, however, leaders will also influence these situations. As a result, leaders may be forced to shift roles precisely because they have helped to bring about a change in context.

Given the postmodern interplay between globalization and localization, we can expect many leaders to simultaneously play on the global stage and the local stage. We can also expect them to be deeply embedded in their own organization (as a new neighborhood) while also seeking to retain a viable family and community life. We also expect them to be national and world citizens, who are thoughtfully informed and ready to vote! The boundaries between work and home are inevitably blurred, leaving little time, in many instances, for leaders to keep their appointment with self. These postmodern conditions confront the leader with challenges that require both courage and insight.

The vertiginous rise of executive coaching in the last ten years - in its myriad variations - is a response to these challenges, both as a tool for self-development in the context of work and as a form of self-care. If leadership is situational, coaching is called upon to provide leadership development of the most customized and "just-in-time" kind.

This book about our postmodern condition, is a book meant to encourage reflection—as well as action—in its readers. This reflection and action, in turn, might require finally that each of us, as busy leaders and coaches, keep that long-delayed appointment with ourselves, so that we might ponder the implications of these themes and their variations in own life and in our vast as well as intimate communities.

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