

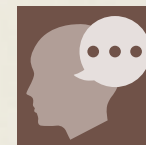
# CAMINO

LEADERSHIP NOTES ON THE ROAD

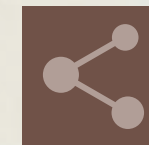
LEANDRO HERRERO



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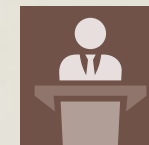
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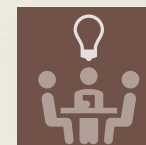
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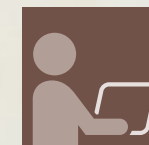
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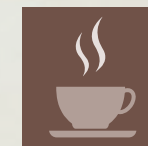
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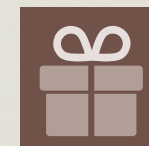
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FOR OTHERS

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- 244 The pilgrimage to the top of the leadership mountain to ask for permission, blessings and a bit of gratification
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- 250 The leader is not an answerphone. Or a help desk.
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- 292 Navel-gazing (Nombrilisme in French, sounds much better) is constant in the organization. The issue is not to deny it, but to fight it.
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- 312 Do competence-based management and leadership systems create better managers or leaders? (Sorry for the inconvenient question)
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- 316 An enlightened top leadership is sometimes a fantastic alibi for a non-enlightened management to do whatever they want
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- 332 Could the 'global teenager' teach us about 'global leadership'?
- 333 Don't trust armchair critics, reformers and broadcasters of leadership who don't know what a dry cleaners is
- 334 Competition glorified: you are not a student, employee or citizen, you are a contestant
- 336 The video and the audio of empowerment are out of sync
- 337 Saturday poem for leaders who don't read poems
- 338 'If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in 5 years there'd be a shortage of sand'
- 339 I make my best clients restless. I make the others comfortable.
- 340 There are off-the-shelf accounting packages to buy and use. There can't be such a thing as an off-the-shelf Leadership Development Programme.
- 342 My friends, the monks', secret weapon: the asterisk. I want Leadership with tons of them

- 344 'We have no time' people and 'there is plenty of time' people, share the same sixty-minute hour
- 345 It's still Day One: the winning philosophy of Day Two and Day Two Thousand
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- 352 The 'Great Man' model of leadership is alive and well, despite largely exaggerated accounts of its death
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- 368 Is leadership so elusive? Or only in the hands of academics?

- 370 Corporate grammar could learn from Obama's spelling guidelines
- 371 Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' was not in the script
- 372 7 Rules to negotiate and lead (and control your destiny). Number 5 is the tricky one.
- 373 The best question is the one which has no answer
- 374 'Our best days are yet to come. Our proudest moments are yet to be. Our most glorious achievements are just ahead'.
- 376 Good leaders are a bit like corporate anthropologists, without the six months in Tanzania
- 377 Three magic questions for leaders
- 378 'What is in it for me?' Don't answer that for anybody
- 379 The tragedy of corporate shallowness. A call to wake up
- 380 The arithmetic of suffering is flawed. Leave the tape measure at the door.
- 382 Going back to normal post Covid-19, when normal is not waiting for us
- 384 Solidarity as a form of organizational culture is both a soft label and a secret weapon
- 386 The 6 stages of management teams. The origin and evolution of these species on one page.
- 388 No milk, no honey, enjoy the journey
- 390 What I learnt from the monks: a little anthropology of leadership and space on one page
- 396 PLACES



# BASE CAMP

**Philosopher Martin Heidegger requested before his death that the collection of his writings be called 'paths, not works'. He had used the word 'paths' several times. It provides, according to some interpreters of his 'works', an image of 'leading' but not necessarily to anywhere in particular; like many paths do in the woods.**

The great Spanish poet Antonio Machado said it well in one of his most acclaimed poems. It would read in English something like this: 'Walker, there is no path, you make the path by walking'.

The allegory of the path, whether Machado's path making or Heidegger's 'paths, not works', is a good metaphor for leadership. I really believe that cartography and leadership are twin sisters.

Pilgrimage is also another good metaphor for the leadership journey, a journey that can be done in solitude but also accompanied by followers. The pilgrimage has both the personal and the collective, all in one. The journey contains all sorts of challenges and discoveries for the pilgrim, as it does for the leader. The difference in the pilgrimage is that it has a fixed destination. But arriving is never landing by helicopter. You have to walk, to go, to move, bit by bit, and then sense, learn, live.

Every year, about 300,000 people walk the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St James) a network of routes starting in France or Portugal, or Spain itself, and that ends in Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, Spain. Probably a minority will walk the 'required' last 100 km on pure religious grounds. But most will talk later about the transformative effects of the Camino, the route, the pilgrimage.

Constantine P. Cavafy is one of my favourite poets, and *Ithaca* my favourite one. He describes the perils of the journey to the mythical Ithaca. A destination. 'Keep Ithaca always in your mind. Arriving there is what you're destined for'. But he says that most of those perils may be in your head. And then he recommends to take your time, not to rush, go slowly, stop in all the ports, learn from the locals, and buy their perfumes. And he warns, maybe when you finally get to Ithaca, you'll be disappointed. It has nothing to offer compared with all you've learnt and lived and changed. 'Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean'.

Good leaders are good path makers. Sometimes the journey is not clear. The destination may still be ambiguous. Again, it's all about cartography. For me, a leader is the cartographer in chief who, whilst walking with others, also becomes an architect and a builder. If this is about journeys, and maps, and building, and Cavafy's 'enter (ing) harbours you're seeing for the first time and stopping at Phoenician trading stations, to buy fine things', then there is almost no end to it.

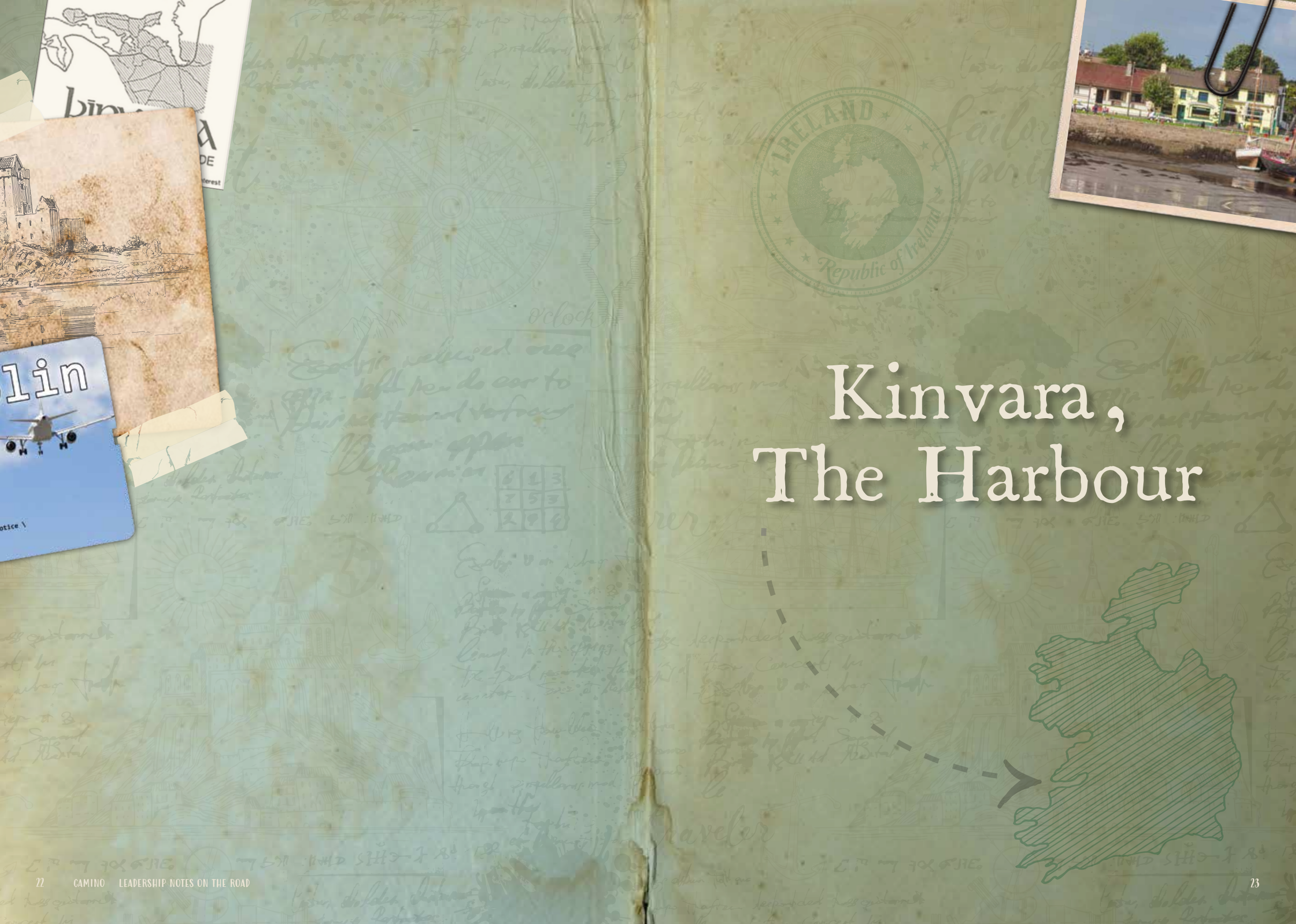
On my imaginary journey inside my head, I took notes and articulated ideas. Most became a Daily Thought, a blog I have been running for years. This is a collection of those notes. Don't look for Harvard here, there are only harbours and other places that have generously adopted the content between them.

In this Camino of mine, I have also learnt to spot the real things, the fundamentals, the rocks. These are my Rules. A small collection of warnings, strong views and discoveries that I do not intend to be transferable. After all, the journey is not transferable, nobody can walk the Camino for you. Liberated by the idea that I don't need to impart universal wisdom to end in a sterile case study and that I can share these rules like one shares a meal without having to explain the chemistry of the ingredients, here they are, still full of dust from my journey. The one I have only just begun.

1. Earn credibility all the time. Stocks deplete easily.
2. Act as if you do not have anything to lose.
3. Be unreasonable in your demands, the reasonable ones are taken.
4. Detect bullshit and become proficient at detecting it. Then, protect yourself and others.
5. Exercise provocation with panache and respect. Aim at being appreciated, not hated, for it.
6. Don't be a provocateur, rebel, maverick, contrarian or challenger for the sake of it. Have a good 'because' ready.
7. Infect others, don't do it alone.
8. Be restless, be uncomfortable (and foolish and hungry and the rest...). They're the only things that confirm that you are alive.
9. Watch your ego. Most of the time it is not your friend. Rule of thumb, most of the time it's not about you.
10. Never settle for one possibility only.
11. Don't waste your time managing the 'inevitable'. There is a lot of 'possible' waiting for a leader. Look for what would not happen without you.
12. Seek unpredictable answers. The predictable ones are already seeking you.
13. Don't be against anything. Don't create enemies. The exceptions are mediocrity and dishonesty.
14. Write down your little bit of daily legacy in a secret little book.
15. There is only one test: what will you tell the children? (that you do, you did, you didn't do).
16. More important than what you say is what people hear when you are saying it.
17. Practice 'I don't know', possibly followed by 'and I don't think you know either, so let's figure it out'.
18. Make things happen first, then clean up the process for the next time. In that order.
19. The unexamined leadership, like the unexamined life, is not worth living.
20. Play as many roles as you want, but never a victim or an enemy. Both being 'victim' or 'enemy', requires your full consent.

**Off to the next harbour.**





# Kinvara, The Harbour



## His greatest success was not to fail

Many people, many of them in high managerial positions, succeed by avoiding failure. They become unmemorable by design. A new head teacher was appointed in an important school. The press went back to past pupils and asked what they remembered of him: 'he fell downstairs once'. A new pharma R&D leader is nicknamed 'The Chronic Survivor' because everybody else in his top team has left or been fired but he managed to survive unscathed from all the storms. People can't remember any mistake he has ever made. People can't remember anything, period, other than the fact that he survives.

THESE TWO VIGNETTES ARE REAL AND PART OF MY PAST EXPERIENCE. MANY LEADERS MAY REMAIN UNNOTICED AND IN THE UNMEMORABLE CATEGORY. THEY ARE SQUATTERS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART. 'WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR?' IS A CRUCIAL QUESTION WE DON'T ASK OFTEN ENOUGH.

## Do visionary leaders nominate non-visionary successors ?

HARDLY A QUESTION I CAN ANSWER WITH STATISTICS, BUT I WOULD TEND TO AGREE. AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY STEVE BLANK ON QUARTZ.COM POINTS IN THAT DIRECTION ALTHOUGH ONLY CITING TWO ICONIC COMPANIES.

This is how it goes:

Apple. Visionary Jobs innovates and innovates. Followed by Cook, non-visionary, not really new products, certainly not à la Jobs.

Microsoft. Visionary and innovator Gates is followed by non-visionary not innovating, revenue super boosting Ballmer. Here's the good news: followed by Nadella, visionary again and new innovations coming out.

Hardly a scientific experiment, but it made me think. I've seen these alternations in small scale again and again, more of the Apple type than the Microsoft, that in fact has gone back to the core and soul of the company as Nadella puts it in his book *Hit Refresh*.

I think the article is harsh with

Cook and Ballmer, The Great Successors, but there is something there.

For whatever it's worth I think that visionary leaders should be followed by visionary leaders. It is not true, for example, that there isn't another Jobs. There is, they're just called something else.

What the organization needs is a simple and healthy internal balance between vision and execution, the latter not at the expense of compromising the former.

Are we following here too much a form of the Great Man Theory of History? Perhaps. But the observations by Steve Blank made me think.

Rambling, yet it makes me think.



# In doubt, make it personal

INVITED TO PRESENT AT TEDX EAST LONDON, I HAD LOTS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH ITS WONDERFUL CURATOR MARYAM PASHA. THE THEME OF THE TEDX WAS 'SOCIETY BEYOND BORDERS'. I HAD A FLOW OF IDEAS ABOUT HOW THE DIGITAL WORLD HAS FORCED A REDEFINITION OF BORDERS AND THE CONSEQUENT PARADOXES: THE END OF SPACE AND TIME THAT DOES NOT INCREASE OUR PROXIMITY; HYPER-CONNECTIVITY THAT DOES NOT MAKE US HYPER-COLLABORATIVE, ETC.

I had a clear idea of the first part of the flow of the talk. What was less clear to me was 'Part 2' or the 'So what?'. Like those TV contests, some movies and some video games, I had two possible endings for the script. I could go for the logical 'commercial' side easily. After all, my consulting work has to do with large scale behavioural change and we use the power of peer-to-peer influence as a currency. We

know about networks and human connectivity. This is natural territory for me. Or I could perhaps go for a more personal side: the liabilities of a lack of borders for the Self and the Soul in the new digital world. In praising 'no borders' ('Anything without Borders' has a head start), we have forgotten the dangers of full disclosure of the Self that many people seem so comfortable with.

Option A's end was clear, but Option B's ending was fuzzy, more of a nagging problem in my head: adolescents living in that world of full disclosure, the relinquishing of privacy, the cult of transparency, identity in cyberspace, etc. My old psychiatric hat was nagging me too much to let me avoid these themes.

I did offer Maryam both Option A and Option B, quite convinced

that A (the logical, commercial, well-crafted version) would win. I was wrong. In her gentle and firm curatorship, I was directed towards the corridor of my unfinished thoughts. 'Make it personal', she said. The same week I had a chat with a business partner and I shared with him my dilemma. He asked me straight: 'Where is your heart?' I confessed, B. 'Well, no brainer then, that would be You talking!'

YES, PERSONAL WINS. PERSONAL WON ON THE DAY.  
IT WAS GOOD ADVICE FOR WHEN IN DOUBT.  
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ... BUT I NEEDED A GOOD CURATOR  
AND A GOOD BUSINESS PARTNER TO TAKE ME  
TO THE MORE DIFFICULT AND LESS  
OBVIOUS OPTION.



# The death of the charismatic leadership has been grossly exaggerated

As Mark Twain said of himself, 'The death of the charismatic leader has been grossly exaggerated'. The problem is that 'charisma' has changed its face. Many years ago, charismatic leadership sounded loud. A charismatic leader was supposed to mesmerise, exhibit exuberant passion (stereotype of the American leader?), be extraordinarily persuasive (would sell ice to Eskimos) and be able to command an almost unconditional following. Of course, I am in caricature mode here. It took a lot of time to realise that many exceptional leaders, according to this profile, were not charismatic at all.

Perhaps charismatic leadership today has a different profile. His or her inspiration comes from being emotionally and socially brilliant. The new charismatic leader sees and feels the social environment around them, they 'get' the people and the dynamics of the organization. He or she is a master of giving the stage to others, something that I have described as Backstage Leadership™. Above all, the new charismatic leaders have less of a 'push' style (messaging) and are more able to 'pull' behaviours around him. They would be firm and visible but also far more humble.

I have a little rule of thumb about trust and charismatic leadership. The old type sometimes used to trigger feelings such as: 'he is brilliant, great charisma, I am not sure I trust him, though'. The new type produces first an 'I trust this guy', and then other traits follow. Don't look for any science behind my rule.

Perhaps new forms of charisma have been evolving all the time, but the death of charisma itself has been grossly exaggerated.

It reminds me of an old thing when I started medical school. Students used to repeat (and shout) the mantra; 'we don't want magisterial lectures' - the ones given by chair professors in front of hundreds of people for sixty minutes or so, non-stop, in huge amphitheatres, as was the norm. I always thought that the main reason for disliking them, was because we did not have good 'magisters'. Had we had good ones, I personally would not have minded at all.

**I WONDER WHETHER THE FALL FROM GRACE OF  
THE CHARISMATIC LEADER (AS HAS BEEN THE CASE  
IN RECENT YEARS) HAS TO DO WITH THE SCARCITY OF THEM.  
JUST A THOUGHT.**



# The era of Narcissus

IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, NARCISSUS FELL IN LOVE WITH HIMSELF WHEN LOOKING AT HIS OWN IMAGE REFLECTED IN THE WATER. IT WAS, OF COURSE, ALL NEMESIS' FAULT, WHO HAD NOTICED NARCISSUS' FONDNESS FOR HIMSELF AND TOOK HIM TO A POOL OF WATER WHERE NARCISSUS DISCOVERED HOW BEAUTIFUL HE REALLY WAS. HE DIED, ADMIRING HIMSELF, STUCK LOOKING AT THAT POOL.

That was when the Selfie was born, but, of course, neither Narcissus nor Nemesis had a chance to patent this new concept. Narcissus did not have a smartphone to take a picture of himself, just the water as a high resolution camera.

Never in history has humankind had the opportunity to be more self-centred. The instant broadcasting of 'Me', plus the colossal interconnectedness between individuals, coupled with 'the end of distance', 'the end of time', and the ubiquitous social media, makes Narcissus' possibilities unlimited. The new digital world is a Narcissus pool of

water of pan-galactic dimensions.

What is the point of posting that you've just arrived at Frankfurt airport and it's raining? Or posting a picture of your bowl of cereal on the breakfast table? Perhaps pictures of yourself looking at yourself via your iPhone?

Downloading an entire dictionary of quotations, one quote an hour on Twitter? Checking in with yourself? The point? To reaffirm your own existence, I suppose.

(Nothing as irritating as David Cameron, when UK Prime Minister, congratulating the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on the

birth of their newborn baby, via a post on ... LinkedIn!).

'Come on!', my Jiminy Cricket/Pepe Grillo says, tapping on my shoulder. And, as with the conscience of the Disney character, Pinocchio, I must pay attention to him. 'Ease up!', he says, 'it's all good. It's all sharing. You use social media too Leandro (yes I do, modestly, but not on the cereals side) and you write and broadcast Daily Thoughts (yes, until I stop making sense)'. OK, I'll ease up now.

I still worry about the self-centrism that we are generating. I must confess I worry less about adults taking pictures of themselves 'because they can' than kids learning that the centre of the Universe is that image that

they can see in their smartphone screen.

As I flip screens on my MacBook Air on a quiet Saturday morning, I see the world around me. One Facebook screen shows three selfies of 'friends' last night after a few drinks. Next screen is the BBC's news on Ebola and some Dantesque pictures in Africa. A twitter feed has just popped up with somebody I don't know telling me that 'He has absolutely zero motivation this morning'. Another screen on *The Guardian* online shows me an article entitled 'Big pharma has an interest in rich people being sick'. An alien, just landed, would say: 'What kind of mad world is this?'

OK, this is my world this morning. Mad.

PERHAPS TAKING PICTURES OF ONESELF IS NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL. BUT, OF ME? DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.



