

Leadership Modalities for an Apotropaic Society

About this Document

Student:	John Brisbin
Student ID:	13389938
Contact:	0407 275 600, johnb@communityfoods.com.au
Unit Name/Number:	100649: Leadership and Change
Lecturer:	Dr Vlad Dimitrov
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Introduction

In this essay I will explore some of the philosophical and moral notions of leadership appropriate to rapidly complexifying social environments. The academic and applied research territory is so densely populated with various theories and helpful coaching manuals for would-be leaders that I'd like to draw a long bow and aim for an evolutionary perspective on the matter, hoping to find some useful new grounding for immediate, practical actions.

The starting point will be a hypothesis linking leadership phenomenon to complexity theory, and showing how the concept of "apotropaisis"—the ability to avoid disaster—can be considered the ultimate arbiter of morality.

With a proposed recipe for morality and leadership, I turn to social applications of leadership and suggest that the most critical issues of our day arise from super-dense human organisations, specifically large cities and corporations.

In searching for in which to conduct this enquiry and language cultivation, I offer examples from my personal experience that indicate modalities new approaches to organisational leadership, personal leadership, and anonymous emergent leadership.

I believe these environments are sufficiently novel to justify conscious cultivation of new languages and supporting cultural narratives appropriate to the new realities unfolding around us.

1 Complexity, leadership, and a moral imperative

Leadership as a social phenomenon is so unpredictable in its particulars and effect as to be practically unresolvable through the lens of systematic analysis. In another line of argument, it could be said that the vast majority of "reality" is unresolvable through the lens of systematic analysis, and leadership is simply another of these dimly-languaged domains that we muddle through the best we can.

I want to acknowledge the "fuzziness" inherent in any enquiry (Dimitrov, 2001), and yet attach my efforts to Wolpert's view (1992, xii) that "scientific creativity has its own special characteristics quite different from those of other arts...often characterised by a 'psychic courage' which requires scientists to include in their ideas assumptions for which they have very little evidence."

1.1 Life: it's a negentropic dissipation sort of thing

Life is a dissipative system: its foundational characteristic is that it must transform energy input into complexity (Prigogine, 1977). Why and how is a mystery, but we cannot escape the notion that—to be living—we must be continuously complexifying. Otherwise we are on the down side of the thermodynamics and sliding toward death by chaos. This is as true for humans as it is for peat moss, perennial pansies, and perhaps even galaxies (Dawkins, 1976).

1.2 Apotropaic morality

Apotropaic is an exotic bit of greekery commonly used to describe the magical ability to ward off evil. Dimitrov takes this starting point and—in the contexts of complexity and leadership—provides a positive interpretation: "...the kind of leadership that is in harmony with one's endeavour to master his/her self-organising human nature."¹

Coincidentally, I have been wrestling with some notion of an adjective phrase meaning "life-positive", or "supportive of the continuation of the complex system that we understand as 'life'", which is life-threatening, grammatically. For the purposes of this essay, I will use apotropaic in its adjective form, and partner it with "negentropic" to emphasise our specific concern with the connections between human behaviour and dissipative systems.

Apotropaic behaviour cannot be predicted. There is no *a priori* recipe for matching up particular leadership modalities with ever changing environmental circumstances to produce an apotropaic outcome. We discover survival opportunities like water experimenting at the edge of a levee to find the best points of weakness . . . life seeps across its environment and looks for the best route of flow moment by moment. In this sense, all human endeavour has at least some potential to be apotropaic. Even the most despicable, horrid, immoral, and seemingly unsustainable behaviour is clearly within the totality of all possibilities. So how now can we claim that there is any moral basis for refining human behaviour? Complexification may offer the foundation. By melding Descartes and Prigogine to: "It complexifies, therefore it is life", we have a starting point for differentiation and optimisation.

What we call free will is probably more like freedom of choice between various behaviours, with judgement being exercised by all living systems in ways that, as humans, we can only partially grasp with our limited conceptual models.

The negentropic "will-to-live", as a core energising bias, then takes structural form in an astonishing variety of strategies, some of which turn out to be apotropaic. The essence of good or bad leadership is a question that is only answered retrospectively, and subject to continuous reinterpretation as the future unfolds into the present.

Pushing a system toward criticality means that it is more likely to exhibit emergent behaviour: this does not imply that any particular emergence phenomenon is necessarily "good" for the system. But since our prime directive is to sustain human life (and through this, sustain all of life), we have a natural foundation for ethics and morality. I suggest that the moral distinction between "good" and "bad" can be mapped to the single greyscale axis of negentropic efficiency.

1.3 Leaders as emulation targets

Leaders are people whose behaviours we mimic.

One of the tricky perception issues is the framing of "leaders" and "followers" . . . in my observation, all leading is leading by example, so the relationship is much more about emulation, not about following a literal instruction set (this is only possible with non-willful entities, such as machines, and even then there is room for quantum voodoo).

All leading is leading by example: the leadership qualities catalogued by Kane (reader p43), Lucas, Komvies, and McMahon (reader p45) and countless others are really the qualities that all people should aspire to in their relations with others. It seems apparent to me that the attributes of a good leader are identical to the attributes of a good person, ie a person who is both self-actualised and socially adept. Those people who manage to achieve some success in this area become targets of emulation by others.

To save time and energy (marginal energy gains are reinvested in complexity, increasing dissipative efficiency), we are continuously looking for and emulating what appear to be apotropaic behaviour strategies.

Individuals and groups then appear to us variously and we emulate them according to our judgement. We call these emulation targets "leaders", since they are at the root node of a particular behaviour pattern that others seek to mimic. We are all watching each other, all the time. When we see something that seems worth mimicking (note that this decision to mimic or not mimic is a personal action, thus it is an expression of internal leadership, or actualised self-will), we acknowledge the relationship between originator and replicator by referring to the originator as the leader (in a particular context).¹ The actions of the leader are personal, as are all actions by anyone, yet the essence of leadership is social:

"leadership as a relational process of people together attempting to accomplish change or make a difference to benefit the common good." (reader p45)

Leadership is a publicly visible quality of self-alignment: a combination of will-to-live plus actionable strategies. Leadership is only expressed as a conscious act of will. What is the difference between leadership and will? I think it's a fine line, essentially a shady area where context is all important. But I think the bottom line distinction is that leadership is a subclass of self-will that is characterised by its high level of attractiveness to others.

1.4 Leadership exists at all scales

Using the notion of a holographic universe (Talbot, 1991), or self-similarity at scale, we can quickly find evidence of leadership at organisational, cellular, and environmental levels. The location of leadership in all will-capable systems de-fuses much of the fractious intellectual debate associated with questions of personal sovereignty, social hegemony, and cultural destiny.

The leadership required to start at this cosmic end of the debate can only come from with individuals who chooses to ground themselves in as authentic terrain as they can honestly find. Within corporations and large cities, we lose a huge degree of personal accountability that would otherwise be inescapable in a small, stable community or in close contact with the natural environment.

1.5 Who are you to tell me what to do?

Robert Woog made the provocative statement: "A corporate approach to leadership is prevalent in today's society. With such an approach, legitimacy does not lie with the individual."²

Sean Rickard, an intelligent, respectable man with an important government position, is heard to shrilly challenge the opponents of food globalisation: " Are you really suggesting that we should tell people what's good for them? People **want** to eat junk food, that's why they buy it. Who are we to regulate what people should eat?"³

¹ In a funny way this is sort of like a warranty: and we see what happens when the followers become disenchanting with the leader and return a faulty ideology, demanding satisfaction.

² Woog, Robert. Learning to Lead: Leading to Learn in a Complex World. UWS. 2003.

³ Rickard, Sean. From audio recording: "Local Food, Global Prosperity" Conference at Kensington Hall, London 2000. International Society for Ecology & Culture

This reasoning mirrors the classic parent's dilemma with the child who just wants to eat lollies. As adults,, few of us question our obligation to advise and guide the youngster toward a better diet. Yet when the same situation is presented amongst a peerage of adults, even those who know better are quickly hammered down by an "egalitarian" admonishment that no free person has the right to tell another free person what to do. There is no moral resolution to this story: for our current human minds the problem is indeterminant. That's why we write things down and re-tell stories.

So if we are guided by stories, what is the differentiating quality that makes some stories more apotropaic than others?

In the past, the environment itself acted as a great scouring brush that brought continuous critique upon our social stories. In the absence of easy media such as printing presses, video tapes and hard drives, people were more conscious of the load that a story requires (memory, re-telling) in relation to its utility (do I feel better, have I been guided wisely, is my life healthier). Stories that were empty, vacuous, or flimsy simply could not be justified and were left cold beside last week's fire circle. The sublime, generative, and informing stories were retained.

Suddenly, in the course of a dozen generations, a small demographic of the human species has apparently broken free of the environment. In the modern world, encased in our urban and corporate super-shells, we are becoming gods whose every word and motion can be recorded and retold through stabilised media like print, audio, and video.

The race from Voltaire through the machine age and now the information age has propelled a small sliver of humanity into an orbit of new possibilities. It is increasingly apparent that the complexity structures that emerge from our activity must be more relevant to the greater process of life, or else we risk terminal irrelevance.

2 Social crises

In large cities and corporations, the social debate has been detached from fundamental environmental grounding and is in the hands of a power elite who are not efficiently increasing the apotropaic potentials of society as a whole.

Recognising what is novel about a specific problem is the necessary complement of recognising what is familiar. In many ways the discussion over leadership is conducted within a mantra that "the world is different now, so leaders must be different." Having set up this notion, various parties debate which existing leadership behaviours might be best suited to the new world. Yet the core components of what makes this new world "new" are actually not being talked about in any particular detail. I refer specifically to the lack of common cultural debate over the urban and corporate superorganisms that define daily reality for consumer societies.

2.1 Why start with leadership?

Leadership attracts a lot of publicity. Lots of headlines and cameos and soundbites and spotlights. Of course, a fair bit of this hoohah is created and paid for by the same power elite who own the media and select the "leaders" who are paraded before us. This provides a pretty warped common experience of leadership. Worse yet, this contrived, made-for-camera cultural simulacra is all we have as we attempt to discern authentic social qualities that are best suited for the continued thriving of the species.

I think this is at the centre of my own agitation over the question of leadership. The fact that our understanding and appreciation of leadership is molded in such a constrained and artificial manner.

What we know from the past is that when humans are attenuated to their environment we acquire a strength that is powerfully apotropaic. We have grown from the attenuated stability of tribal societies and invested the surplus energy into a specific mastery of materiality driven by information technology.

This evolutionary surge has produced radically novel social environments, and demand active engagement to encourage appropriate social behaviours.

Leadership strategies suited for small groups living close to the earth (ie, in close co-opetition with the living environment). Any critique of leadership needs to recognise the specific social/environmental context in which it is located.

Rather than look at a wide range of historical forms, I am more focussed on the unknown frontiers, eg large cities and corporations. Here there is a unparalleled detachment from naturally occurring complexities. It seems quite reasonable to suggest that the social conditions inside these shielded environments is novel.

Physical relationship with other people	Relationship with natural environment	Organisational phenomenon
Dense settlement	Highly shielded	Large cities, especially in the northern hemisphere
Dense settlement	Low shielding	Mid-size cities in the south
Sparse settlement	Highly shielded	Large corporations with global, distributed structures
Sparse settlement	Low shielding	50% of the human population, subsistence farmers

Note how the corporations are constantly shaping the environment (mental and physical) in order to gain more survival advantage. David Kubiak calls this process "corporate anthroculture: the breeding of humans especially fit for corporate service". There are interesting precedents for this dynamic we can see in small scale: eunuchs in service to Chinese mandarins, castratos in service to the Italian opera. But we have never seen the sort of total hegemony of our ambient environments as it is currently developing under corporate influences (Korten, 2001)

It is interesting to map a possible trajectory that seems to be the logical preference for the corporates. What do they want from us? How are they exerting evolutionary selection pressures on humans? Here's a recipe for ideal corporate citizens:

- people with little exposure to (and thus a reduced need for) contact with natural environments, complexities, risks, and awe (ie, people who prefer the neat and tidy risks of simulation world)
- people adapted to elemental nutrient streams unrefined by other living systems (ie, imagine a drip feed of pure sugar, oil, and salt . . . the foundation for most of industrial agriculture's output, and immensely suited to mechanised processing)
- people with impenetrable walls of egoism so that they require enormous external inputs (supplied by the corpus) and lack the capacity to act cooperatively (reducing the risk of emergent leadership challenges to the corpus)
- people who can repetitively use a small portion of their discernment to handle problems too ambiguous for machines to solve (thus providing some symbiotic benefit to the corpus).

It starts looking eerily like the world imagined in the popular sci-fi movie The Matrix.

Here I wish to clearly state that I have no moral argument that will condemn or celebrate the general trend toward human encapsulation within the corporate body. My personal choice is to avoid this merging, but that is not the same as suggesting a merger is somehow "wrong": like everything else, the emergence of corporations is a characteristic expression of complex systems, another experiment in the search for apotropaic elegance . . . no one is in charge of this, no one can possibly stop it, and the best we can do is keep good notes while becoming more resonant as individuals.

3 Applications of leadership

Most of people are still quite close to the land, and are generally doing as well as they ever have except for the adverse effects of globalisation's "collateral damage". A marginal percentage of the species has poked a finger into an unknown world: So I choose to focus specifically on cities and corporations. These two environments are the cutting edge of the western experience, and if we are to validate anything about our evolutionary gambit, its central relevance is in the novel human condition of existence inside large cities and corporations. Apotropaic leadership in such environments is an unknown dance.

Following are some stories and descriptions from organisations I am personally involved with. I believe these are examples of effective leadership at the frontiers of these social contexts.

3.1 CultureLab: Organisational leadership as performance

About a year ago I began collaborating with CultureLab International, an experimental theatre ensemble based in the Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney. I have no theatre or performance background, but was provoked by the group's intelligent, deeply theoretical approach to cultural enquiry and exploration of the role of the actor in society. Within weeks I found myself in white facepaint and beginning to glimpse the edges of an immense body of thought concerned with public performance and the individual's relationship to roles, masks, and authenticity.

CultureLab "performances" are delivered as exposed processes of performance-making. The audience is invited to transcend the customary barrier between performance artefact and immediate experience, opening up fresh pathways for people to explore their worlds.

CultureLab is a semi-anarchic collective of about 35 members, 6 of whom share a single house. The central creative forces, Willem Brugman and Catherine Hassall both deny any agenda or vision for the organisation, staying firmly in touch with their personal sovereignty as artists in the first person. Outside of this core, a tightly bound group of 3-4 people take leadership in various matters such as project management, housekeeping, and group facilitation. The next ring of activity involves 6-10 people who perform, create, and participate regularly. Then there are remote members who connect with the core group several times a year for intensive sessions. So there are complexities within the group at all sorts of levels: individual, collective, practical, ideological, sexual, temporal, geographical, etc. And there is the ever-present, gut-busting, spirit-grinding problem of keeping the rent paid.

Leading role: an act to follow

The first CultureLab project that seized my imagination was the vegie run. In November of 2000, the group was offered the opportunity to revive a box-delivery service in the mountains. The vegie run, as it is called, involved going down to the main markets at 3am every Monday morning, picking up about a ton of fresh organic produce, transporting back to the home base, portioning out to the boxes, and then delivering them across the community.

The original impetus behind this operation was pragmatic: the ensemble gained access to a steady source of food and a bit of income in exchange for a few days of clean, honest work each week.

In time, the operation became more like a performance, with the script reading straight out of the pages of common community activity from a previous era. People have been banding together cooperatively to secure food for a long time: only in recent years, with the proliferation of corporate controlled supermarkets selling artificially cheap imported food has fresh, local produce become a luxury. This outrageous situation is crying out for public protest, yet our modern, climate-controlled, insular living styles mean that most people have actually forgotten the basic mechanics of behaving cooperatively.

Forgotten the mechanics of behaving cooperatively? That's a big generalisation, of course, but we can easily see this problem surface in the specifics of our everyday community life. There are many people working to change this condition, each applying their talents in a way that seems sensible to them.

For CultureLab, the vegie run became an opportunity to experiment with participative performance of community. The group began to wonder if the community itself could take over the vegie run, sort of like the audience coming up on stage and continuing the performance while the actors (the leaders) faded out of view.

In November of 2002, this delicate manouever commenced. The central coordinator, Catherine Hassall, encouraged the group to find its own resources and motivations to keep the service operating. For several weeks, her whispered invitations and quiet ultimatums were lost in the normal noise of people behaving like an audience. Then Catherine called a "final" organisational meeting at which the CultureLab people would officially step aside to make room for whatever the community wanted to do. This was to be the last invitation, and we were all prepared for the experiment to fall flat. But it didn't.

At the meeting, sitting in a circle in the garage, Catherine again told the story of the vegie run's history and explained the basics of the operation. She then called up the long-serving CultureLab people, who officially took their bows, had their picture taken, and then sat down. An awkward (dramatic) silence stretched for over a minute. The CultureLab people sat still, saying nothing. Suddenly, the rest of the group realised that

they indeed were on the stage now, and unless they opened their mouths and moved their bodies, nothing was going to happen. In fits and starts, slowly at first, the group found its breath and began to con-spire. Someone took the facilitator role. An agenda for the meeting was agreed. Points were discussed and actions were connected with doers. A date was set for the next meeting and smiles were exchanged all around. Seemingly out of nowhere, in the best emergent fashion, people who had been mere consumers of the delivery service had become participant-leaders.

The group is currently gaining more new members than they can handle, fresh volunteers are coming forward to fill gaps, a group newsletter is being published fortnightly. Newcomers join with the long term volunteers to learn the classical cooperative dance as they negotiate management structure, operations, and getting along with one another for the benefit of all. The "performance" appears to have successfully "led" people into a more highly evolved practice of community.

3.2 BigMedicine: Personal dimensions of leadership

BigMedicine is the brainchild of W David Kubiak. David has been studying the growth and life-threatening effects of large corporations for over 30 years as a researcher, journalist, and memetic guerrilla. His network of collaborators and correspondents includes an amazing range of leading thinkers, including Noam Chomsky, David Korten, Thom Hartmann, and Stewart Brand.

BigMedicine is a portal-like organisation that operates as a catalyst in activist networks. David is a meditator, visionary, and healer. His personal practice of leadership—consciously shaping his self-will—enables him to radiate an attraction field that draws in collaborators and supporters, each of whom bring a range of energy inputs.

David transforms this potential energy into complexity, thus creating living systems. The systems he chooses to create are involved in a range of "leading" evolutionary ideas:

- Recognising the sudden proliferation of corporate superorganisms, and the novel hazards their presence involves, he is involved in creating a taxonomy to describe these creatures in such a way that we recognise their true natures and the environments that they inhabit. Corporations exhibit some characteristics we're familiar with: predation, parasitism, symbiosis, etc. Yet our language and social custom lags far behind in terms of providing a framework for study and predictive modelling. An appropriate language would be a good start.
- Creating effective alliance networks across a huge range of issue-based activist organisations in order to form collective counter-corporate strategies. In the populist state of Maine (USA), David has created joint campaigns for healthcare, timber workers rights, and a state/national resource clearinghouse for people working on corporate reform.
- He has been instrumental in raising the visibility of the direct democracy movement which aims to re-write the US Constitution to include a fourth branch of government under the direct control of the citizens.
- In association with Rita Kubiak, he is supporting a knowledge exchange network between permaculture experts and herbal medicine healers in India.

These activities provide experience and insight for the many hundreds of people David's work touches in some transformative way. In so doing, he provides effective leadership for the research and activism that is essential for re-shaping the emergent qualities of super dense human organisations.

3.3 Australian Community Foods: Anonymous leadership emergence

In previous papers⁴ I have outlined the complexity theory underpinning this website project. In the current context, the project serves as an example of augmented self-leadership.

⁴ See Appendix C, attached

Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. 1973

Dimitrov, Vlad. Various essays (<http://www.zulenet.com/VladimirDimitrov/pages/home.html>)

Wolpert, Lewis. *The unnatural nature of science*. 1993

There are no obvious personalities or well-known organisations credited for the site: it is a public service in a generic wrapper. I designed the site this way to encourage people to take their own power seriously.

To participate, people are invited to register themselves and their food interests through an online form. The process takes about 5 minutes. Food producers, distributors, market operators, retailers, and consumers provide their basic details, including physical location and what they consider to be "local" (ie, in the bush people may think 150km is local, while a person in Western Sydney might think 15km was too far).

Periodically, a geographic searching program trawls through the listings, looking for people with matching profiles and overlapping concepts of local. The server sends an email to the matching parties, introducing them to one another and inviting them to exchange full contact details. In this way, farmers and consumers in a locality become more likely to meet each other and form real-life relationships that strengthen the foundations of community.

The site is a non-political, non-religious, life-positive. Possibly at a pre-conscious level, people may realise the highly efficient energy equation involved: they spent 5 minutes doing something constructive with their self-will, and good things happened. The website is not so much a leader itself as an example of anonymous technology laterally supporting people in further acts of self-leadership.

4 Eating an elephant (serving suggestions)

Eating an elephant is classically achieved one forkful at a time. Looking back over the scope of what I have attempted to communicate in this essay, there are obvious benefits in isolating manageable, bite-sized chunks.

What we need are some guiding insights that will unlock the potentials for change that we need to cope with a changing environment. These insights will of course be cobbled together from fragments of existing understanding, and the occasional novel reconfiguration. We have not really pushed the question of how to foster these conditions at a social level.

Some say that this involves a retreat from much of modernity, while for others it is a signal to accelerate change and experimentation. It seems to me that either road requires a more fluid approach toward consensual action, and this requires more engagement with how we discuss and cultivate understanding about leadership.

Following are my summary recommendations for generating apotropaic leadership modalities appropriate to complex social environments.

4.1 Personal practice: an other world is possible

Dimitrov, amongst many others, have centred on the primal role of the individual as a transformative agent. Connecting again to the idea of a holographic universe, the message is quite clear: get your own house in order, find a personal sense of the sublime, and in doing so you will help manifest the higher essence of a more conscious universe. The benefits of this strategy are obvious, difficult to fault, and accessible to anyone who wishes to lead themselves along the path.

I would just add that, as participants in the social experiment, we are also drawn to establish cultural practices that support this individual engagement with the divine.

4.2 Sieze the media: Reinvigorate the social narrative

The refinement of the individual is a social project. Unless we are able to manage the mechanisms of social narrative for more relevant and benefical purposes, we are going to find it hard to pull ourselves back from the brink of terminal irrelevance.

We have insanely granted monopoly rights over the media to "the economy". In the west, now in our third generation of TV-saturated human cultivation, we're losing track of exactly who's in charge as the media increasingly shapes us to suit its own emergent preferences.

There ought to be incredible niche opportunities to introduce life-positive media by reflecting back to society the continuous activity of itself.

4.3 Study the world

For some, there is a central notion that humanity will never "learn to do better". We are fundamentally flawed and will end up destroying ourselves. This is a conceivable future, yet I reject the moralistic side of this in favour of seeking a value-neutral, natural parallel. I do this with two objectives: first is an acknowledgement that we have consistently exploited our environments to wring an operational surplus from them. We have re-invested this surplus and reapplied the successful strategies to get where we are. Yet even our longest term strategies are mocked by the experience of "lesser" beasts: in short, our competitive success with respect to the rest of Earth's life forms has been blindingly fast, and yet it proves nothing about our ability to remain successful over the next millennia. In fact, it might be more accurate to regard our existence as an intentional expression of the super organism of planetary life: we are the rose blossom that lives for a week then dies. An extravagant use of resources, but necessary to the continuation of life.

The rose is a simple metaphor, and there must be untold thousands of metaphors stocked in life's socio-bio-diversity storeroom just waiting for us to embody. This is where we will find the keys for our next evolutionary gateway.

If we were to take a fraction of the human creativity being squandered in the elaboration of consumer society and apply it instead to open, living systems research, I daresay we would

4.4 Morality for grown-ups

I sweep all the great moral traditions with one broom: they are strategies born of a desire to continue living in a material world. The most de-materialised of philosophies can be seen as ways of reducing material dependency which translates to more efficient resource utilisation.

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What's the point?

The world around us is staggering in its beauty: an expression of its truth as John Ralston Saul has said. This beauty transcends economic, religious and political ideologies and provides a deeply humbling, yet inspiring, commonality which all people can access.

Given the ethical and philosophical crisis we find ourselves in, one of the best uses for the media networks is as a central nervous system for humanity: a mechanism for accelerating communications that can revitalise our sense of wonder, our confidence in commonsense, our valuation of wisdom, and our capacity for humanity.

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We have studied life enough to understand some of its basic mechanics, especially the dissipative characteristic identified by Prigogine. As a process, we see:

(raw energy inputs) + (existing living intelligence/information)
is consumed/absorbed by-> human endeavour
and is transformed to-> higher order complexity

I don't think we have any choice about this equation, but we do have a choice about what sort of higher-order complexity we build with the energy we absorb.

I suggest that (in the modern world), we are absorbing vast amounts of raw material and intelligence and converting it to higher orders of complexity, especially in the emergence of cities and corporations.

A quick example: Imagining the forests felled and rivers dammed in order to generate enough energy surplus so that a tiny handful of people can build a stock exchange and survive off of speculation in third order abstractions of money. This is an example of high complexity, and it does support a few people very well. But the underlying complexity of the stock market has very little relevance to the rest of the people on the planet, or indeed any of the entities forming the planet's living surface. While this rarified elite tribe of market speculators declare that they have created a great little apotropaic strategy, the rest of us can see the total irrelevance and wastefulness of their energy investments.

We could reasonably guess that money speculation is actually teaching us very little about how to increase our survival potential as organic entities enmeshed in an organic environment. If we're going to fell forests and dam rivers, we ought to do it in the name of all living systems.

It seems reasonable to me that we all have the right and obligation to explain our actions in terms of the apotropaic values involved. To support increasingly intelligent investigations, we might extend our cultural practice to incorporate review by a jury of peers who can judge these leadership propositions and place them as appropriately as possible within the context of the day.

¹ Dimitrov, Vlad. Leadership and Change: A Complexity Perspective
(<http://www.zulenet.com/VladimirDimitrov/pages/Leadership-and-Change.html>)