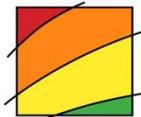


**Evil vs. Good**  
**Illustrated by unlikely similarities between Adolph Hitler and**  
**Nelson Mandela**

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The young man stood watching the mass of workers wind their way up the stone stairway from the canal to the road. There were thousands. Angry men, desperate men, some armed, waving red banners and flags, chanting loudly as they surged forward. It was a well-organized and coordinated mass movement. Earlier the organizers had harangued them shouting, pleading, whipping them up into a crescendo. The young man in the black shabby overcoat and black greasy derby watched them intently as they moved upwards and past him. Police stood by uneasily, clutching their weapons.

It was cold.

The young man's thin coat was turned up, his face unshaven. Long and unkempt hair curled over his collar, and was plastered down one side of his forehead. His eyes were alive, wide, staring intently at them. As one of his friends said, he looked "an apparition such as rarely occurs among Christians"<sup>i</sup>

He stood there for maybe two hours, his ever present hunger temporarily forgotten as he watched this human dragon wind past. In his memoir he would later write "*In oppressed anxiety, I finally left the place and sauntered homeward*". Once home, a hostel for unemployed and homeless men, he engaged in feverish study, trying to understand what political leaders of successful mass movements did, reflecting on their psychology, their political techniques and results, what worked and what did not.

There, this penniless, unemployed, uneducated, but avid young man, (who did not finish school) scarcely twenty three, formulated a conceptual abstract model of how he would structure his as yet unborn political party. His simple but profound plan consisted of three points: the need for and power of a mass movement, the importance and art of propaganda, and terrifying in its brutal simplicity, that physical and spiritual terror would achieve his aims with mathematical certainty. This was the most precise analysis of Nazi tactics ever written and these three guiding points would never be changed. That young man was Adolph Hitler. At the age of twenty three he had no party, no power and no prospects.

Around the world, another young man, about the same age, stood with a friend under a shelter as the rain bucketed down. They could see the train moving slowly into the station, its black and chrome snout gleaming in the rain, snorting noisily as it edged alongside the platform, where the throngs of excited and anxious people waited to make the journey towards Johannesburg, the City of Gold. The young man was apprehensive, his heart heavy but excitement was pulsing below the surface. He was running away from an arranged marriage. Not only was he turning his back on his royal obligations, the leadership of his tribe and a secure future.

He had thought deep and hard about taking this step, but intuitively he knew what he was doing was right, he knew there was a bigger purpose ahead. But at the same time he also knew that the way he was doing it was wrong: he was acting clandestinely, betraying the people who had supported, loved and cared for him. But he had to do it – he would make

amends later. He felt a calling in him, a purpose that was bigger than his predestined future.

When this young man was a youngster the Chief of his people, his guardian, had let him sit with the elders and their visitors who often came from afar, a very unusual occurrence. Maybe his guardian sensed this serious youngster was different. He had listened avidly to stories from near and far and had realised that a new, other world existed beyond what his people knew.

It was during this time that he started learning about the history of the Bantu-speaking people, and an abiding interest in African History was ignited. Krune Mqhayi's speech about different nations, likening them to the Milky Way, made him understand that Africans of all tribes had to be connected, and that they could stand their ground against the white man.

His academic prowess, which he would later put down to dogged hard work and determination, saw him focused on getting a degree, not an easy matter in those days of growing oppression. It was while at university, under the arbitrary rule of a white colonial administrator that he sensed the strength of moral issues and began standing up to unjust systems, initially the colonial administrators at the university who had absolute authority over his future.

It was soon after arriving in the City of Gold that this young man discarded his previously held beliefs and made a decision to fight for freedom: *"the freedom not to be obstructed in a lawful life...it was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when discovered as a young man that freedom had already been taken away from me, that I began to hunger for it"*.

Freedom was initially centered on "I", the freedom to be oneself, stay out at night, read what one chooses, go where one desires. But he realised then that it was not only about him, it was about everyone who looked like him. This young man would soon become one of a small group of lawyers serving the needs of millions of oppressed people and would lead a political party on a journey towards the emancipation of the human spirit.

It was this fight for freedom that transformed *"a frightened young man into a bold one, drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal and turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home."*

Two world leaders diametrically opposed in outcomes; one would be hailed as liberator and a custodian of human values, the other denounced as a dictator who wrought the greatest human misery and destruction ever experienced. One believed in all humanity being equal, the other in the racial purity of one group and the extermination or slavery of other groups.

One mourned by the world on his passing, loved and respected. The other dying by suicide, alone and bunkered down. Despised and detested. But both created legacies and

provided value frameworks for shaping global values and behaviours. Both lifted humanity to a higher level of awareness and a new understanding of what constituted Right and Wrong. Both leaders emerged during times of crises: Germany in post-World War I turmoil and South Africa sliding under the control of what would emerge as Apartheid.

Despite all the difference, a key similarity was that both Adolph Hitler and Nelson Mandela were on the same cognitive growth curve. Human capability (or potential), based on Elliott Jaques'<sup>ii</sup> model of mental processing, has been a field of extensive research<sup>iii</sup>. Capability is linked to our individual ability to handle ambiguity and uncertainty, and the way we process information and make sense of the world within which we live. Our capability changes at different and predictable rates with maturity. It is not determined by education, skills or personality. Nor does race, gender or cultural diversity seem to influence this human trait. As our cognitive ability changes with maturity (and it changes in predictable jumps) so our mental processing ability increases.

In the world of work, this change in cognitive processing power is translated into a need to handle greater “work” complexity. We actively start to search out bigger work challenges. For example, some people may be happy with a certain type of work challenge for most of their lives, but in their forties experience a need for a new work challenge. It may be to supervise, organise and generally take on more responsibility – in other words a different level of work complexity. This emergence of capability takes place along a series of curves, referred to as Growth Curves or Modes. These growth curves have a strong similarity to the Gompertz equations, the rate at which Nature germinates seedlings.

Some of the modes are flatter than others, meaning people will spend more time satisfied by the challenges of one's work. High potential individuals are on the steeper modes and thus require bigger challenges for finding actualization. In the example of the forty something, their mode (or particular growth curve) has transitioned from the cognitive ability to deal with one type of work complexity to another, for example from an ability to enjoy work that is defined by tangible and practical outcomes to a new work level that involves using experience and resources to organise others to achieve defined outcomes.

But Jaques' model of cognitive capability is just as valid without reference to the world of work. Many people do not work in western work systems, but human capability continues to unfold, regardless of work context. Consider people who have no knowledge of work – Mandela's success as a leader was a function of his emergent cognitive capability as was Hitler's – Hitler never formally worked. Consider an illiterate 56-year-old painter's assistant who was underutilised by three work levels. He used his capability to bring health care and education to his impoverished village by enlisting the support of the United Nations and the church. Another case involved criminal activity in the mining industry. Four employees with identified potential turned down accelerated development, even though they were working two full levels below their capability. Their refusal to participate in the program was initially puzzling, but three years later, when their sophisticated racket was discovered, it made perfect sense.

Research into this understanding of capability has shown that people on Mode V and above are high potential individuals who represent the first of the growth curves to reach a capability equivalent to an executive level of work complexity. Mode V people are often seen as exciting, different, Mode VI are seen as disturbing and challenging to peers, while Mode VII, which may be 0,5% of a population, see themselves as different and this difference is salient to them *and others*.

Both Nelson Mandela and Adolph Hitler were highly unusual individuals in that they could process significant uncertainty and ambiguity to develop views on intangible, complex issues and create the relationships and frameworks within which they could shape and deliver outcomes, even in the face of the unknowable. They could also execute on their vision. Other great leaders, who have created legacies, shaped our history and thinking may also have been individuals on similar Modes. Through a Jaquesian capability analysis and its understanding we can form a view about an individual's mode and predict possible outcomes, it does not tell us if a person with such capability will use that power for good or evil.

Both Mandela and Hitler were driven by visions that made them into icons and symbols, one inspiring dread and one inspiring love, one calling forth darkness, the other light. Now more than half a century after his death the name of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party still are an example to avoid repeating again at all costs.

On 5 December 2013 Nelson Mandela died. Like Ghandi's memory, we might expect that in fifty years' time his legacy of tolerance, love and forgiveness will still shine on as an example.

Now consider this... it would appear that times of real hardship produce leaders, people of their time who emerge, equipped with the cognitive capacity to provide pathways forward. As a species we are living in the middle of a societal revolution, whose size and complexity dwarfs any other time in our history. We face the real possibility of extinction or collapse as we are now a plague covering the globe with a ferocious appetite to consume. We are a species of consumers.

Some feel our leaders are not dealing with the complexity of the matters facing us. Some feel we are still searching for relatively simple answers that are not too unpalatable. Some feel the whole level of the debate needs to be escalated and the real tough issues of managing multiple capitals (social, economic, physical, human and environmental) need to be faced head on. Our society has created a situation which now can only be solved at a much higher level than we are achieving at present.

The bottom line is that we need leadership at a level we are not getting now. Current world leaders cannot do it: the complexity is beyond them and we appear committed to a course of action that will see us cutting down the last tree, despite all the progress claimed.

We can of course, simply wait until the next exceptional human being arrives, another Mode IX, X or XI, to navigate us out of a shattered landscape. The problem with that approach is that we might well once again hear the sound of jackboots, albeit green ones.

Truly high capability as history has shown us need not be benign.

Or are there enough of us at all levels of developed and developing societies, equipped with new tools to act at the community, national and global level to bring about the changes our leaders seem incapable of implementing? This is the first time in human history that there is a critical mass of educated people across all Growth Modes who are capable of acting, who are connected and who might and can sway people and influence events, empowering one another in the process.

Thank you Nelson Mandela for creating a foundation that we must all be accountable for building upon. Time will tell how well we do this and time is a commodity that is very short at the moment.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Konrad Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p 68.

<sup>ii</sup> Elliott Jaques first introduced his ideas in the 1940's and 50's Glacier Project in the United Kingdom, while a consultant for the Tavistock Institute. Jaques's models have been used for fifty plus years, extensively, in diverse organisational and business settings and across different cultures. It is also difficult to understand (Solaas, 2003) as there are a number of theories that he developed over time. His models of work complexity and human capability have been used in Australia and South Africa for more than forty three years.

<sup>iii</sup> Craddock, K. (2002). Requisite Leadership Theory: An Annotated Research Bibliography on Elliott Jaques, Including: Requisite Organisation – The Glacier Project – Stratified Systems Theory – Levels of Mental Complexity – Complexity of Information Processing – The Quality of Labor – The Mid Life Crisis – and Psychoanalysis. (covering 1942 – 2002). Columbia University. Retrieved 25/02/04 from <http://www.canadiancentre.com>