

CHARISMA, Public Speaking and Leadership

by
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Introduction

Charisma is by definition a rare personal quality that is usually attributed to political leaders who arouse fervent popular devotion and enthusiasm. However, it is not unknown in other persons, one example was the late ballet dancer, Rudolph Nureyev.

Since this trait is so rare, there is a belief in some quarters that it is something one is born with and therefore, it is not something that one can hope to acquire. This paper takes a different view and sets out the conditions that must exist so that the trait can manifest in a person.

When the trait of charisma is extant it speaks to a subset of phenomena in the person. They are:

1. personality congruency
2. personality alignment
3. unique depth, scope and grasp of knowledge
4. deep insight
5. clarity of mind and vision
6. precision and direction in the decision process
7. power in verbal articulation.

All these variables relate to the style of metamentation (a.k.a. thinking), the form and manner of his psychology, the scope command of his language. This paper proposes to address, with scientific rationale, each of these properties and to demonstrate that such qualities can be acquired.

It was at the time of WW II that the world saw the emergence of a set of war leaders who were unique and charismatic leaders of their people:

1. Adolph Hitler*
2. Winston S. Churchill^α

* Adolph Hitler was once a corporal and failed painter. He was to find his forte in politics. When he rose to speak in the rostrum of the Nuremberg stadium, he held the entire mass of people in the thrall of his charisma.

3. Franklin D. Roosevelt^ϕ
4. Charles de Gaulle^ψ

To begin with, none of these men were known to be charismatic. Hitler was once a down and painter. Churchill, whilst of British aristocratic lineage was a very poor student at school and was once a struggling war correspondent. Roosevelt, whilst from a rich family had to politic his way to the top of the Democratic Party totem pole. de Gaulle was once a lieutenant in the French army.

Then, these men rose to the moment of their destiny when they nations were in perceived or actual peril. They then unfolded in their incredible ways to lead their countries. Their respective nations followed them. However, for Germany it was to end in defeat, infamy and disaster. For the others, it was to end in victory, glory and history.

Recently, President George W. Bush described himself as a war president. It is, however, clear that he, at this moment anyway^ξ, he does not have the stamp in his persona of the subset of these phenomena to any degree of note.

Charisma is also about a person who emanates exquisite personal charm and power. By his wish and will he can be utterly compelling and irresistible. His kindness can be overwhelming and his dark side can be utterly devastating.

1. Personality congruency:

Personal congruency concerns the perfect balance of a person's symmetry. It is therefore about the physicality of his being. The two halves of his body are in equal balance. This can only happen when the motor tone of each half of the body is distributed equally across the same muscle groups. Normally this is not the case and as a result there is an asymmetry in the form of the body of a non-charismatic person. Thus, one eye is narrower than the other, the angle of the lips on one side is pulled up, one shoulder is lower than the other, one foot is in front of the other and one set of hands is on one hip and the other is in the pocket.

This asymmetry can be seen and sensed; and it speaks to a dehiscence of the persona of the individual. Such a person can be aware of his incongruence because he will admit that he is torn; and he will feel the "tear" across his midline especially in his torso. Verbally he will confirm, "I cannot decide because on one hand I can see the argument for X. But on the other hand, I feel the strength of going with Y." This incongruency is a metaphor for paralysis.

As a personality pattern, when it is mild, people may say of such a person as one who is of an "iffy" type, implying that he is indecisive. When it is worse, the person will be said to be "flaky." When it is severe, people will say that he is "way off" or he is "split." When it is extreme, the two

^ϕ Franklin D. Roosevelt was the leader of a nation that held a significant number who were against any involvement in Europe. In uniquely powerful he shepherded his people to take their place in the world stage and to victory in WWII.

^ψ Charles de Gaulle of these four was the late developer. The power of his charisma unfolded at the time of the Algerian war. It was in such a crisis for the French nation they turned to him to save them. And he did so.

^ξ at this moment anyway, George W. Bush clearly has certain flaws in his grasp of the English language. Thus, does not seem realize that there is no such word as "misundersetimate."

parts can reveal themselves as two discreet different personalities. They manifest sequentially. This is the minimum of multiple personalities – two.

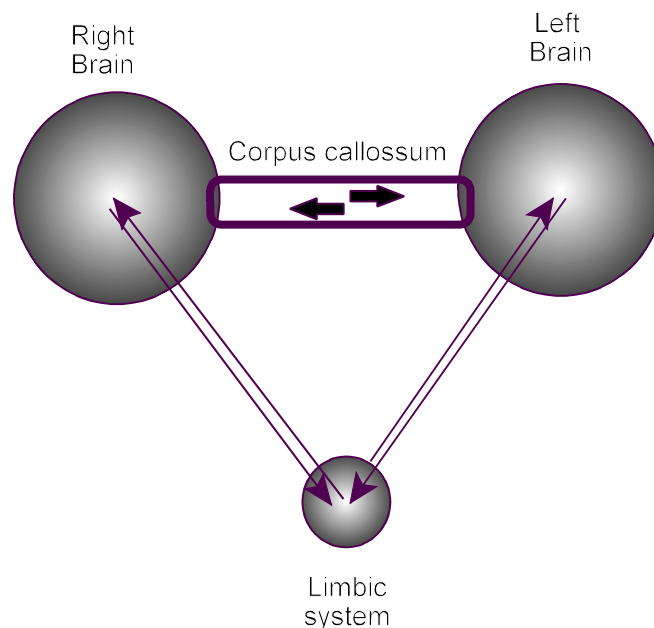
2. **Personality alignment:**

Personality alignment is about the directionality in thinking, feeling and spirits. In charisma, they are all in the same direction and they are of equivalent quanta.

However, the directionality of these elements in most people is usually conflicting. Thus, a person may conclude in his mind that he ought to do X, but his emotions roil with concern about what other people may think if he did do so; or an individual wants to do something but his thoughts and mind are worried about the unknowns and possible downsides relating to intended project. Such a person is conflicted and is unable to act and can become literally paralyzed. Then there are times when both mind and feelings agree but the spirit is not there for the job. Such a person is spoken of as being weak.

Personality alignment is about the cohesive operations of the Left Brain, Right Brain and the Limbic system^γ with respect to a domain of consideration.

The diagram below schematically represents the three major functional components of the human brain and their interconnections:



When all above components are in concurrence, the person will be aligned. A person who is congruent and aligned is one who will come across with strength and power. If he is a person with

^γ Limbic system is the remaining oldest lump of gray matter of the brain from which evolved the neopallium of the cerebral cortex. In it are the encodings for the behaviours of aggression, flight, hunger and sex. These are the minimal behaviours for ensuring the survival of any creature.

culture and civilization, he will come across in a most admirable and elegant manner. People can sense these attributes in such a person. When a person is incongruent and is poorly aligned the deficits as indexed above will also be sensed.

3. Unique depth, scope and grasp of knowledge:

The charismatic individual possesses a unique depth, scope and grasp of knowledge base of his domain of interest and concern. It is the only in this way that he is sure about what he knows and what he believes.

It is also in this way that he has command over his domain of knowledge. It is in this way that he inevitably enjoys an undoubted form of surety and comfort level over his knowledge base. From it he derives utter confidence in what he knows. He has no uncertainty or concern about defending his position against all the slings and arrows that may come his way. Few people in life have such an advantage.

Most people really do not have a complete command over their knowledge base. In fact, it is probable that their knowledge base is inadequate. As a result at some intuitive and instinctive level people realize their deficiencies and insufficiencies.. Therefore there is an instinctive knowing that they are not really able to defend their intellectual positions. They just do not have command over their field of knowledge. It is out of this that they will inevitably carry a degree of worry, anxiety and uncertainty. They will not have the confidence even to try to huff and bluff their way through.

We now would like to share a concern about chairpersons and speakers. It is usually a given that a speaker must be good. This creates an unfortunate bias by the chairpersons for the speaker. Now, if the speaker is now subjected to the onslaught of high precision critique, the chairperson may do everything to save the speaker for fear that he might be reduced to feeling small and be offended. When this happens, the speaker can get away with things that he says that may either be inaccurate or nonsensical or are very close to being both.

4. Clarity of mind:

The charismatic mind is a clear mind. It is not cluttered with conflicting imagery, ideas and thoughts. It enjoys a vision across the entire span and depth of what the charismatic person is talking about. Clearly there are very few people who are so gifted.

People more times than not delude themselves that what they know is sufficient. Some even have grandiose that they know it all. People's grasp of any domain of knowledge is usually insufficient and defective. At an unconscious level, they know this. In a test by a serious debate or critical enquiry from the floor, they will be found wanting. Under such duress they are may collapse. Therefore, to save face, such eventualities, the chair will manouvre to usually obviate such a contingency. This ill serves all parties since truth is now sacrificed. Once, at the AGM of a club that I belong to, the unfortunate membership secretary was subjected to a series of withering questions about the discharge of his office. He was certainly not so charismatic that even the chair could not save him.

5. Deep insight:

This is a very unusual faculty. With it the charismatic person can:

- a. can see deeply into in a matter of consideration that others cannot
- b. generate a set of distinctions that escapes the wit of others.

It is in this way that he has a powerful edge over others. In his course, he can range over domains that others can only but feel wonder and amazement at the scope of his thinking.

Thus, it was once my privilege to attend a discourse given by Lee Kuan Yew. He is the founding father of the city-state of Singapore. As he ranged over the matters of a future independent Singapore I was left breathless by his grasp of the subject. Today, the city-state of Singapore has a population of some 4 millions with no external debt and foreign reserves of close to US\$100 billion.

When J. Nehru was prime minister of India, his foreign minister was one Krishna Menon. A very well known correspondent seconded to the UN could never be in the building when Menon came in because he would break out into huge hives. Now that is quite something for one human being to have such a consequence on another. I attended a meeting in London in which this same Mr. Menon was a speaker. Now, there was a charismatic speaker. Whilst he spoke, he could hear a pin drop in the room.

The late ballet dancer, Rudolph Nureyev was not only an incredible dancer, but he had a charismatic personality. Even if he was not introduced in a room, he only needed to enter it and everyone instantly knew that they were in the presence of a very power personality. In the field of ballet he had no rival.

2. Power in verbal articulation:

It is with a solid knowledge base and complete command over it that the charismatic speaker emerges. He is able to hold forth with power in his articulation. He knows he is invincible and invulnerable. Those that listen know it.

Questions will usually be well thought out and respectfully offered. It is rare that a person would be stupid to take on a charismatic speaker.

Without such a solid foundation of knowledge and the command over it, a person must by definition suffer varying degrees of deficiencies and flaws that will act as drags in how he is going to speak. If this is so, he will fail to reach the bar of Charisma speaker let alone a good speaker or even an excellent.

In conferences, there is invariably a requirement of registrants to evaluate the speakers that they have attended. On a scale from 0 to 10, there will extremely few who will ever score 10. However, when you find evaluations of those who get 8 – 9, one would then wonder if such presenters are not close to being charismatic.

The problem for persons who do not have charisma but poise as platform presenters is that they are in danger of falling into the category of being relatively witless. They will be described as lacking in smarts or brains. They can even be thought of as being slow. Their metamentation will lack the critical mercurial facility of the charismatic mind. In life, at this level consideration, it is clear to excel that one has to have this mercurial facility.

3. Precision in the decision process.

Across the track of the delivery of any presentation by a charismatic speaker, he is involved in many decisions as to how his utterances are to evolve. And this is taking place in the context in which a charismatic speaker never read off notes or typescripts. He will do so easily, smoothly and seamlessly. He will never loose his track.

Before his fall from grace, there was one Rev. Jim Bakker of Charlotte, North Carolina. His place of worship was known as Heritage USA. When it was time for him to preach, he was utterly commanding. He had an equal in another reverend of the cloth who was also to fall from grace. His name was Jimmy Swaggart. Jimmy has recovered his position in the preaching field. However, he his luster as a charismatic speaker compared to how he was is now dimmed.

Centered and Balanced

Charisma, from what we have tried to demonstrate in this paper, it is something that can be acquired. It can be done if the person who wants it sets out to satisfy the conditions that are cited here.

We are also quite sure that it is something that can be honed under the direction of professionals who help people to become good speakers. Pre-eminent in this domain is a friend of ours. In his career, he was once the artistic director of various theatres in Canada in which he played a powerful role in helping aspiring actors to perform on the stage. In therapy such work is known as analogue molding.