Hi Class,

Your homework assignment for this week is to observe range. Roger first defined the concept of range as something other than a home for buffalo. For our purposes, range is described in a story about how Roger asked someone the following question. Why do you come to work? And what does that make possible? And what does that make possible? You won't have to go very far with this line of questioning to run into the self proving, self evident reason that we wouldn't ask ourselves this question daily. The self-evident question is why are you annoying me? The self-evident answer is survival, but only metaphorically, not literally. Hitting range is when you are no longer answering the questions 'and what does that make possible' by imagining the possibilities, but by contracting, moving laterally, or shutting down. And baloney if you think this can't happen to you.

Your homework assignment is to sense when someone else (or you) is hitting range.

Keep in mind that if you are personally invested in a particular creative process, and someone else has hit range, you might have some motivation to persuade or 'manipulate' the other person into seeing it your way. And you're in luck, too. That process sometimes gets called strong leadership. Nice. Isn't this a great class?

Roger wants us to consider leadership as a creative process. That sounds like fun. Eric asked about how we could see leadership as a creative process at the same time as deconstructing problems. Roger naturally asks, what's a problem? He explained that if a system functions in such a way as to create a phenomenon called a problem, we add a coping mechanism to solve the problem which soon requires another coping mechanism. And so on.

Birds in Beijing

At one point the authorities in Beijing believed that a certain sickness was being carried by birds. So, they decided to kill all the birds. Since birds eat insects, getting rid of birds meant you have too many insects. The insects defoliated all the trees. The solving of one problem caused the need for a coping mechanism, which caused another problem. Hey, didn't someone see this coming? How could you make such a colossal mistake? Sadly, this would be funny if it weren't for the fact that it is going on right now.

So, lets move on to the simple question of what does it mean if 'that's just human nature'? Turns out that's not a simple question and we have almost as many interpretations for it as we have people in the class. You might see human nature as a way to predict, as an expectation of a reaction, or as the essence of a person. Maybe you see it as a way to handwave a particular set of circumstances, as an unexamined self evident starting point, or you may see it as part of a social contract about good or evil. If human nature is good your social contract would be quite different than if human nature is evil. So what is the final definition of the context for human nature?

Maybe you'll get a hint if you watch the video....

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc

RSA Animate - Drive - The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

The youtube movie is something everyone wants their boss to watch, and maybe we can learn enough in leadership class to make that happen. In the meantime, let's consider whether we can separate change and leadership. This requires us to contemplate the condition of our current condition. Please note that our current condition is always changing, and everything is really in absolute impermanence. Change is a turtle on top of a turtle on top of a turtle and it's turtle's all the way down. Any pretense we have of permanence is contextual. The stability is about the storytelling, and we are all part storyteller. The base condition is constant change. If you want to intentionally create discontinuous change, then change the story or change the context for the story. For an organization of about 2000 people, the co-creation to a difference story takes 3-5 years. A new perception is created. Don't worry friends, if you're reading this e-mail, you have a front row seat for this transformation. So sorry that I thought I needed to leave the room to make this great announcement outside the class rather than inside.

What would keep our old story in place? Well, evidently we practice. We practice our problems. We share our stories in different ways and it becomes a fabric of our condition. That explains why Kurt thinks the education delivery of CENG hasn't changed in a billion years. We're all helping keep the perception going, Kurt. I don't think leadership is a narrative.

What is the measure of the narrative? Easy. You get 100 people together for a day to tell 'The Cal Poly Story'. Then, voila, you have the narrative as a place to start and you move on to your 'new story'. Sounds great, however you have to deal with dynamic tension which acts like a rubber band. You create a vision and everyone is excited at the time the vision is created, however the 'current reality' yells its narrative in your ear, and soon you can't remember the vision. Happens all the time.

I'm pretty sure we will have to come to class again this Friday for tips on how to turn down the volume on current reality yelling in our ear. Gosh, I'm looking forward to co-creating with you all again. Class will have Provost Koob as a visitor on November 12. Can he co-create too?

Dianne J. DeTurris, Ph.D.  
Director of Global Technical Education Initiatives