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The Positive Power of Hedgehog Leadership in Academe

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Hedgehog Leadership in Academe:

The Organizational Power of One Big Thing (OBT)

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"The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."[1]

INTRODUCTION

If you are like many in leadership positions you have probably read your share of books and monographs on the topic of leadership. There are some, no doubt, that you recall having read with fondness, and there are others that you have forgotten entirely. Although they are all written with similarly glowing prose about the importance, nigh necessity, of leadership you likely enact few if any of the prescribed "secrets", "laws" or "habits" commonly "revealed" in these screeds. The unspoken truth about the leadership industry is: It hasn't made much difference in advancing an individual's ability to lead.

The mind boggles when it tries to unify the wide variety of leadership prescriptions, guidelines, and tactics. Should I be assertive or use tentative talk (Grant, 2016)? Should I be visionary or hands-on (Collins & Hansen, 2011)? Should I be visible or aloof (Roberts, 1987)? Should I be situational or consistent (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993))? Ambitious consumers of leadership literature will find advocates on each side of these distinctions. Quite possibly the only way forward in this ambiguous situation is to eschew this contradictory literature altogether and return to a simpler notion of leadership.

This paper is based on Isaiah Berlin's famous distinction between the hedgehog and the fox in his essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History" (Berlin, 2013). Berlin was not directly addressing leadership in his essay, but it has been turned to that end by a large number of interpreters, essayists, and scholars (Fulford, 2013). Elaborating on the meaning of the distinction Berlin wrote: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing… Taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general" (Berlin, 2013, p. 2).

[1] From the essay, "The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History", (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Clearly, Berlin was of the impression that his distinction was an important one. On this view a hedgehog is the type of individual who “relates everything to a single central vision, one system, less or more coherent or articulate.” Of the fox type, Berlin wrote they are “those who pursue many ends, often unrelated, and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some de facto way, for some psychological or physiological cause.”

This paper is based on the contention that higher education is replete with fox-style leaders—and for good reason. Our organizational settings are bureaucratic in nature with innumerable internal policies, external accreditation standards, conflicting individual incentives, and divided loyalties. In addition, our profession is highly self-critical with pervasive and ever-changing accreditation rules. Only a covey of foxes, it would seem, is able successfully to interpret, translate, and impose these rules and policies.

Foxes also predominate in academe because most academic leaders are recruited from within the faculty ranks where foxlike cognitive, communicative, and interpersonal styles predominate. In my own experience as a department chair I have found that faculty members succeed, and then move (I won’t say “advance”) into administration based on their ability to think, write, and communicate critically and carefully. The interpersonal style that results from this professional pressure tends also toward circumspection, risk aversion, and rule following.

Hedgehog leaders, in contrast to foxes, are those who hold strong convictions centered on a singular (or at least very limited) idea or vision. They tend to be more innovative and action oriented than foxes. Few faculty members are trained or acculturated as hedgehogs, making this style of leadership relatively scarce in the academy. Yet most people are inspired by leaders who do more than simply address and maintain organizational and individual compliance. Most want leaders who create environments of opportunity, inspiration, and aspiration. Faculty members generally experience positive emotions when they feel their creative energies have opportunities for expression beyond the routine teaching, research, and service functions that commonly define their profession (Hardre & Kollman, 2012). Many also want to teach in non-degree executive programs, speak to civic and other local groups, participate in meaningful events and programs that bring diverse communities together, and other relevant activities.

In what follows, I will first examine the methodology behind this essay. Rather than attempt to collect and analyze empirical data this essay essentially is an exercise in moral suasion. The difficulty of my position is that I have no bedrock data or metaphysic upon which to base my arguments and observations. As such, I will utilize a technique that I refer to as “hermeneutic theory convergence”. Using this approach I will attempt to persuade you that an important intellectual shift is afoot, that it is manifest only via an overview of independent scholarly domains, and that it deserves our attention, reflective thought, and potential change of moral attitude.

I attempt to leverage this methodology by linking four streams of independent scholarly literature that justifies a call for hedgehog style leadership. I confess here in the interest of full disclosure that this style either has adopted me or I've adopted it (or, perhaps, as Forrest Gump said regarding individual destiny, "I think maybe both are happening at the same time"). The four converging literature streams that support my advocacy of hedgehog leadership are: Pragmatism, effectual logic, spontaneous order, and identity theory. I elaborate on each below, and conclude with some action steps people can take, if they care to, to adopt the hedgehog leadership style.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this paper is best described as hermeneutic theory convergence. The work is grounded in the desire for human solidarity and agreement. It does not, indeed cannot, purport to have discovered some objective truth. This essay is not empirical in the traditional sense of the term, where dependent variables are causally influenced by independent variables leading to predictable results and the opportunity to publish in an academic journal. There is no question this inductive approach is the dominant methodology within the natural sciences. The social sciences, however, present us with a more complex subject matter, and thus afford the opportunity for varied methods of study and analysis. The social sciences have as their subject matter unique entities that cannot be evaluated in the pure cause-effect manner of the natural sciences. For example, if an egg suddenly hits a person walking down the sidewalk the natural sciences can predict that if the velocity of the egg was sufficient it will break upon contact with the subject's head. But only the subject can provide an interpretation of the *meaning* and causal implications of the egg coming into contact with the head (Smith, 2016).

To persuade someone within the natural sciences of the truth of a proposition it is often enough to point to experimental results that confirm the proposition. This is a useful tactic for persuading colleagues when the proposition is narrow in scope and refers specifically to a single, causal event within the known universe. In his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Thomas Kuhn referred to this everyday type of empirical research as "normal science" (Kuhn, 1960). Normal science "is the practice of solving problems against the background of a consensus about what counts as a good explanation of the phenomena and about what it would take for a problem to be solved" (Rorty, 1979, p. 320). Scientists working within the disciplinary matrix of a normal science don't expect their well-crafted experiments to yield surprising results. The purpose of scientific work within a normal science framework is to extend as far as possible the range of phenomena that we are able to predict and control.

In Kuhn's framework, normal science proceeds in an orderly fashion within an accepted disciplinary matrix, and where the truth-value of propositions often corresponds to specific experimental results. Everyone who has been adequately trained in the vocabulary of the theory or theories that constitute the disciplinary matrix of a normal science knows what words and other symbols to use to interpret experimental results.

Occasionally, however, anomalous experimental results lead to new ideas and theories, some which might lead us into a period of "revolutionary science". Such revolutions in the natural sciences are generally initiated by the discipline's "young Turks"—those who have not yet built their careers by advancing the discipline (and themselves) through the conduct of normal experiments and writing up normal results. The scientific establishment, steeped in the day's normal science, usually rejects the revolutionary theory and there is often rancorous and extended controversy between the respective proponents.

Importantly, Kuhn highlighted that it is impossible to set criteria for theory choice and, thus, impossible to predict when a scientific community will unite around a new theory and declare it to be "the Truth". The process of change from one theory to another is sociological and psychological; it is neither deductive nor inductive. People within the discipline as a whole merely begin to adopt the new way of talking and acting. They make their choice about which theory to advocate and work within primarily on pragmatic grounds. There is risk in choosing one or the other as the validity of either choice can only be determined by future success. There is nothing in the present that definitively determines the validity or perspicuity of theory choice. Only retrospection from some unknown future time can determine whether one has chosen the superior of the competing theories. But note, even verification of a revolutionary science from future empirical results would not mean the end of theory change. It simply signals a period of quiet when most who identify with a particular scientific discipline are satisfied with the superiority of the new theory and the opportunities for additional research that it provides.

We are in a situation like that with respect to the argument that I am making regarding the necessity for hedgehog leadership in academe. The prevailing "normal science" regarding who should lead academic organizations, I have stated, is to select fox-style leaders. This is the safe and "wise" choice within the culture that we are and that our predecessors have created. I am not saying that my call for hedgehog leadership in academe is revolutionary in some Kuhnian or otherwise important way. All I am saying is that the hedgehog approach to leadership is currently not predominating in academe, and that a greater frequency of hedgehog leadership proponents and practitioners likely would be a healthy change.

One example of the kind of large-scale conceptual change I am describing is Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. As a stand-alone intellectual contribution it was the subject of considerable criticism and debate after Darwin introduced it and throughout most of the 20th Century. However, as the century wore on and as evolution was imported and tested in a wide range of independent intellectual domains—including now psychology and medicine—its basic tenets have become increasingly difficult to challenge. As fragile organisms it behooves us to choose the theories that provide us with the greatest power to fend off nature's destructive forces and simultaneously promote widespread human happiness. Evolutionary awareness has certainly begun to enable the former, and has only recently been put to use for the latter.

The lesson to be drawn from the Darwinism example is that theory choice at the highest levels is not a matter simply of looking to see whether the theory corresponds with reality. Intellectual change of that magnitude requires the convergence of independent schools of thought to become more widely accepted. Ideas that become foundational and/or canonical for scholars gradually also become foundational in society writ large. Evolution is still challenged in the public square, but it is not as controversial as it has been and the trend of broad acceptance is now well established. Lane (2009, p. 287), echoing the hermeneutic approach advocated here, noted the convergence of evidence from independent fields of study should be convincing:

> *"To doubt that life evolved… is to doubt the convergence of evidence, from molecules to men, from bacteria to planetary systems. It is to doubt the evidence of biology, and its concordance with physics and chemistry, geology and astronomy… It is in the end to doubt reality."*

Given the persuasive power of independent scholarly domains converging upon acceptance of a particular theory, I will now attempt to make such a case on behalf of hedgehog leadership. The four independent domains that I intend to cite to make this case are: Pragmatism, effectual logic, the spontaneous order articulated within the Austrian School of Economics, and identity theory. I will begin with an overview of the contributions of pragmatism to the case for hedgehog-style leadership.

Pragmatism

The primary foundations of my own hedgehog style are rooted in my studies in philosophy of science. I was a science major in college. I did particularly well in the analytic subjects like physics and chemistry. However, I constantly was puzzled by the fact that much of what I was learning was not "common sense" among my family, friends, and community. I was led to wonder: "If knowledge resided in the textbooks and journals of the sciences then why is the world riddled with conflict, strife, and disagreement?" For example, I simply could not reconcile the physical sciences and cosmology with religion.

Intellectual conundrums concerning the relationships among independent bodies of knowledge go far beyond the mastery of a particular subject matter. They are sociological, philosophical, historical—large questions. To deal with my personal desire to understand how differing bodies of knowledge could be reconciled I decided to enroll at the University of Minnesota where I would study philosophy, with an emphasis on scientific method. I wanted to learn how people decide what to believe, and to find out how I could decide for myself.

Most scholars in the social sciences probably have some background in philosophy of science. As such, I won't spend a lot of time recalling the many varied and subtle arguments and positions that characterize the field. Here, I'll only highlight that philosophy of science is an offshoot of the more general line of inquiry known as epistemology or "theory of knowledge". Within this genre there have been three primary schools: realism, idealism, and pragmatism. Below I provide a very brief overview of why I think pragmatism is preferable, and why it is compatible with hedgehog leadership.

I went off to graduate school to study philosophy for the same reason that most young people study that arcane discipline. I wanted to understand how humans can be so smart and know so much and yet fill their world with so much conflict, strife, and uncertainty. The University of Minnesota was a natural place for me to go, as it was the home of the famed Minnesota Center for the Philosophy of Science. In my youthful naivety I believed I would find the answers I was seeking by studying in that august environment.

Can you believe my shock when I first encountered the center and discovered that it was no more than a tiny room full of obscure books, papers, and journals? No one was working there, and it struck me as dreadfully disappointing. Here, I thought, was one of the most famous philosophy of science centers in the world—it had been the home of some of the great thinkers in philosophical history, yet one could barely locate it amidst the catacombs of old Ford Hall. How could the epicenter of the human quest for scientific certainty be so non-descript?

After that initial shock I began my studies in earnest, and was introduced to serious studies in the philosophy of science. My peers in graduate school were smart, analytic, challenging, and competitive. We all wanted to be the first to achieve that clarity of thought that would come from knowing Reality in the absolute Platonic way. It was not long, however, before the disillusionment I felt over decrepit state of the Center was also felt toward my studies. Scholarship in the philosophy of science, I was soon to realize, was little more than nit-picking, incessant, internal arguments among people supremely talented in word play. No sooner would a thinker propose a solution to a problem than another would argue that the solution was illusory or simply wrong. Worse, I was soon to learn that this state of affairs was not just current, it was status quo over hundreds of years. I did not want to become a part of what I was coming to believe to be a futile enterprise.

In light of this growing dissatisfaction I turned to a strategy that I had been using for years to overcome other intellectual confusions—I went to the library. There, I spent time reading things that were not assigned in the classroom—including a book that was to change my life: Richard Rorty's (1982) "Consequences of Pragmatism". I had heard of Rorty before, his work was brought to my attention while I was an undergraduate student. But I was warned that Rorty's work was controversial and that it would be best to avoid it. Amidst the crisis I was experiencing in graduate school, I felt like reading Rorty was worth the risk.

It was not long before I realized that Rorty and pragmatism were precisely what I needed to help me relieve my confusion. Rorty characterizes his style of writing as "therapeutic", designed to help people escape from the questions and problems that had bedeviled philosophy since Plato (Rorty, 1979, p. 7). Rather than attempt to answer those questions, he suggests, it may be that they can simply be set aside. The questions Plato asked were useful at one point in time, but the history of philosophy suggests they are now more trouble than they are worth. Further, the many attempts to answer Platonic questions are either deeply "academic" with little impact on everyday affairs, or blatant attempts to elevate one area of culture or cultural group over others by virtue of a claimed special relationship to something non-human, eternal, and absolute.

Gradually, I became a pragmatist, and continue to read and write in this genre. It has informed all of my scholarship, including my research and writing in entrepreneurship, economics, business, and leadership. Because it is pervasive in my own thinking, and because I believe it to be a major pillar of hedgehog leadership, I will provide a little more background on pragmatism and articulate some of its main tenets.

Pragmatists have always had a difficult time arguing for their point of view because they cannot adopt a "gods-eye" perspective, as do their philosophical opponents and popular critics. That is, opponents and critics of pragmatism are those who believe that there is intuitive merit in Plato's questions and that they must be answerable in some deep and important way. Anyone who attempts to dissolve or dismiss these questions is thought to be irresponsible, relativist, or motivated deliberately to cause intentional harm.

For their part, pragmatists are baffled by the criticism they attract. They wonder how it is possible that simple philosophers can be considered dangerous to the minds of youth. Many pragmatists spend their off hours helping in soup kitchens, teaching literacy courses, or otherwise donating their time to others. How, one wonders, can people who routinely perform charitable and socially beneficial acts like this be considered a threat?

The critics of pragmatism believe that in the absence of *some* non-human sanction of human activities the adage "anything goes" becomes the only alternative. Since pragmatists think that after thousands of years of effort no one has conclusively demonstrated non-human sanction of human behavior, and that it is unlikely anyone ever will, their critics associate them with the "anything goes" position. They think it impossible for people to commit their lives to particular moral virtues or human values if they don't get their orders from some non-human authority. Pragmatists retort that of course they can commit to moral virtues and they can, in fact, be willing to die for them. They like to point out that one of the things they are committed to that they don't believe to have non-human sanction is their pragmatism.

And therein lies the challenge for all pragmatists. There is no way to argue for pragmatism using the techniques used by those who are convinced they have access to the prescripts of a non-human authority. The purveyors of these ideas argue from one of two perspectives. Some claim personal divine revelation, which has literally no way to disprove or confirm. Others claim access to objective knowledge via scientific method. We've already discussed the latter perspective as unproven and optional. The divine revelation perspective mostly has lost its meaning in our modern age.

The only way that pragmatists are able to speak on behalf of their "naturalistic" perspective is by asking their critics to think of things in a different way. For example, the pragmatist asks why it seems necessary to have a non-human sanction for someone to demonstrate commitment to a set of virtues—virtues for which they are willing to die. If we observe someone selflessly and courageously running into a burning house to save a child how can we tell if that person is motivated by a non-human sanction? Do we care? Doesn't the action speak for itself? Perhaps the heroic individual is motivated by the fact that she has her own child and knows how she would act to save him. Perhaps she believes that her profession as a firefighter requires courageous acts and she wants to be perceived by her colleagues as a true professional.

Wittgenstein, who is generally regarded to be a pragmatist, famously stated, "a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 95e). This pithy statement is one of the founding principles of a generalized pragmatism. Pragmatists interpret this to mean that if something does not make a difference to practice it should not be a concern to humans. In the realm of human action, it makes no difference to say that a person acts virtuously because of a fear of god or because of a fear of losing a job. The motivated action appears the same to us regardless of the motivation behind it.

Pragmatism's insistence that we abort the Platonic project to discover non-human sanction of human activity is not *itself* sanctioned by a non-human authority. That is what makes it so difficult for pragmatists to make their point. The only "authority" to which they can appeal is human judgment. They insist that their take on things be judged in light of human history and the future results of adopting their perspective.

According to the pragmatists humans can face the future in one of two ways. The first is via socialization into some normal discourse where everyone is mostly in agreement about what is going on. In fact, pragmatists believe that this is generally desirable as an initial part of our individual development. To become socialized into one's group via acculturation into the normal discourse of the day is necessary as a prelude to abnormal discourse. To begin with the latter would make one an outcast—a perceived crazy or insane person who has nothing in common with the local group.

Once the individual has sufficiently internalized the normal discourse of the social group into which one was born, there is now an opportunity for abnormal discourse (Rorty, 1989). Abnormal discourse is that which stretches the normal discourse into domains or modes that are unusual, novel, and risky. One of the ways that people approach the future without a non-human sanction is through non-predictive application of the resources they control. That is, people can use a form of logic that does not presuppose that everything we do must lie within a framework of goal setting and resource acquisition to pursue the pre-determined goal. There is another way to approach the future. It involves the non-predictive application of currently controlled resource toward an unknown and unknowable future. This form of human action is equally rational to the goal setting form, but it is less well understood and certainly less widely practiced. This alternative approach to the future is known as "effectuation" and is embodied in an alternative logic. We turn to that next.

Effectual Logic

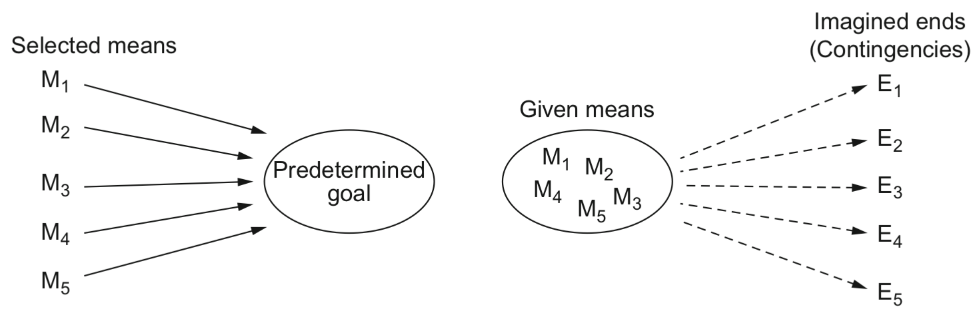
Within the last 15 years Saras Sarasvathy and StuartRead began articulating the thesis that expert entrepreneurs tend to use a different logic that guides their orientation to the future than do corporate managers (Read & Sarasvathy, 2005). That is, she and her colleagues made a distinction between causal logic and effectual logic. Corporate managers commonly use causal logic. It involves setting a clear goal and then gathering and deploying the means to achieve that goal. Most of us have been trained to follow this type of logic. There are even some clever acronyms that have been devised to help set and proceed towards goals. For example, the acronym SMART stands for:

S: Specific
M: Measurable
A: Assignable
R: Realistic
T: Time based

Little reminders like this do help people achieve goals, and they also serve to reinforce the causal logic on which they are based. Effectual logic is less well known, and has yet to find its way into the standard management textbook. However, it has become an important component of entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogy.

Contrary to causal logic which begins with the goal in mind, effectual logic begins with the resources currently controlled. Taking stock of resources currently controlled the expert entrepreneur uses those resources to create value in a non-predictive way to achieve an outcome. The outcome that is achieved is not only unknown at the commencement of value creating activities, it is unknowable. The difference between causal and effectual logic is shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1
Causal and Effectual Logics



As this figure shows, effectual logic involves taking action to create value with the resources currently controlled, but without a clear prediction of outcomes. This is the logic deployed by entrepreneurs striving to create value for customers in order to effectuate a going concern (a new venture). Value creation, in this logic, is a discovery process. No amount of business planning can absolve one of the need and challenges involved in creating customers. As the notion of effectual logic diffused among entrepreneurship educators, they began to alter what and how they teach. For example, the business plan, long a staple of entrepreneurship education, has now faded in importance. Today, students are taught to spend time in the problem space to develop a deep understanding of customer problems. Discovering a customer problem is a resource—a bit of knowledge that there may be an opportunity to create value through a solution to this problem. Only once the problem space has been adequately explored and the problem richly defined does the entrepreneur begin to develop a solution. In other words, it is important to avoid the trap of creating a solution that is looking for a problem.

Over the course of my career I have been involved in starting nine different companies, both for profit and non-profit. In each of these startups we did not write a business plan prior to getting started. I did not know about effectual logic while I was starting and operating these ventures. I first learned of effectual logic when I read a paper on the topic by Read and Sarasvathy in 2006. Immediately I realized that the logic fit well with the experiences I had with each venture. In each case, the evolution and outcomes that we achieved through our value creating activities were far different than we expected at the beginning. Ventures evolve based on original intent and on opportunistic value creation. Of course there must be some germ of an idea that gets the ball rolling toward revenue and profits. But the entrepreneur, using effectual logic and an innate dispensation toward opportunism, learns new and unexpected things about customers, markets, and internal capabilities as the venture evolves. Thus, an original business plan, rather than providing a road map to success, would instead be like a cage that prevented exploiting opportunities if slavishly adhered to. And, there is an inverse relationship between the detail of the plan and the ability to take advantage of discovery and unexpected opportunity.

That is, the more detailed the plan the less adaptive is the venture to pursue new opportunities.

Effectuation and effectual logic have now become part of the canonical body of knowledge that prevails in the entrepreneurship curriculum worldwide. Aspiring entrepreneurs today are taught to develop what are called “minimally viable products” and present them to customers early and often to gather feedback. The iterative process of inventing, testing, and evaluating feedback has replaced the traditional approach of writing a business plan and then rigorously executing it. This helps the value creator adjust innovation to the needs and desires of the market, and to save money by reducing the potential for developing a product that the market rejects entirely.

Effectual logic introduces non-predictive control to the understanding of forward-moving human action (Sarasvathy, 2001). In other words, prior to the articulation of effectual logic it seemed irrational to take action in business affairs without a well-conceived goal or expected outcome of that action. Effectual logic enables business leaders—and leaders of any organization, including academic—to act in a non-predictive way by creating value with the resources they currently control. The outcomes they achieve are not predictable. They are spontaneous results of human action bounded only by the hope of creating a better future. Spontaneous outcomes are the result of human action, but not human design. The Austrian School of Economics has articulated in a deep way the intriguing notion that favorable outcomes can be achieved by human action without a clear idea of the potential outcome. I turn to this perspective next to highlight how effectual logic plays out in society *writ large.*

Spontaneous Order

At the beginning of the last century a new school of economic thought emerged and is today referred to as the Austrian School of Economics (ASE). Some of the most well known thinkers within ASE include Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Joseph Schumpeter, and Carl Menger who is credited with ASE’s founding. One of the principle methods of analysis in ASE is deemed “methodological individualism”. Without belaboring the nuances of this method, here it is only mentioned that the point of departure in methodological individualism is the singular economic agent—the individual human being acting within a society. This approach is usefully contrasted with Keynesian analysis, which tends to use aggregate economic data. Examples of aggregate economic data include familiar things like Gross Domestic Product, the Consumer Price Index, and others. ASE economists, by contrast, use logic and axiomatic principles to understand how individual human actors behave in their quest to obtain the joys and necessities of life through free exchange with others. Arguably the most comprehensive of these analyses is Von Mises’s four-volume opus “Human Action” (Von Mises, 2007). To characterize his work in contrast to those economists who favor aggregate indicators, Von Mises wrote: “They could not satisfactorily answer the question regarding what factors compelled the various acting individuals to behave in such a way that the goal aimed at by the whole's inexorable evolution was attained" (Von Mises, 2007, p. 1).

Hayek, who will be the primary ASE economist that I reference, uses methodological individualism to study the use of knowledge in a society. His work refutes some of the basic premises of socialism and the administrative state. Hayek's analyses are based primarily on logic and thought experiments to demonstrate the "fatal conceit" behind the notion that human society can be centrally managed (Hayek, 1988). Instead, he demonstrates how individuals necessarily possess unique knowledge of local conditions that enable adjustment and adaptation to change. Hayek's critical point is that centralized control would not only be less efficient than distributed control, it would be impossible. That is, Hayek's analysis of the use of knowledge in society demonstrates that it is impossible for a society to centralize all decision making regarding economic matters, while expecting the same level of dynamism and innovation that, today, we take for granted and that has created the enormous wealth that permeates Western societies.

Hayek's analysis resonates with biological evolution in that it has now become clear that the exquisitely complex life forms of today are the result of accumulated adaptations to changing environmental conditions. Given this broad diversity of life forms and their having been formed via purely mechanical (i.e., non-intentional) means it is a short leap to view human societies as similar evolutionary adaptations. The standard objection to this observation is that humans have risen above their animal nature and are endowed with the faculty of reason. Further, this endowment enables us to escape the forces of time and chance and structure our society according to principles that are consistent with our nature.

To address this challenge Hayek simply notes that it does not help to identify reason as a source of specialized knowledge as reason itself is an outcome of human cultural evolution. That is, our use of language and rules of discourse are conventions that are the results of trial and error (Hayek, 1973, Chapter 1). They only seem removed from trial and error learning because the conventions that we use today are the ones that have survived and prospered based on their fidelity to our evolved physiological and psychological morphologies. That is, the language that we use today is the one our ancestors chose as best suited to achieve the objectives they deigned to put before themselves.

And, as it is for language, Hayek argues that the same can be said of other conventions, traditions, and abstract rules that guide human life and civilization. Hayek generalizes all of these culturally evolved guides "abstract rules". They are abstract in the sense that few of us truly know where they came from or why they are followed. For example, the convention to "bless" someone who sneezes has become significantly distant from its religious roots. People now bless sneezers more as a function of etiquette than as a lay attempt to prevent evil from taking nefarious advantage of the sneezer. Few "blessers" today know the origins or reasons behind this convention (Provine, 2012).

Because conventions have evolved through cultural trial and error it is erroneous for people today, imbued with what we call reason, to believe they can plan a better civilization than the one we have. Of course there are always opportunities to improve conditions for individuals. Cries for expedience over principle often intrude when a specific case seems to be contrary to the intent of a principle. For example, when someone is denied a life saving organ transplant because they are not first in line in the queue we often feel as though some "authority" should step in and "do something". We further are appalled at the "inhuman" fealty to the rules of organ distribution and decry our inability to do better.

What is missed in such cases is the general principle that liberty demands we adhere to principles that don't always work in our favor. Liberty is not about expedience; it is about reducing as far as possible the coercive power of "authorities" to force our behavioral choices. In the case of organ transplants we are faced with an economy of extreme scarcity. Better to have organs distributed according to impersonal principles than to have some authority "play god" and determine who is to live and who not. Of course we would all act in the interest of the transplant recipient in a world of infinite abundance. But that is not the world in which we live and so some recipients will simply not live long enough to reach the front of the queue. That is unfortunate, living within a civilization that values individual liberty requires that all of us are equal before the abstract laws that are, as this example clearly shows, human through and through.

Within the context of liberty and equality before the law each person is called upon to find a way to leverage their talents as a means for their social reward. That is, each person is free to use or squander their talent within an economy that rewards those who create the most value as judged by others. Some people choose to express their talent by adopting a profession. The choice of profession is in part driven by one's desire to identify with the traditions and abstract rules that are associated with that profession. For example, one becomes a teacher to be part of a profession that is highly regarded and that is rooted in the virtue of acculturating and empowering the rising generation.

The point to be made is that becoming a professional means committing one's life to a set of abstract rules that are consistent with that profession. Becoming acculturated within a profession is a process of internalizing these profession-specific virtues and practicing them to develop expertise. The process of internalizing virtues associated with a profession is coextensive with the process of developing a personal identity. We turn to that literature next.

Virtue Theory

Moral virtues have been a hands-off topic for educators for the better part of a century (Lieberman, 1993). The public school movement removed virtues education from the curriculum in part because it was thought that such training should be confined to the home. It was also thought that moral virtues are necessarily defined by and inextricably linked to religious belief and practice. Since government institutes and sanctions public schools, and since virtues are widely thought to be associated with religious practice, public schools abandoned teaching virtues based on the constitutional separation of church and state.

Research into virtues has been rekindled within the positive psychology movement. One of the primary streams of positive psychology research is the virtues and character strengths correlated with high-functioning (flourishing) human beings (Seligman, 2011). The definition of "virtue" offered by the positive psychologists is: "A disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing. Moreover, virtuous activity involves choosing virtue for itself and in light of some justifiable life plan" (Yearly, 1990). Positive psychology has developed a relatively stable set of virtues associated with optimal human functioning, and codified as the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths (see Table 1).

Table 1
The VIA Classification of Strengths

Virtues	Description of Character Strength
Courage	Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal.
Justice	Civic strength that underlie healthy community life.
Humanity	Interpersonal strengths that involve "tending and befriending" others (Taylor et al., 2000).
Temperance	Strengths that protect against excess.
Wisdom	Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisitions and use of knowledge.
Transcendence	Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning.

For most of us our families constitute our first moral community. It is not a community we freely choose, but it does provide us with a basic set of rules to guide our behavior (e.g., say "please and thank you"). As we mature, meet new people, and gain experience most of us have opportunities to join additional moral communities. One of the most important moral communities people join is a professional one.

Professions, loosely conceived, have a number of defining characteristics. They can be defined by formal job titles, by the actual work that one performs, by the organization one works for, and others. One often overlooked and yet critical component of a profession is the set of virtues that direct the behavior of those who commit to and identify with it.

People choose a particular profession for a variety of reasons. They may have a natural talent for it. They may have family members who served as role models in the profession. But one important factor in profession choice that has not received enough attention is the individual's desire to identify with and to become a member of the moral community that the profession represents. For example, a young person aspires to become a teacher in part because there are clear virtues associated with that professional community. Teachers are widely regarded to be empathic, helping, and committed to educating the next generation (Cooke & Carr, 2014). Many teachers find the virtues associated with teaching to be an inspiring part of the profession, and it is a sense of identity with that particular moral community that motivates the individual to persevere through the process of attaining professional status, and through the inevitable challenges that arise from practicing the profession (Campbell, 2013).

Virtues help people determine *what* to do with their skills and abilities and also provide a sense of *why* they do it. In fact, the teaching virtues may lead teachers on occasion to determine that they must develop new skills and abilities. For example, many teachers today are working feverishly to adapt to technological advances that were not part of their formal education. In addition, teachers manifest their professional virtues when they spend their own resources on classroom supplies, work evenings preparing lesson plans, or work overtime with underperformers to help bring them up to the level of their peers. These selfless acts are motivated by the teaching virtues—they just seem to be the right things to do within a professional community where it is the norm.

Virtues are central components of an individual's profession, and of a practitioner's sense of professional identity. Whether the individual is attracted to a profession because of its virtues will vary from person to person. Yet, every practitioner must identify with and internalize the virtues associated with the profession to be accepted as a legitimate practitioner. The greater the degree of identification to the profession-specific virtues, the greater will be the commitment to excellence and high performance within the bounds of professional norms and one's personal talent. Let's now briefly examine how scholars

Virtues have several defining characteristics that distinguish them from mindsets, mental models, and other putative psychological entities that have been proposed as foundational elements of entrepreneur development (Krueger, 2007). The concept of a mindset is generally postulated to stand for a set of memorized procedures, scripts, or schemas that exist somehow, somewhere within a person's brain. Without delving into the neurosciences to investigate whether such psychological entities exist, let's simply ask how we can determine whether a person has developed a particular mindset. Observing a person's behavior doesn't necessarily reveal an underlying mindset. For example, someone who flatters me may have the mindset to make me feel good about myself, or contrarily, they may have the mindset to make me feel good about them. Many people use flattery not to give something to another person, but rather to elevate themselves in the other person's esteem. One cannot tell from the overt behavior which mindset might be lurking in the background.

The point is, there is no reliable way to determine another person's mindset merely by observing their overt behavior. Of course, it is possible to ask the individual questions about their motives, knowledge, and personal perspectives. However, this approach is liable to self-report bias (Davis, Hall, & Mayer, 2016). That is, if we ask the subject to articulate which mindset was operating during a particular behavior we may get the answer the subject believes we prefer to hear. In the above example, I may ask the subject whether the flattery was real. What would you expect the answer to be? We simply cannot determine a person's mindset by objective data available to us in the day-to-day world. If we cannot determine whether a mindset is operating by observing another person's behavior or by asking them relevant questions, how is it that this nebulous mental entity can be a teachable component of professional development? Despite some recent efforts to make the notion of a mindset a measurable construct (see Davis, Hall, & Mayer, 2016), I suggest that inculcating particular mindsets should not be the goal of entrepreneurial development, nor of professional development generally. Instead, virtues are a more robust, observable, and measurable construct that can be taught, practiced, and pragmatically measured.

One of the primary arguments for virtues instead of mindsets is that virtues can *only* be measured by how one actually behaves in the world. A virtue is ascribed to a person who displays *consistent action in the social world*. Unpacking this characterization of the concept of virtue, note that we would not ascribe a virtue to someone who practiced a particular type of behavior only occasionally. For example, we would not ascribe honesty to a person who manifestly is honest only under some conditions and not others. There are other words we use to describe such people: duplicitous, self-serving, hypocritical, are just a few that come to mind. I challenge you to think of any virtue that you would ascribe to a person who only occasionally demonstrates behavior consistent with that virtue and on other occasions behaves contrary to it.

A virtue is also a function of individual choice and action. We would not ascribe a virtue to someone who was coerced into behaving virtuously. Virtue is only imputed to those who freely choose to act virtuously and who could have behaved otherwise.

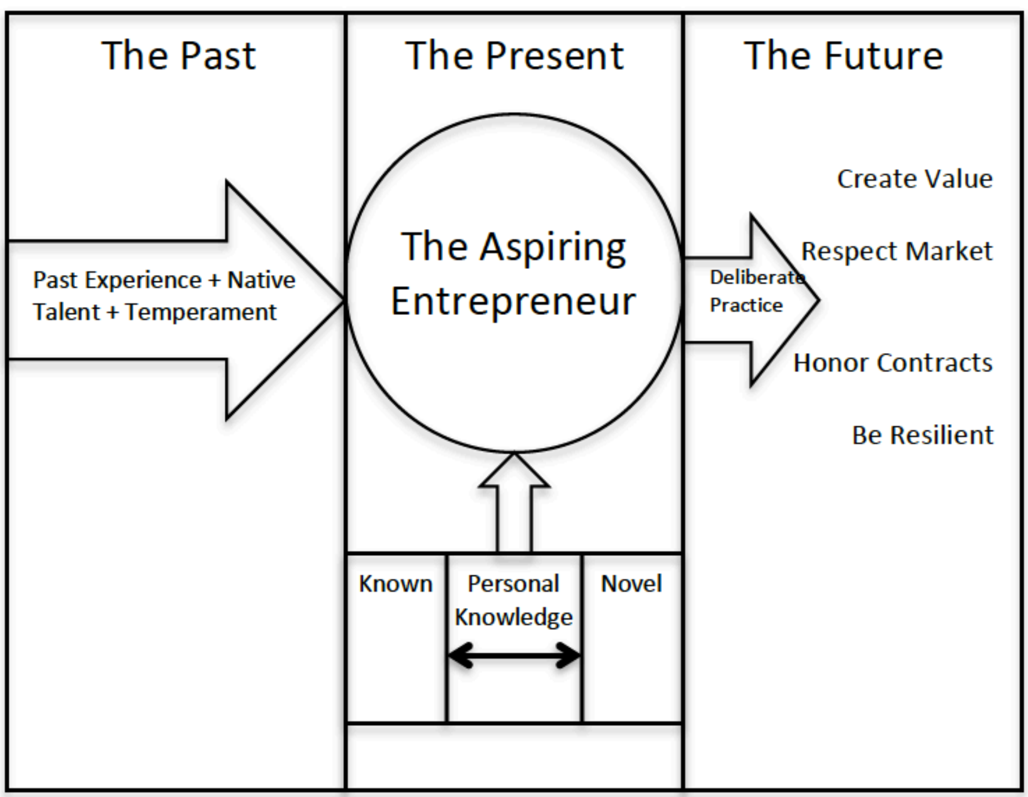
Finally, a virtue is characterized by the fact that it must affect other people. If a person were honest only to their pet dog we would not ascribe the virtue of honesty to that individual (although the dog might). Being consistently honest to one's dog does not affect other people. We would not ascribe honesty to that individual because we cannot predict from behavior towards the dog how that individual will behave in the human world.

To measure whether an individual possesses one or another virtue requires assessing that individual's actions in the social world. This understanding of virtue does not require us to delve into the mindset of the virtuous person. In fact, mindset is an irrelevant construct in the assessment of an individual's virtue. It matters not what the mindset of the honest person might be if that individual consistently manifests honest behavior in the social world. We are fated by our imperfect perceptual and cognitive systems to know vanishingly little about the internal thought processes of others in our social world, including the aspiring entrepreneurs we are endeavoring to develop.

Virtues are a more credible measure of an individual's past behavior and more reliable predictor of future behavior than mindsets or other ghostly mental entities. Someone who has acted honestly in the past and has become known as an honest person is likely, from a pragmatic perspective, to be honest in the future. The way we come to rely upon another person's honest behavior is through direct observation (familiarity), and/or from second-hand reports of such behavior from trusted others (reputation). Focusing entrepreneur development on virtues helps us better measure the results of our interventions than other oft-used constructs, such as mindsets. In addition, aspirants can practice virtuous behavior and develop personal expertise in the entrepreneurial virtues. Having something specific about the profession routinely to practice is essential to identity work and construction, as noted above. Helping aspirants develop profession specific virtues attenuates some of the ambiguity inherent in entrepreneurship and may enhance its attractiveness. Additionally, perfecting one's personal facility with the entrepreneurial virtues may enable greater levels of persistence within the profession.

Figure 2 highlights how we conceive the entrepreneurial virtues playing a role in the professional identity development of the aspiring—and practicing—entrepreneur.

Figure 2
Entrepreneurial Virtues Model



Each aspiring entrepreneur enters a development program with a past that includes his or her experiences, native talents, and temperament (among other things). These play a role in shaping who one is presently. The present self is informed by an ever-expanding store of knowledge—some of which others share (e.g, how to write a business plan), and some of which is novel and unknown to most others (e.g., intimate knowledge about one's customers). The aspiring entrepreneur uses both known and novel knowledge to engage the unknown future by enacting the entrepreneurial virtues through a regime of deliberate practice. That is, the aspiring entrepreneur practices creating value, respecting markets, honoring contracts, and being resilient on the economic frontier. Through deliberate practice, one becomes increasingly adept at enacting these virtues.

HEDGEHOG LEADERSHIP IN ACADEME

It's time to pause, take stock, and summarize the above to gather our wits. There are definitions to flesh out, threads to tie, and choices to be made. The definition that I will focus on is that of hedgehog leadership. I will do this primarily by contrasting it with the fox leadership style. I will then tie up the various intellectual threads that were discussed in discrete sections above. It's reasonable for the reader who has followed the argument this far to be unclear about what to take away from the above. I will attempt to provide more clarity shortly. Finally, for those who are persuaded that the argument made in this essay has merit and that there is something interesting in the definition and promise of hedgehog leadership, there needs to be something they can practice with the intent of becoming more hedgehog like, or at least to be able to switch to hedgehog mode where appropriate.

Let's begin first by defining once again the concept of hedgehog leadership. As Berlin noted, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Fox-style leadership is hands-on, policy and rule focused, and designed to keep things running smoothly. In the pantheon of sociological thinkers, Max Weber (1947) stands out for his identification and analysis of this type of bureaucratic leadership. Organizations cannot subsist without some "glue" to hold together the diverse pieces, including human agents toiling within. There are individuals—the "bureaucrats" (a term that was not pejorative to Weber)—who constitute, promulgate, and enforce the rules. This is all well and good, and necessary for a going concern. Far too often, however, organizational life becomes consumed by the rules at the expense of realizing, in some non-predictive fashion, the founding principles of the organization.

Hedgehogs are the founders of many, if not most, organizations—including academic organizations. In order to endure the grueling task of creating an organization from desultory resources the hedgehog can only focus on one big thing (OBT). Generally, these are the founding principles of the organization. From this founding vision a great and noble institution can take shape and make real what had heretofore only been an idea. Only hedgehog-like focus on the founding OBTs can bring an organization to life. The rules and policies of the emerging bureaucracy serve to preserve what had been created based on the OBT. But, if the bureaucracy becomes too strong the organization will, like a universe with excessive gravitational force, eventually begin to contract and potentially die. Hedgehog leaders focused on currently relevant OBTs derivative of the founding OBTs are necessary to provide the cosmological constant that ensures the organization will not contract itself into oblivion, and in the best case will help it expand and evolve in perpetuity.

Most of us can relate to the notion of “one big thing” (especially those of us who take our philosophy from Curly in Billy Crystal’s “City Slickers” who famously told Billy’s character that the meaning of life is “just one thing”), but we don’t necessarily know how to put into words what seems to be inherently ineffable. The best way for us to define the concept “one big thing” (OBT) is by citing some examples of what others have suggested it means.

To that end I will first consult with thinkers who share the pragmatist perspective that there is nothing non-human to which humans need to be responsible. That is, pragmatists want us to eschew all metaphysics and to de-divinize the world through and through (Rorty, 1989, p. 21). On this view, humans are just animals doing their best to cope with their environment. This Darwinian picture leaves us with no skyhooks to help us determine what we should do with our lives or our communities. Pragmatists are comfortable with the idea that humans are making things up as they go—that our present choices cannot be judged by comparing them to something non-human. They can only be judged by the future. This perspective resonates with Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas*. In that classic he wrote:

> *“America, filling the present with the greatest deeds and problems, cheerfully accepting the past, including feudalism (as indeed, the present is but the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism) counts, as I reckon, for her justification and success (for who, as yet, dare claim success?) almost entirely on the future” (Whitman 1982, p. 929).*

Pragmatists look to the future to justify the OBTs to which they are committed. As the future cannot be known, only the fuzziest of concepts can be used to articulate the large projects for humans generally to undertake. For Rorty, this means that humans should commit to “creating a better future”. When pressed on specifying criteria for how we would know that we had achieved such an end, Rorty says: “Pragmatists can only say: Better in the sense of containing more of what we consider good and less of what we consider bad” (Rorty, 1999, p. 28). When pressed further about who the “we” is in this vision of the future Rorty notes the pragmatist is confined to his community. When pressed on what is considered “good” he says “pragmatists can only say with Whitman “variety and freedom”, or, with Dewey, ‘growth’ (Rorty, 1999, p. 28). In his *Reconstruction in Philosophy* Dewey (2004) wrote, “growth itself is the only moral end”.

Taking cues from effectual logic the OBT recommended for aspiring entrepreneurs is to "create value". Effectual logic is based on the discovery that non-predictive control of resources and their deployment for creating customer value is common among expert entrepreneurs. Such individuals work on the economic frontier, comfortable with being unable to predict precise outcomes of their value-creating activities. It is likely, for example, that Bill Gates was unaware in the early days of Microsoft that the company would become an iconic brand and software giant, and that he would one day be one of the richest people in the world. At the founding of Microsoft Gates, a 20-year-old Harvard drop out, more likely was simply making day to day decisions to create value using the resources (including knowledge) that he and Paul Allen, his co-founder, were able to muster and deploy. The simple mantra to "create value" guides entrepreneurs in their daily choice making, and on occasion leads to impressive and profoundly transformational businesses.

The Austrian School of Economics suggests that the OBT at the core of economic life is centered primarily on liberty, private property and the division of labor. Hayek defines liberty as the absence of coercion. As such, liberty is a negative concept—it is defined by what is absent. Humans have achieved liberty only recently, and it must actively be understood and preserved to maintain its place as a primary organizing principle of Western societies. Liberty is an exceedingly rare organizing principle in the history of human civilization. Of the seven great civilizations prevailing on earth today, only the West has liberty as a central organizing principle (Huntington, 1996). To maintain liberty, people in the West must preserve the principle in the education of youth, in the recognition and exercise of private property, and, not least, in the freedom for individuals to choose how they will earn their daily bread.

These are very large OBTs—national or even global human goals. These may be part of the academic hedgehog leaders big things, but there may be more granular OBTs that apply specific to the world of academe. As a committed and practicing pragmatist the candidates I suggest are necessarily fuzzy, untethered to non-human benchmarks, and capable of being judged only by the future. A leading candidate for me concerns the mission of education generally. Here, I refer to the educational philosophy of John MacMurray who said the goal of education "from the standpoint of its victims is learning to be human" (2012, p. 666). MacMurray did not discount the vocational value of education, but he was concerned that the modern age had elevated this objective above the *raison d'etre* of education, which is to help people flourish within the context of other humans.

Another OBT candidate for the hedgehog leader in academe is concerned with faculty. This I call simply "solidarity". Faculty members should be encouraged to pursue their profession in as unfettered a manner as possible. They should not have to conform only to the precepts or dictates of accrediting bodies or vocational consequences. If the primary goal of education is to learn to be human, a pragmatist corollary of this is that there are many ways to be human. On this view, academe should encourage, celebrate, and advance intellectual diversity in the interest of creating better human beings. Faculty should be encouraged to model their own individual variety of excellence and allow students to decide which model they prefer to adapt to their own lives. The hedgehog leader builds solidarity around this goal of creating a culture that nurtures freedom and variety amongst the faculty members and staff around the singular goal of providing education centered on learning to be human.

Solidarity can be achieved among the faculty, and a focus on learning to be human can predominate as an educational philosophy, but it takes a hedgehog leader to articulate and enact these principles. The fox-style leader is going to be consumed with the commonplace pre-occupations of most academic leaders, including the aforementioned accreditation rules and standards, budgetary constraints and allocation decisions, human resource rules and compliance, and the mundane affairs often derisively referred to as "keeping the trains running on time".

But leaders and those led within the academe can and should aspire to so much more. The hedgehog leader is more than inspirational. The hedgehog leader is an exemplar of how to face an unknowable future with resolve and determination. The hedgehog leader spends more time articulating and promoting the OBTs of solidarity and learning to be human. Finally, the hedgehog leader trusts that a culture of individuals galvanized around these OBTs will achieve a better future—even though the notion of "better" is only to be superseded by the next generation of leaders and followers acting on the OBTs that *they* think are right for their time.

BECOMING A HEDGEHOG

I think I'm a hedgehog. If you asked my colleagues to label me either as a fox or hedgehog I'd wager that more than 90% of them would say that I'm an example of the latter. Some would do so spitefully and with a hint of disdain because I tend to be cavalier, even dismissive, toward those with a talent and penchant for policy making. Others would perhaps do so admiringly, wishing they had a bit of the hedgehog in them as well. Of course, there is no moral distinction between hedgehog and fox leadership, each has its place and each has its representative individuals. Rather, the distinction is a practical one: being a hedgehog will have advantages in some circumstances and being a fox will have advantages in others.

As I've indicated above, becoming a hedgehog leader in academe means spending the most of one's time enacting and articulating the OBTs appropriate to our time. This is manifest via a commitment to the students who pay for the services rendered by the academic organization and to the faculty to render those services. The hedgehog leader will be ineffective if he or she does not develop genuine love for those being served. This means getting beyond mere functional relationships with people and the roles they play to understanding them as persons.

A relevant question to ask is: “Are hedgehogs made or born”? I’ve been dealing with a similar question for years in my academic role as a teacher of entrepreneurship. Many people, even many of those who teach the subject, believe that entrepreneurs are born and not made. Entrepreneurs are, to be sure, following a path in life that differs from the career paths chosen by the vast majority of people who are not entrepreneurs. Yet, the research and data are clear—there is no such thing as an entrepreneurial “personality type”, “mindset”, or other “innate” quality that would pre-dispose one to becoming an entrepreneur (Duening & Metzger, 2014). It is clearly the case that anyone can become an entrepreneur if they choose to follow, practice, and perpetually refine virtues germane to that path.

So it is true as well, I think, of hedgehog leadership. Hedgehogs can be made, but they must choose to follow the “hedgehog way” and practice the virtues germane to hedgehog leadership. I will talk more later about the “hedgehog way” and suggest virtues that one can practice to enhance their personal hedgehog leadership. Yet we must also acknowledge that, just as some people are likely to be better entrepreneurs than others by virtue of myriad indirect variables, the same is true of hedgehog leaders.

The only way that I can persuade others to follow the hedgehog way is through a discussion that examines the various trade-offs, advantages, and disadvantages of the intellectual foundations of the hedgehog way. I believe that there are at least four independent intellectual strains that are converging to support the case for hedgehog leaders. There may be more, but these are the strains to which I’ve been exposed and have personally favored. Each has its contrary perspective, as do all things in human affairs. But each of these four strains strikes me as useful and compelling in understanding human action. Further, the fact these four strains are based on scholarship in wholly independent domains, and yet converge on a respective support of the hedgehog way, provides more weight to the hermeneutic approach I’ve selected.

I return to the philosophy of John MacMurray to highlight these various ways of being in the world. MacMurray highlighted that individuals are brought into the world entirely dependent on caregivers for their well being. As they mature, individuals are able to evolve from dependence to interdependence. In the process, they evolve from being a mere individual acting on the impulse of the moment to become a person capable to developing and nurturing friendships with others. According to MacMurray “the first principle of human nature is mutuality… A person is always one term in a relation of persons” (MacMurray, 2012, p. 670).

I have developed an acronym that can be used in one’s personal quest to develop hedgehog leadership capabilities: LOVE. This acronym stands as a reminder deliberately to practice the hedgehog building behaviors noted in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3

L.O.V.E.
The Practical Components of Hedgehog Leadership

L:	Listen: Listen to the people that you are leading Look: Constantly look for opportunities to help people flourish in themselves
O:	Open: Open doors for people, connect them with others who can help Opportunity: Create opportunity for others and encourage them
V:	Invite: Invite people to join together to achieve OBTs Everyone: Involve and invite everyone, do not exclude anyone
E:	Expect: Make expectations known Excellence: Don't settle for anything less than excellence and professionalism

To achieve true hedgehog leadership style, of course, will take time and effort. Applying the principles of LOVE is not unlike the application of the entrepreneurial virtues as noted above. That is, deliberate practice of elements of LOVE will, over time, increase one's facility as a hedgehog style leader. One practices LOVE in the context of students by helping them become human. For the faculty, one practices LOVE by helping galvanize them around the core educational mission of the organization and of higher educational generally.

Using the above behaviors denoted by the acronym LOVE will help aspiring and practicing hedgehog leaders enroll people in the unending pursuit of worthwhile OBTs. We have suggested that the OBTs in academe should center on learning to be human for students and solidarity for faculty and staff. It will require courage to become a hedgehog leader who visibly and vocally enacts and articulates these OBTs. It is likely more comfortable for most of us simply to be agents who keep the trains running, rather than visionaries who point to the future and trust that it will be better for all.

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