

Chapter 2: Leadership, Personality, and Charisma: How to Generate Leadership Strength Through Confidence and Trust

Overview

In the [previous chapter](#), we explained that leadership is a universal phenomenon that occurs wherever strengths need to be pooled in order to achieve goals that are beyond the reach of individuals. The phenomenon of leadership can be observed among humans and animals alike, in every culture and throughout history. The history of humankind is related first and foremost on the basis of great leaders. The success of our own lives is highly dependent on both successful self-leadership and the question of whether we are led by able and successful leaders.

The history of humankind is related on the basis of great leaders.

People have long given thought to why certain people become successful leadership personalities while others fail, and why some succeed in actually assuming leadership while others just don't manage to pool strengths usefully. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists have dealt with the phenomenon of leadership from a historical, cultural, sociological, or psychological perspective. In the first chapter we showed why leadership even exists. In this second chapter we will deal primarily with the question of how the ability to lead develops in certain people and how certain people manage significantly better than others to get people to follow them. In this chapter we will look particularly closely at the personality-oriented perspective.

Which characteristics turn people into leaders?

We will therefore ask which characteristics turn people into leaders. At first glance we appear to be bound by the Great Man theory, an early psychological theory explaining leadership, which mostly draws on leaders' personality traits to justify their leadership performance. This Great Man theory has been heavily criticized during the course of psychological history. Many other explanatory models have been developed that endeavored to explain the topic of leadership as a product of situation, of given conditions, historical constraints, or peculiarities of the people being led, etc. We by no means deny that these other aspects are influencing factors—all different standpoints on leadership have their own specific explanatory merit, which we will look at in greater detail during the course of the book. But to claim that personality is ultimately not an important determinant in forming leadership strength is basically throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Leadership success is not to be understood as independent from the leader's personality.

Not just anyone could have become Jesus, Buddha, Fidel Castro, or John F. Kennedy. This by no means refutes the fact that these people acted within a very special historical frame of reference that left room for a very particular type of leadership. But it is also true that this space could not have been filled by just anybody.

In this book, we begin with the personality-oriented side of leadership because understanding leadership competence as a personality trait is, in practice, intuitively the most dominant element of explanation. Despite all the criticism of the Great Man theory, there are certain people we see in day-to-day life and in the working environment who we consider capable of much greater leadership performance than others. When we analyze leadership in action, we cannot disassociate this action from the leadership personality we are observing. That's why we want to turn our attention first of all to the question of which personal preconditions allow people to become leadership personalities.

Personality is intuitively the most dominant element of explanation for successful leadership.

2.1 The Leadership Attribute of Charisma

The term *charisma* can be a difficult one to tackle. In thinking about charisma, we discover the following ambivalence: Many leaders would like to be charismatic and, for practical reasons alone, are interested in improving their charisma. On the other hand, many people consider charisma to be somehow mystical, making it irrational, or perhaps even unethical, as charisma seems to be associated with the art of seduction and delusion. That being said, virtually no one will deny that at the point when leaders become heroes by virtue of the greatness of their tasks, most of them can be described as charismatic.

For many people, charisma is somehow mystical and irrational.

The German writer Werner Fletcher penned the following reaction to charisma: Charisma is a dazzling bouquet of mendacity, illusions, and delusions, the flowers of which exude synthetic excesses intended to fog the senses so as to cover the sweaty stench of primitive animal bestiality. (Fletcher, 2005)^[1] (Supplied by the translator.)

This statement is likely best understood in the knowledge that the Germany of last century had unquestionably had catastrophic experiences of charismatic leadership. With this in mind, we would like to preface our discussion of charisma as follows: Charisma in itself is neither good nor bad. It is pretty much beyond dispute that the phenomenon exists of great leaders who are responsible for significant acts (be they catastrophes or advancements for mankind). So there is no sense in criticizing the mechanism of charisma itself. We will examine and discuss the conditions under which charismatic leadership can do something positive for the world in greater detail in [Chap. 11](#) on the topic of leadership ethics.

Bad experiences with charismatic leadership.

So far we've talked about charisma without more accurately defining the term itself. The following definition probably most closely approximates the everyday understanding of charisma: charisma describes the aura and experience of great leadership personalities or the exceptional experience of leadership.

Charisma describes the exceptional experience of leadership.

Charismatic leaders seem to possess a very particular power that enables them to make other people feel they are part of a special and great act of leadership or an

important movement. Many leaders appear charismatic, particularly from a historical perspective. If we look at the attributes ascribed to historical leaders who are said to be charismatic, we often notice the following points: mercy, belief, wisdom, speaking in tongues, healing, fulfillment, meaning, vision, and prophecy. It is likely that these terms will put you in mind of great founders of religion, and maybe wise kings. Historically, charisma puts us in mind of founders of religion, wise kings, or heroes.

Perhaps you also think of heroic rebels and revolutionaries. The mystical and inexplicable part of charisma appears particularly strong in these terms. However, it is now very important that we make a clear distinction between the following two aspects: Charisma itself describes not only cognitive experiences and effects, but also emotional ones. In this respect, the effect of charisma on followers is definitely irrational in part. Yet this does not mean that the way in which charisma actually works is irrational and eludes all attempts at explanation. How exactly charismatic leaders succeed in achieving irrational effects and how exactly the relationship structure between charismatic leaders and their followers works can most definitely be explained rationally. Charisma has irrational effects but can definitely be analyzed rationally.

- We can gain a very precise and rational picture of why certain leaders are perceived as charismatic and others are not. We can explain how charisma develops and which path charismatic leaders take in their own psychological development. We can see why some of them are successful in their endeavors while others fail.

We can demonstrate ([Sect. 2.6.2](#)) how to work on developing one's own charisma. Charisma is not God-given. Take the world of politics, for instance. Look at long-term career politicians and you'll probably see people who have become more charismatic over time, while others have ended up as quite tragic figures. So there is a way to cultivate charisma.

Charisma can grow and develop.

2.2 The Rational and Irrational Side of Leadership

In the first chapter we demonstrated that one of the basic conditions for leadership is that the leader must pursue a goal requiring exertion and the desire to overcome adversity, and requiring the leader to pool the strengths of his or her followers to attain this goal. The more successful this pooling of strengths, the more likely it is that large goals will be attained. If we look at the process of leadership from a psychological perspective, we see the following: If you start out as a leader with a very specific goal, you perceive yourself as having a rational plan. You can name a desired condition in the future that you pursue through joint efforts. Leaders perceive themselves as having a rational plan with their goals.

This certainly does not mean that the phase of setting goals by the leader needs to be a rational process. Which goals you pursue depends mostly on your own psychodynamics. The process of setting goals is always intuitive—it is not possible to determine what is to be pursued analytically. As soon as the goal is fixed, though, it has

a rational quality. Incidentally, this rational quality of goals is not decided by whether you are pursuing something good or bad—that is an ethical question. Whether you are pursuing egoistic and personal goals or goals for the common good or for other people does not make a goal any more rational or irrational. As soon as the goal has been set, the rational or functional side of leadership consists in achieving this goal. This is most likely easiest to understand when looking at large organizations. Here, the major goal of the organization (in commercial enterprises, for example, it is profit) is generally broken down into many small goals that the various managers in the company have to achieve. The question of whether it is good or bad to make profit does not need to be discussed within the system of the market economy.

Setting individual goals is always intuitive, not analytical.

Managers in a commercial enterprise now have the task of achieving their subgoals so that the overall goal can be attained. The different managers in the company therefore have a function. Their function is to pool the employees' strengths with a view to attaining the goal. This is a very rational task that can be clearly described. As a manager you can have the functional goal of reducing costs by 10 % in your area. This sub-goal may be purposeful, logical, and comprehensible in the meaning of the overall goals achieved. With this in mind, you are pursuing a rational goal. That is the functional side of leadership.

Managers in a company have a function, which helps to determine their goals.

In practice, however, the following happens: **You have the rational goal in front of you** and you also have the function of achieving this goal. **As soon as you announce this goal, however, you trigger an emotional reaction among the followers.** The moment your goal assumes a meaning for the followers, this emotional reaction is unavoidable. The emotional significance of this goal can, of course, concern the exertion and desire to overcome adversity that are perceived to be necessary. However, it can also concern the actual goal that you wish to reveal to or ask of your followers. The emotional reactions can vary greatly. Naturally there can be goals that rouse enthusiasm or euphoria as an emotional reaction. Certain goals generate joy and passion. Other goals (or the same goal with other followers) may incite fear, rage, disappointment, sadness, hatred, or despondency—just look at people's different reactions to the goals that politicians announce in political debate. Even if you as a leader have rationalized the goal to yourself, you cannot avoid receiving an emotional reaction to it from others.

Rational goals lead to emotional reactions.

Visualize this mechanism in your mind's eye and it immediately becomes clear what the critical leadership challenge is from a personality perspective.

- As a leader, you will be able to achieve the maximum pooling of strengths to reach your goals if you manage to channel and use the emotions these goals arouse so that they create the power to attain the goals together.

You won't succeed at this with your rational goal alone. If you only define yourself rationally, you will always come up against followers in whom you will be unable to rouse the maximum motivation. Without using and processing the emotional reactions

to a specific goal in a useful manner, there will always be unused potential, and at worst crippling objection.

Leadership success originates from the successful integration of the emotional reaction.

Basic conditions for leadership success:

- In order to be successful as a leader, you first of all need a goal (we could also call it a message, an offering of meaning, a promise, a hope).
- When you confront the people you lead with this goal, you need to deal successfully with the emotions it gives rise to.

This makes it clear that there is no sense in playing off either the rational or the emotional side of leadership against the other. Leadership needs both. You need a rational element (otherwise there is no sense) and you need the ability to unite the emotional strength and the emotional reaction of your followers so that the effort required to achieve the goal can be provided successfully. We call this process charisma.

Charisma unites the emotional reactions of followers for the purpose of achieving the goal.

- First and foremost, we see charisma as the ability to convey meaningfulness in the communicated goals and to successfully bundle and use the emotional reactions.

Charisma therefore relates to emotional—or irrational—processes. If you have ever had to organize a difficult change process in an organization and deal with the many fears thrown at you, this will no doubt sound very familiar. The process of how you deal as successfully (or let's say as charismatically) as possible with these emotions is not an irrational process in itself, however. As we will see later, it can be described in very clear and precise psychological terms. With this in mind, let us provide a more accurate definition of charisma.

Dealing successfully with emotions can be described in clear psychological terms.

Leadership always has a functional and an irrational side—that much we have established. As a charismatic leader, you convey through your goals that it makes sense to follow you. This takes care of the functional side. At the same time, you generate an emotional state among your followers that makes the required exertion for achieving the goals likely. You see right away that we cannot reject charisma in this understanding. Great goals need the emotional willingness of the followers and they need leaders who succeed in productively handling the fears, objections, and disappointments along the way to achieving the goal. Those who don't want there to be leaders who are in a position to do this reject the phenomenon of leadership as a whole (which, because of the interconnection between leadership and culture described in the first chapter, is not possible if we want humanity to dedicate itself to great goals). Or in other words:

Great goals need charisma because they cause intense emotions.

- We cannot reject charisma if we want great leadership to take place. We can only support or reject goals that are pursued by charismatic people.

2.3 Charisma and Biology

In the [previous chapter](#) we drew certain parallels between leadership in the animal kingdom and leadership as a human phenomenon. These parallels continue through the topic of charisma. Leadership needs to offer meaning and a goal, as well as a good strategy in dealing with the emotional reactions that are generated. In the animal kingdom, the functional or meaningful side of leadership is not consciously experienced. The pack leader cannot make the "sense" of its leadership clear as such or communicate its goals. In the animal kingdom, the sense of leadership is ultimately anchored in evolutionary strengths.

The meaningful side of leadership is not experienced in the animal kingdom.

The functional side is present and describable for us humans, but is not consciously perceived by the individual animal. Pooling strengths when hunting or raising young are examples of the aspects of leadership in the animal kingdom that give meaning (which most definitely have their parallels among humans). If this functional aspect in the animal kingdom cannot be consciously experienced by the leader, then only the irrational, emotional (let's say charismatic) side of leadership remains in the animal kingdom. This side of charismatic leadership in the animal kingdom is **strength**. In the animal kingdom, an animal becomes the leader through physical strength and dominance. The more strength and dominance an animal conveys, the more likely it is that the other animals will submit. The charismatic animal must surround itself with an aura of strength that, where possible, deters potential challengers right from the start. In the animal kingdom, charisma is physical strength and dominance.

The more strength a pack leader conveys, the more consistently it will be able to hold together a pack and ensure that the pack reacts in unison in dangerous situations (e.g., joint flight or fight). The functional side of leadership takes place unconsciously. In the animal kingdom there is only charisma.

2.4 Leadership and Fear: The Psychological Bases of Charisma

At first glance, *strength* certainly does seem to be connected in some way with charisma in humans too. In our species, however, it is somewhat more complex and nuanced than in the animal kingdom. If we take a look at the psychological causes of human leadership, we quickly come across a very fundamental emotion that is necessary in order to describe the act of leadership in humans. This emotion is **fear**. The dominant role that this emotion plays in the act of leadership becomes clear when we examine the following considerations: Why should people even let themselves be led in the first place? Why could people even be prepared to restrict their own freedom, relinquish autonomous decision-making capabilities, and endeavor to meet the demands of a leader? It must be of some psychological benefit to them. People only allow themselves to be led if there is a psychological benefit.

You would not reduce your own freedoms as a person without reason. You would not place your trust in, let alone submit to, leadership if there were no need to do so. You would not call for leadership unnecessarily. What lies at the root of this is fear—the fear of being unable to achieve a particular promised goal through your own efforts. It is the fear of not attaining a certain goal that people feel if they were not prepared to submit to

the leader who represents this goal. People allow themselves to be led by others who represent the hope and promise that the goal can be achieved under their leadership. Fear in this context doesn't necessarily mean an actual dread that manifests itself in palpitations and cold sweats. Fear is meant as a much more basic urge to act. Fear in this sense means the fear of not achieving goals that could be achieved, not realizing potential that could be realized, not making the most of opportunities in life that you could make the most of, not experiencing passion and joy that could be experienced. People are scared of not achieving certain promises.

As soon as a leader is able to represent that this fear can be eliminated or become irrelevant under his or her leadership, this generates the emotional readiness in others to allow themselves to be led. A person who is completely fearless in this sense would not actually be responsive to the irrational side of leadership or charisma, but could only be approached through sense and logic. Most people, however, are responsive to charisma if the charismatic leader embodies a successful defense against fear. Fear generates the emotional readiness to allow oneself to be led.

Fear as a Trigger for Leadership in Humans

Let's break down our argumentation into a few day-to-day experiences, otherwise the word fear can seem too dramatic for the context of leadership:

- Instead of fear we could say the following in day-to-day language: If the leader does not solve problems and does not bring about any benefits for the followers (benefits can only be brought about if there is a lack of something, and this lack is described as fear in our description), there is little sense in following the leader.
- When you see a manager at work in an organization, you are not necessarily seeing charismatic human leadership that is based on removing fears. Think back to our starting discussion in the first chapter: We argued that it is sometimes the structure that leads. When structures are strong, less charisma is required to lead.

The successful mechanism of defending against fear is called trust. People follow leaders who they trust will be able, through their leadership, to render a certain fear insignificant, such as the fear of not reaching a goal or not being able to correct a deficit (see also Excursus "Fear as a Trigger for Leadership in Humans"). People follow leaders who they trust.

There are two essential aspects of trust:

- **Integrity.** When people trust someone, the first influencing factor is the question of that person's integrity, that is to say honesty, humanism, and adherence to principles. They trust leaders who give the impression that they are not pursuing goals that are detrimental to the followers, and who announce their goals honestly. People allow these leaders to pursue their own parallel goals. However, these goals must not contradict the communicated goals if the leader wants to give the impression of integrity. If you are a sales manager trying hard to get

your team to use the last of its reserves for a final successful push at the end of the year, the reasons you state will be in the interests of the company. Your employees will allow you this, even though you are also pursuing your own goal of optimizing your personal bonus at the same time. The goals are not contradictory, which means that they retain their integrity. The first dimension of trust is therefore integrity.

Integrity leads to trust.

- **Confidence.** The second dimension of trust is confidence (this dimension most closely corresponds to the strength we described as the charisma factor in the animal kingdom). People are prepared to follow leaders under whose leadership they are confident that the promised goal can be attained. If the leader does not seem competent or fit enough to provide leadership that will lead to the goal, then confidence and therefore trust are missing (Fig. 2.1).

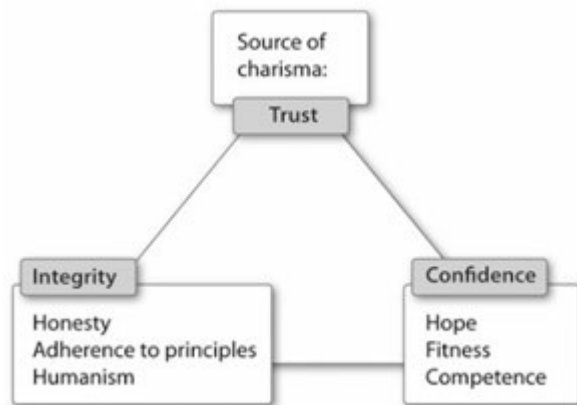


Figure 2.1: Trust as a source of charisma
Confidence leads to trust.

Charismatic leaders succeed in instilling the trust (and thus the confidence and perception of integrity) in their followers to follow their leadership.

- Charisma is the ability to inspire trust through suggestive power.

When faced with the question of whether you want to follow a particular leader, you intuitively ask yourself whether you trust the person, whether you are confident in their ability to attain the promised goals, and whether you consider them trustworthy and to have integrity!

Charisma is the generation of trust.

Examples of Trust as a Condition for the Willingness to Be Led

Let's look at some different situations in which you have the choice of which leader you want to follow and whether you want to follow. Our first subject is political election decisions. The more an election decision is a race between individual candidates rather than parties, the more thought you will give to the following two questions in considering who you want to vote for: Can I trust this politician? Is he or she being honest? Does he or she have the competence and strength to deliver his or her promise? In the end you

will probably go for the politician who provided you with what you perceive to be the positive answer to these questions.
You elect politicians you trust.

Another example would be a difficult operation that you have to undergo. After consulting various doctors, here too you would perhaps obtain references or familiarize yourself with the operation methods. You would ask yourself the following questions: What experience does the surgeon have? What is his or her reputation? How successful has this type of operation been in the past? Ultimately you would choose the surgeon whom you most expect to perform the operation successfully and whom you consider to be honest and trustworthy.
You choose doctors who you are confident will provide successful treatment.

When it comes down to it, both cases concern reducing fear: In the first example this is fear of the future, which can be lessened by trusting a politician who gives you the most hope for the future and seems to have the best ability to solve problems. The second example concerns fear of the difficult operation failing and of possible complications if it is performed badly. In such situations we see the charismatic mechanism at work. Ultimately, the mechanism that allows you to let yourself be led is the reduction of fear.

You only surrender your own freedoms and trust certain decisions and procedures to other people if you gain a psychological or emotional benefit from doing so. You would not willingly reduce your own freedom to make decisions for a leader under whose leadership you felt things would be worse than they are now. In this case, you would only submit under force, but would never voluntarily contribute to the purpose offered by this leader (see also Excursus "Integrity or Confidence: What Takes Priority in Case of Doubt?").

Leadership must provide an emotional benefit.

Fear is the key mechanism for charisma.

Integrity or Confidence: What Takes Priority in Case of Doubt?

We have already said that trust works along two poles: integrity and confidence. Now we can ask ourselves which of these two mechanisms is ultimately more important. If the leaders available do not cover both poles sufficiently, causing people to decide between them, who do people follow? Do they follow the honest, humanistic leader with integrity who just doesn't convey the fitness a captain needs to take to the helm and weather the rough storms expected ahead? Or do people follow the strong leader, even if they doubt the purity of this leader's motives?

Do people tend to follow strong leaders or ones with integrity?

Even if the answer may not seem particularly pleasing, people will usually follow the second option in case of doubt. The greater the crisis is out of which a vigorous leader needs to lead the followers or the greater the fear of the followers, the stronger this mechanism is. Conveying confidence is the primary factor in successfully reducing fear. This makes it easier to explain many events in world history. In crisis situations,

inspiring confidence is more important for charisma than conveying integrity. It's precisely this mechanism that has helped many unethical leaders into positions of responsibility.

In crisis situations in particular, strength is more important than integrity.

If we take a closer look at this key psychological mechanism of leadership, the Great Man theory mentioned at the beginning of this chapter can now be reconciled with situational approaches to leadership. Charismatic leaders both past and present possess the same ability to act as a projection surface for fears. All charismatic leaders have successfully conveyed that under their leadership, followers can have the confidence to achieve things that help to overcome or render irrelevant their own angsts. But these fears have differed widely throughout world history. Two thousand years ago, Judaism was characterized by an apocalyptic atmosphere and suppression. At that time, the message of Jesus, with its promise of salvation in the afterlife and brotherly love as the principle of coexistence, had the ability to remove fear on an immense scale. This great charismatic ability was the basis on which the Catholic Church—one of the most resilient organizations in world history—was built. Personality approaches and situational leadership models are not contradictory.

In an atmosphere brimming with nationalism and anti-Semitism and dominated by broken delusions of grandeur, the seemingly unfair Treaty of Versailles, and terrible fears for the future resulting from the economic crisis, even a man such as Adolf Hitler, who, with hindsight, cut quite a strange figure in terms of personality, was able to unfold charismatic power. He was able to successfully pool the fears he came across for his own goals. Looking at this extreme comparison, it becomes clear how culturally dependent and time-dependent the topic of charisma is. Leaders who seem charismatic due to the fears they have removed today may no longer seem so tomorrow. When it comes to charismatic leaders of the past, we are only able to grasp how these people so successfully managed to remove fears from a historical perspective, as it is barely possible to do so from our own experience. Charisma is not a personality trait in and of itself, but is rather a relationship phenomenon.

Charisma is only to be understood as a relationship phenomenon.

- Charisma is relative. It always develops relative to the time, culture, history, and collective psyche of the followers. Charismatic leaders are able, using something akin to the lock-and-key principle in biology, to sell themselves as saviors from precisely the fears that plague their followers at the given time and in the given situation.

It is understandable, then, why the search for the personality traits that characterize successful leaders (or successful charismatic leaders) has remained largely unsuccessful. The only thing that charismatic leaders really have in common is their ability to remove their followers' fears. Otherwise, all we need to do is to take a look at the different character profiles of the many leaders who are making changes in the world right now to see how few personality traits there are that characterize all leaders. However, the ability to generate trust through suggestive power is the same for all major

leaders. Charisma is therefore the only common attribute that unites the list of requirements for leaders. All other requirements are more context-dependent. As we have seen, even the content of charisma itself is dependent on context (e.g., dependent on the historical situation). The way in which it works, however, is not (removing fear). Of course, this argument does not mean that charisma is not dependent on the personality of a leader. Our message is that the personality traits of a leader, the personality traits of the followers, and the context must fit together in a particular way so that a charismatic leadership relationship can be created. The power to remove others' fears is the deciding personality trait for great leadership performance.

There is another term that is worth introducing to the discussion at this point. This is the concept of **authority**. People who convey the confidence that their leadership can be trusted in a particular area are often referred to as an authority. In humans then, authority is the equivalent of strength and dominance in the animal kingdom. It can be considered one of the cultural achievements of humankind that leadership has been disassociated from purely physical dominance. In order to be charismatic, it is not sufficient for us humans to simply behave dominantly. And we have to offer a purpose for which we stand. We also have to exude the authority to realize our goals. That's why humans can also accept leaders who are not dominant in the animal sense. Authority can certainly be conveyed through competence, too. Indeed, many great human cultural achievements can only be explained by the fact that there were leaders who not only showed dominance, but who were also able to convey meaningful plans for the future through their authority or suggestive power and exuded the ability to realize these plans together with their followers. Authority is not created by dominance alone, but also through competence and endowing plans with meaning.

2.5 The Psychological Bases of the Leadership Relationship

In the [previous section](#) we explained that successfully removing others' fears is the basis of charisma. We described the difference between the actual dread experienced and fear as a fundamental motivational mechanism. So far, this description is still somewhat unspecific. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction in a charismatic relationship, we need a more precise understanding of the powers that drive us psychologically and determine our lives (see also Riemann, 2009). If we want to understand the role that fear plays in our lives, we need to develop an understanding of which fundamental psychological powers determine our lives. Which psychological powers drive our lives?

- There are generally two major questions we need to find answers to in our lives:
 - What stance do we take in relation to other people and relationships? Which powers determine our social coexistence?
 - How do we find our identity over time? How do we find our identity in a changing world?

These two questions are elemental dimensions that determine our lives. We need to find a stance in our lives to take in encountering other people. We need to take a stance

on what we want our place in the world to be, and in a world that is constantly changing. It is not as though we consciously provide answers to these questions. We do not make a basic rational decision on how we stand on these two questions. It is more the case that our characters, experiences, childhood, upbringing, and probably also our genes interact in a complex way to determine our answers. We are characterized by experiences and genes.

There are two possible answers to each of these questions.

What stance do we take in relation to other people and relationships?

The first question implies that we need to take a stance in our lives on how we relate to other people and, more fundamentally, to the character of our relationships. The two possible answers to these questions are marked by two opposite poles. On one hand, the response can suggest that we seek close relationships with other people and are therefore looking for closeness and involvement in relationships. The other answer signifies the exact opposite: we may also want to distinguish ourselves from others and instead seek individuality and autonomy. We seek closeness or distinction.

As you can already see, the answer to these questions is not a decision in the narrow sense of the word, but is to be understood instead as a fundamental force, namely the force that pushes us toward other people or causes us to distance ourselves from others. Let's call the first force **relationship orientation** and the second force **autonomy orientation**. Relationship-oriented people seek closeness and security. They are team-oriented, open to others, willing to trust, and enjoy openness and being with other people. Relationship-oriented people seek closeness.

Autonomy-oriented people do not want to lose themselves in relationships with others, but seek their uniqueness in distinction. In this sense, autonomy-oriented people are more competitive than team-oriented, more individualistic than collectivistic, and strive to stand out from the crowd and attain status as being special. Nevertheless, other people play an important role for autonomy-oriented people, as it is others who serve as a constant standard of comparison that they themselves are in a position to be special. Autonomy-oriented people seek distinction.

Of course, most people have a certain measure of both these forces within them. Many people experience contexts in which they desire closeness and security, and other contexts in which they want distinction. Nevertheless, one of the two sides dominates in many people. This dominant side often comes to the fore in conflicts. If you look at the people around you, you will no doubt be able to say whether someone's internal compass in shaping relationships points to individuality, distinction, and competition, or to involvement in the community. There are also people who are characterized to the extreme by one of these two poles. They are then unable to distinguish themselves from others or incapable of forming relationships. We will look more closely at these pathological extremes in [Chap. 10](#). Our orientation comes to the fore particularly clearly in conflicts.

These two orientations can also be understood as fears. The force that pushes us in one direction can just as well be understood as a fear that causes us to flee from the other possibility. As such, relationship-oriented people are characterized by a fear of loneliness and isolation. Autonomy-oriented people are characterized by the fear of losing individuality and specialness, and of getting lost in the crowd. Sometimes you can feel the fundamental or life-determining force of this fear at work in people who invest an incredible amount of energy in being liked and accepted by others, and in feeling as though they belong to a team. Yet you can also sense the extent of this fear when you see the energy that different people put into making themselves the center of attention and underlining their own superiority at every opportunity that presents itself. When you see what an effect these behavioral tendencies have on determining lives and how strongly they dictate cooperation, partnership, upbringing, and a person's role in a community, then you can appreciate just how fundamental these two contrasting tendencies actually are.

Both orientations can also be understood as fears.

You should be able to identify a tendency within yourself: What is more important to you on principle? Close, open, trusting relationships, sharing common ground, being on an equal footing with others, a feeling of belonging, positive feedback, altruism? Or is it more important to you to set yourself apart, be different, achieve more, live more individually, and clearly distinguish yourself from people you don't consider to be on the same footing as you?

You can also identify the basic tendencies in yourself.

How do we find our identity?

The second fundamental question concerns our identity in a changing world. We can also answer this question with two antagonistic poles. The first response is to create a structure of calculability, predictability, and controllability for oneself in a changing world. This pole is called balance orientation. Balance-oriented people seek rules, regularity, predictability, and structure. The antagonistic force is stimulation orientation. We could describe the maxim of stimulation-oriented people thus: If the world is constantly changing, I want to experience this change to the full. Stimulation-oriented people seek novelty and change and are characterized by adventurousness and curiosity. Our identity in a changing world.

The forces on which these orientations are based can also be described as fear. In a sense, balance-oriented people are scared of uncertainty, vagueness, spontaneity, and therefore freedom. This fear is eliminated by creating rules, control mechanisms, and an island of predictability.

Balance orientation is fear of uncertainty.

Stimulation-oriented people on the other hand experience fear of conformity and certainty. The worst that could happen in life would be to have missed something important or great. Their fear is of being tied down, being restricted, and the impossibility of freedom and spontaneity.

Stimulation orientation is the fear of restriction.

You can find clear evidence of just how huge and life-altering these fears can be for people of this orientation in your own environment. Perhaps there are people around you who noticeably suffer when there is a lack of regularity in their lives, when sudden or surprising events require flexibility, or when things do not develop as planned. Yet perhaps there are also people around you who really suffer from having to tie themselves down, be it to a life partner, a way of living, or merely an obligation. These people suffer whenever they have the impression of having to close a door in their life that can then no longer be opened.

To demonstrate these four typical basic forces or basic forms of fear more clearly, we outline below some ideal-typical reactions to an everyday question ("How was your last vacation?"). These examples are clearly exaggerated, but they characterize well the basic angle from which people interpret the world according to their own orientation (Fig. 2.2).



Figure 2.2: Examples of the four different orientations based on a question about a person's last vacation

These four forces are probably a little clearer to you now. Table 2.1 summarizes the most important attributes of each of the four orientations.

Table 2.1: Attributes of the four orientations	
Open table as spreadsheet	
The power of relationships	
Relationship orientation (fear of loneliness and being alone)	When this orientation is very strong it pushes people to...
	... seek closeness to others
	... seek a task that enables them to do something meaningful for and support others
	... approach others with a great readiness for empathy and openness

	... attach themselves emotionally to others and be tolerant of their faults
	... tend toward approaching others in an altruistic, peaceable, and modest way
	... prefer moral and humanistic behavior
	... suffer when faced with distance and rejection
	... strive for a harmonious atmosphere in cooperation
	... be unwilling to criticize others
Autonomy orientation (fear of a lack of individuality and meaning)	When this orientation is very strong it pushes people to...
	... seek admiration and recognition
	... place importance on extraordinariness and individuality
	... focus on the differences between themselves and others
	... convey strong self-assurance
	... avoid dependence on others
The power of relationships	
	... distance themselves emotionally
	... approach others with criticism and skepticism
	... handle conflicts without experiencing any significant personal burden
	... feel themselves to be in competition with others in many situations
Identity in a changing world	
Balance orientation (fear of uncertainty and disorientation)	When this orientation is very strong it pushes people to...
	... seek order and security
	... complete tasks with conscientiousness, thoroughness, and perseverance

	... seek constancy
	... establish fixed habits
	... deal with risks carefully
	... act dependably, reliably, and conscientiously
	... insist that rules are obeyed and to punish deviations from the rules
	... consistently control other people
Stimulation orientation (fear of conformity and certainty)	When this orientation is very strong it pushes people to...
	... avoid committing themselves and keep many options open
	... deal flexibly and spontaneously with different situations
	... leave the past behind them and try new things
	... take risks
	... approach new topics and challenges with curiosity and fantasy
	... end relationships and start new ones if they offer potential for new experiences
	... seek stimulation and adventure

Of course, we can relate these four orientations directly to the topic of leadership. If you hold selection interviews with applicants for leadership positions, for example, you will quickly recognize their basic tendency when you ask what their leadership motivation is. The four answers in Fig. 2.3 are not literal answers, but idealized statements that lie behind the literal response.



Figure 2.3: Different leadership motivations that are connected with the four orientations

You can recognize the basic orientations in applicants.

The following point is also important in understanding these four general tendencies: With these four tendencies, we are not necessarily describing competencies, but forces or motivations. For example, it may be easier for autonomy-oriented leaders to make decisions that are unpopular among followers than it is for relationship-oriented leaders. However, this does not mean that the latter are incapable of doing so. Ultimately they may suffer more and may struggle with themselves, but they can execute unpopular decisions in a practical sense similarly to autonomy-oriented leaders. For autonomy-oriented leaders though, making unpopular decisions is much more about self-affirmation and striving for responsibility than for relationship-oriented leaders. Let it be clear that we are describing motivations (or fears), but not competencies (in the sense of skills).

The four basic orientations are motivations but not necessarily skills.

Note also that we have always spoken of four different orientations or forces, but not necessarily four personality types. Both axes are present in all of us. For example, we often see people who are both autonomy-oriented and stimulation-oriented. These people are autonomy-oriented in shaping relationships, but stimulation-oriented in how they experience the world.

All orientations are at work in every one of us.

- The two orientations are polar but not exclusively so. All four orientations are inherent in part within every person, but with a different priority and to varying degrees. We always see the dominant characteristic most clearly in conflicts. Ask yourself how you typically react in conflicts: distancing and dominant, or more yielding and sad? Rule-oriented and principled, or more impulsive and situational? Your personality reveals itself most clearly in conflicts.

2.5.1 The Charismatic Relationship Contract

When we introduced the four fundamental forces or motivations in the [previous section](#), we gave some examples which apply to different persons with these tendencies. If we want to understand the charismatic relationship contract, we now have to look at these different basic fears from the perspective of the followers.

The charismatic relationship contract is made between fear and the ability to remove others' fear.

We argued that charisma develops when a leader is able to successfully remove others' fears. In the next step, we then learned about the four major fears that determine our lives. From the perspective of these four fears, leaders who are suitable as a projection surface for these fears are perceived as charismatic. This is the basis for the relationship contract between the leader and the followers. This implied relationship contract is outlined more clearly in Table 2.2 for the four primal fears described.

Table 2.2: The implied relationship contract

[Open table as spreadsheet](#)

Fear or force	The relationship contract between the charismatic leader and the followers
Relationship orientation: fear of loneliness and being alone	Highly relationship-oriented people experience people as charismatic who convey to them involvement in a community, who give them familial feelings or team spirit, closeness and security. The unspoken relationship contract can be characterized as follows:
	Leader: "Under my leadership you will join a group you can feel at home in. You will be surrounded by people who support and value you, and work together with you to achieve our goals. If you let me lead you, you will be part of a big family"
	Followers: "We follow you because we are no longer lonely under your leadership, because we know we are secure in a group under your leadership, and because you work to make us feel at home in the team and ensure we are there for each other"
Autonomy orientation: fear of losing individuality and importance	Autonomy-oriented people experience leaders as charismatic who strengthen their feeling of standing out, give them the impression they are very special, and are contributing to something very special. The unspoken relationship contract can be characterized as follows:
	Leader: "If you follow me, you will be able to successfully develop your special skills and talents. If you follow me, you will be given special tasks that will allow you to prove what you are capable of. You will have the opportunity to

Table 2.2: The implied relationship contract

[Open table as spreadsheet](#)

Fear or force	The relationship contract between the charismatic leader and the followers
	do extraordinary things and to develop faster and better than many others" Followers: "We follow you because you give us the self-confidence to be special and under your leadership we have the impression that we are rightly admired and valued by others. Under your leadership we feel that our individuality is appreciated as it should be"
Balance orientation: fear of uncertainty and disorientation	Balance-oriented people find leaders charismatic who give them a sense of security, calculability, and predictability. The unspoken relationship contract can be characterized as follows: Leader: "Under my leadership you will experience stability and order. With me, you will feel safe in an unsettled world. I create clarity and rules that give you orientation, and protect you from insecurity and uncertainty. You can rely on me" Followers: "We follow you because you bring order to the world for us and give us directness and clarity. You clear up ambivalences and uncertainties for us and we see a structure we can stick to. To us, you are the constant and the stability that gives us long-term orientation"
Stimulation orientation: fear of conformity and certainty	Stimulation-oriented people experience a leader as charismatic who can promise them exciting new horizons, learning opportunities, adventure, and experiences. The unspoken relationship contract can be characterized as follows: Leader: "Under my leadership you can reach new horizons. We can reinvent things and change a lot in the world. We free ourselves from restrictions and guardrails and trust our creative power" Followers: "We follow you because it makes our life more intense. We follow you because we can experience a lot of exciting new things, because we have important and visionary plans, and because we shake off the fetters of the present"

The better suited you are as a leader to acting as a projection surface for these fears, the stronger the charismatic relationship contract. The challenge lies in being equally

charismatic for each of the different orientations. If you as a leader stand for structure, stability, and order, and presumably for conservative values, then strongly stimulation-oriented people may not find you so charismatic. However, if you are very revolutionary, visionary, open, and willing to change, then highly balance-oriented people who seek structure will probably not find you to be the projection surface that they need for their fears. Your own charismatic potential is even greater the more of these fears you can remove, or in other words the more flexible you are in reaching out to different people where they are most receptive, despite your own preferences and characteristics. The more different fears a leader can remove, the greater the charisma.

The more clearly you are able to show relationship-oriented people that they can find closeness and security with you, while also giving autonomy-oriented people the strong feeling that they are something special, the greater your charismatic potential. The more clearly you can show as a leader that your leadership can be trusted because you create stability and order, while also conveying that it is possible to reach new horizons under your leadership, the greater your charismatic potential. The more confidence you create that under your leadership there is no longer any need to harbor the fears described, the greater your charismatic potential. This description makes it clear once again why charisma is not a personality trait in itself, but is always a relationship phenomenon. A person only becomes charismatic in the eyes of his or her followers and never for his or her own sake.

A person can only be charismatic in the eyes of others, never for oneself alone.

If we look back at what charismatic leaders have achieved, it is clear to see how the relationship contracts described here have been shaped (see also "Examples of charismatic leaders' ability to remove others' fears"). We often use politicians, statesmen, or even founders of religions in the examples given because every reader knows them and has an idea of the general circumstances of their situations. However, this charismatic effect is by no means restricted to great statesmen; the mechanism we have described here is in fact present in virtually every leadership relationship.

There are charismatic processes in virtually all leadership relationships.

Examples of Charismatic Leaders' Ability to Remove Others' Fears

To clarify things, let's look now at a very negative example of charisma, as charismatic influence—as unpleasant as it may be—is also evident in terrible tyrants and dictators. We have already mentioned Adolf Hitler by way of example. Let's take ourselves back to Germany at that time in history: The First World War had been lost and the German people lived with a peace they considered to be unjust. The economic crisis destroyed property and prospects. At that time, Adolf Hitler's messages appealed almost perfectly to the four fears we have described. The great significance of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, a German concept meaning the "people's community", and the many relationship offerings associated with it (the Hitler Youth was just one of many organizations that the National Socialists founded) gave relationship-oriented and lonely people a new sense of belonging and a new home. The belief in the superiority of the German race and the German race's entitlement to rule over others gave autonomy-oriented people who were

frustrated and dejected by losing the war the opportunity to feel that they were something special again. It was possible for Germans to have confidence in themselves once more. In the chaos of the post-war years and the economic crisis, Hitler created a structure that restored a belief in stability, law, and order to balance-oriented people. For stimulation-oriented people, Hitler upheld the great vision of the Thousand-Year Reich, a complete turnaround of the previous circumstances and the hope of new horizons in the aftermath of the First World War. Looking at his goals then, Hitler's ideology was very skillfully put together. Ultimately, that's the only reason it was able to work its seduction. The many internal contradictions, the racial theories that were even nonsense in view of the scientific background of the time, the mendacity and falsification of history in the Jewish question were ultimately unable to do enough to counter the psychological effect of his message and prevent the path to catastrophe.

Now let's look at Konrad Adenauer as a positive example of someone who shaped relationships charismatically. When Konrad Adenauer became the first German Chancellor after the end of the Second World War and the occupation period, he offered people the following: ultimately he saved relationship-oriented people from too much disgrace and shame and from feeling that they had to break with being German. Through his own moral integrity during the Nazi period and the understated way he dealt with past events, relationship-oriented people were able to slowly reconcile themselves to their German nationality in a positive sense. Konrad Adenauer managed to enable people who suffered from being despised as Germans to quickly gain a new sense of home and belonging. For the autonomy-oriented, Konrad Adenauer and his Minister of Economics and successor, Ludwig Erhard, offered the opportunities of the *Wirtschaftswunder* or German economic miracle. Germany had been given a new sphere of activity in which people could prove their superior ability and competitiveness. The *Wirtschaftswunder* was the perfect antidote to the fear of meaninglessness and created a self-reinforcing mechanism of unimagined energy. For balance-oriented people, Konrad Adenauer represented enough conservatism to create a new Germany based on conservative values. Constancy and provinciality were clear characteristics of the Adenauer government and the break with certain structures of the Nazi era was definitely not as thorough in all of Germany's organizations as some social powers would have wished with hindsight. Adenauer's campaign slogan: "No experiments" clearly demonstrates how he catered to the fears of the balance-oriented. However, for the stimulation-oriented there were also plenty of areas of activity and changes in the new Germany of the post-war period. Adenauer succeeded in balancing the achievements of pushing forward Germany's integration with the West, strengthening its relationship with the USA, and making several fundamental breaks with the Nazi past in terms of democratic values and—as already mentioned—economic freedom, thereby creating a future vision of a Germany in which people could live in freedom and prosperity, and which would bring no further catastrophes on the world. This promise contained enough new horizons and goals that were able to develop sufficient power to remove the fears of stimulation-oriented people despite any provinciality and conservatism.

2.5.2 Unresponsiveness to Charisma

We have demonstrated that charisma is an interaction between the leader and followers that uses the mechanism of fear and removing fears. Of course, this interaction is only possible if the followers actually experience fear. As such, there are two basic reasons why certain people cannot be led charismatically: the first reason would be that they are people whose lives are predominantly free from fear. No one is completely fearless, which means that there are also gradual differences here. The fewer fears you have, the less likely you are to enter into charismatic relationships as a follower. In this case, you would primarily consider the functional side of leadership. You would assess a leader's meaningful goals more strongly from a rational perspective. Ultimately, however, the meaning offered by a leader still needs to fit to a psychological need in this case. Being completely without fear (or drive) is not possible. It is simply a question of the extent of this fear.

Without fear there is no place for charismatic leadership.

There is, however, a second and much more serious mechanism that makes people unresponsive to charisma or, in extreme cases, unleadable. We have said that charisma is the ability to generate trust through suggestive power. In followers, the minimum requirement for being able to follow a leader is the ability to trust other people. Without the ability to trust, people will never trust a leader and thereby reduce their own degrees of freedom. One reason why people lose or never fully develop their ability to trust may be that they experienced abuse in early childhood.

Without the ability to trust, there is no charismatic relationship contract.

Such experiences can be so severe and drastic that these people are never able to give themselves over to others in relationships. Instead, such people often remain eternal rebels and skeptics who regard others with constant mistrust as a result of this experience. It is not unusual for leaders to find themselves faced with the problem that they are unable to create a relationship in which the other willingly follows, despite their best efforts. Every request made of the other person is in itself a struggle and a conflict that cannot be readily solved using the hierarchy.

Distrustful and skeptical people are difficult to lead.

- Not all people are as easy to lead as others, and with certain people the challenge of leading them is particularly tough. As a leader you need to establish trust and as a follower you need to be able to show trust.

2.6 Development of Charisma

2.6.1 Psychological Development Steps Along the Path to Becoming a Charismatic Leader

Charisma is—as we have just shown—not a personality trait and certainly not an innate attribute. Charisma is the ability to remove others' fears through one's own strengths, but the personality aspects required to develop it differ historically and depending on the leadership context. In sects, different types are perceived as charismatic than in commercial enterprises. The terse statement "you've either got it or you haven't" doesn't

do justice to the complexities of reality when it comes to the question of developing charisma. Charismatic leaders undergo a history of development that generally makes it easy to understand why they are then at some point able to form charismatic relationships. Below we attempt to trace and make sense of the typical psychological development process.

Charisma is not simply innate, but has an individual history of development.

Our model of explanation is based on the conception of man in depth psychology. Depth psychology coined the term psychic energy, which is of central importance to our explanation. Depth psychology postulates that the action of every single one of us is driven by a psychic energy source. This psychic energy gives us the strength necessary to act and to take on tasks requiring exertion and the desire to overcome adversity. You have already learned, for example, that leadership always requires exertion and the desire to overcome adversity.

So where does this psychic energy come from that drives us to do things? What feeds people's drive to want to change something in their life or the world? Which energy sources drive people to produce special exertion?

What is the decisive urge that appears to push certain people to superhuman efforts and causes them to put off many other needs? And a question that is particularly relevant to us: Which energy source causes people to develop into charismatic leaders who advocate their goals with enthusiasm and dedication, deal pugnaciously with their opponents, and can create enthusiasm for great goals? Even at as early a stage as choosing the goal, it is apparent that the process is not completely rational. Some people develop charisma simply because they want to get rich as businesspeople. Other people want to eliminate suffering and poverty in the world or use their charisma for the environment, for political ideas, but also for visionary products. What makes people commit themselves to a very specific idea and muster the psychic energy to defend this idea in a charismatic way?

Choosing goals is not a rational process.

Depth psychology describes the cause of these exertions using the concept of *compensation*. People who exert themselves to achieve certain things are concerned with very personal compensation, compensation of *perceived inner deficiencies*. What does this mean exactly? Compensation means balancing out. As such, there must be a disparity in one's own perceived psychological balance that requires balancing. This imbalance causes us to experience a strong malaise that we wish to balance out in order to feel better. As such, we make great efforts in order to restore our own psychological balance.

Great exertions are driven by the need for compensation.

- Superhuman efforts always indicate a strong need for compensation. We don't need to make an effort for something from which we cannot draw any benefits for our psychological balance.

To make the whole thing clearer: we release psychic energy when certain things appear tempting to us and worth striving for. If, for example, a woman puts a lot of energy into

her career development, she is probably doing so because it rewards her to perceive herself as successful. If a man goes to South America as a missionary, he may do this because it gives him a good feeling to bring the Christian faith to other people. These two examples make it clear that urges can be very individual and that neither of the people in the above examples would decide differently *just because*. This means that the underlying psychic energy of each individual is so fundamental that special life events or life changes are required to invest our own energies in other challenges. The desire or need for compensation feeds our actions. We cannot simply decide what is important to us.

So why is career in a commercial enterprise tempting to some and not to others? Let's look at it from the opposite perspective, from the side of compensation. From this standpoint, a non-career would be aversive. And because this is personally perceived as so terrible, we make extraordinary efforts to pursue a career. If a career were more inconsequential, then we would not expend much energy on it. The compensation here could lie in the fact that a person doesn't like to be one among many, that a person feels unappreciated and less valued if he or she cannot show his or her potential and skills, that the philosophy of hiding one's light under a bushel triggers inner panic. All these unpleasant, very personal thoughts can cause an individual to develop great energies to compensate this discomfort through strong efforts to achieve. For different people, the exact opposite may be true: great efforts make them feel uncomfortable and overwhelmed.

Pursuing a career can be better understood from the perspective of compensation.

For these people, career can mean too much responsibility. As such, their compensatory efforts could consist in joining a team in which they can immerse themselves and keep a low profile. For such persons, being the center of attention may be frightening. That's why such people make great efforts never to have to face such a situation and a superior's well-meaning suggestion of holding a presentation at the next meeting is firmly turned down.

Taking this basic observation as our foundation, the next step is to explain our model in the development of charisma.

Figure 2.4 shows the five stages through which people develop into charismatic leaders. These stages are explained briefly below:

1. **Stigma, confusion, psychological stress.** The word stigma is of Greek and Latin origin and means *brand*. The slaves of the Greeks and Romans were branded to identify them as such. We use it here as a personal trauma or grievance that a person has suffered and would like to overcome. These traumas can originate, for example, from our personal history (difficult circumstances such as poverty, a troubled childhood, death, accidents, etc.) or from our own interpretation and reflection of this history (feelings of inferiority, fear of failure, etc.). These occurrences or self-reflections can be the strong drive in a person to want to overcome such traumas and ultimately make enormous efforts. As a result, the starting point for charisma is always a stigma (or stigmata).

The charismatic process begins with a wound.

2. **Compensation, discovery.** Think back to what we said about compensation: A psychic energy, a perceived imbalance is always needed to generate power for exertions. This means that compensation strategies are required to shake off or at least balance out the stigma that threatens our self-worth. Often the first compensation strategies—in children, for example—are insufficient and do not immediately bring the desired success. Initially, these are often attack or flight strategies. If the stigma is a lack of recognition, for example, we can observe insufficient attempts (from an adult perspective) in children to attract attention. If the stigma is an experience of powerlessness (a person was unable to remove him or herself from a terrible situation), the first attempts at compensation by gaining control and having influence may seem helpless.

This phase, however, is where the beginnings of compensation strategies that are typical for the charismatic leader first manifest themselves. These approaches can be divided into four strategies, two of which are ideological or religious, and two of which are specific or historical:

The first compensation strategies are often not successful.



Figure 2.4: The five stages in the development of a charismatic leader

Sometimes even children exhibit the compensation strategies that can later produce charismatic potential.

- **Ascetic compensation.** The first ideological and religious compensation strategy is asceticism. Asceticism is a compensation strategy that relates to one's own conception of life. Subsequent charisma will generally come from the effect a person produces as a role model and from the consistency with which this way of life is practiced. Ascetic compensation focuses on body control, relinquishment, freedom from base needs, and accepting yourself for who you are.

Ascetics compensate through body control.

- **Ecstatic compensation.** We call the second ideological and religious compensation strategy ecstatic. Unlike the rationally dominated asceticism (the mind controls the body), ecstatic compensation is marked by very strong ideological or religious emotionality. In remaining imprisoned in the ideological and religious, the future ecstatic charismatic leader has more of a desire to pass on a conception for a good life rather than a direct interest in changing the real and concrete world.

Ecstatics compensate through emotionality.

- **Rebellious compensation.** The rebellious compensation strategy is the first of the two specific or historical compensation strategies. Rebels see themselves as the antithesis to the given circumstances and want to change them. While the

two ideological or religious compensation strategies are aimed more at overall conceptions of life, the two specific or historical compensation strategies aim at solving real problems in the world and manifest themselves in response to a given cause.

Rebels compensate through fighting to change circumstances.

- **Exhibitionistic compensation.** Exhibitionistic compensation is also a specific or historical compensation strategy. It enthusiastically supports a specific goal in real the world, but not necessarily as a fight against another goal (this would be the rebellious strategy). This compensation is concerned with visions and new horizons.

Exhibitionists compensate through enthusiasm for new horizons.

Basically, we can say that it is possible to tell from the first compensation strategies whether the charisma of the person who later becomes a charismatic leader will unfold in the direction of a basic conception of life or more in relation to practical problem solving in the real world. The actual goal that these compensation strategies will pursue, however, will not become apparent until the next phase.

- **Mission, awakening, and calling.** The third phase is the process of forming the overall goal. In place of an insufficient initial compensation, a larger goal begins to form, taking shape and growing stronger. Someone seeking recognition will take on a really big task that could promise admiration from others. The powerless person formulates the clear will to win power and influence in order to be able to change the circumstances experienced as insufficient. It is in these phases that the goals are formed that are worthy of exertion and overcoming adversity. It is the phase in which charismatic leaders decide to put their energy into attaining a goal.

The first goals are formed.

- **Identification, recognition, initial performance.** In the next step, followers are gathered for this goal. The goal is announced with enthusiasm and initial successes emerge. Budding charismatic leaders experience an increased conviction of self-efficacy, that is to say the feeling that what they are striving for is attainable and that they will succeed in rousing enthusiasm in others. In addition to gaining followers, this phase also involves overcoming opponents.

Enthusiasm for the goals is roused in others.

- **Establishment, staging, ritualization, and institutionalization.** In this final phase of charismatic development, charismatic leaders must overcome their Sturm und Drang period. The charismatic leader has created structures (think back to the observations on leadership structures in [Chap. 1](#)) that can outlast their creator. The charismatic leader has established an organization that has its processes and rituals, that provides the backdrop for its own symbols, but in the end still represents its originator. And these structures that have been created are then the legacy of the charismatic leader and will continue to represent this one particular person, even if many other people also worked on them (a house represents the architect and not the people who built it).

Leadership structures are established.

There is one more important remark we need to make to close this chapter: Our examples and our choice of words may imply that we want to keep charisma as the preserve of great historical personalities. Yet we simply like to use these images because they illustrate the subject's content and messages so very clearly. In fact, we by no means consider charisma to be restricted to seemingly superhuman great leaders. In every company and in every organization there are leaders who have dedicated themselves to a message or a goal for which they can display charismatic power. This doesn't just apply to great historical things; it can also be the development of a team or a product or another minor or major success that changes the world just a little bit in the direction of one's own charismatic message. Charisma is not only of significance to great and historical leaders.

2.6.2 How Can Leaders Develop Charisma?

In this section we will show you a kind of recipe for building charisma. This recipe combines the findings and dynamics that have been described in this chapter and formulates them in a way that can be translated into actions. To illustrate the instructions for becoming a charismatic leader especially clearly, we have chosen a bold, even somewhat ironic depiction. This definitely makes our message very apparent. However, it certainly does not mean that we view the topic of charisma from a cynical perspective—the mechanisms summarized in this recipe are the central controls that you see at work when you observe leaders becoming charismatic (Fig. 2.5).

Checklist for developing charisma

- Trust in your ability to do it!
 - Find yourself a crisis, and start one if you need to!
 - Find an explanation for the crisis and a plausible theory to overcome it!
 - Announce your theory on how to overcome the crisis with enthusiasm!
 - Ensure initial successes!
 - Identify or look for people:
 - with weak identities (autonomy orientation),
 - who long for relationships (relationship orientation)
 - who lack orientation (balance orientation)
 - and people addicted to new experiences (stimulation orientation)
 - Give them positive support so that you become an important entity in their lives!
 - Make a ritual of setting yourself center stage!
 - Create an aristocracy!
-

Figure 2.5: Recipe for developing charisma

We explain this recipe for charisma briefly below:

- **Trust in your ability to do it!** The starting point for charisma is having the confidence in yourself that you can change something. A leadership process cannot begin without the positive conviction that other goals are possible (we refer back to the first chapter here). We have also seen that the psychological effect of leadership is based on reducing fear. It is therefore vital for the relationship contract with the people you lead that you can inspire the confidence to achieve goals. You will be able to exude this confidence if you also have the confidence in yourself that you can make it.

Charisma requires self-confidence.

- **Find yourself a crisis, and if you can't find one, start one!** In [Chap. 4](#) we will address the fact that only a crisis is a time of leadership in much more detail. If there is no crisis, this means that the current leadership structures are guiding behavior in the desired direction and can stay in place. There is no need to change anything. Where do people need to be led in such a situation? It's sufficient to give a certain amount of instruction and control within the existing structures, but leadership in the charismatic sense is not necessary. Only emergencies need leadership; happiness doesn't. In times of fortune you'll have trouble positioning yourself as a leader because you don't solve any problems for the followers and you have no message about where you want to lead. To lead, you need a crisis, and this can be a possible future crisis ("If we don't make changes today, we're going to have huge problems tomorrow") that you will avert in good time through your leadership. If you want to be charismatic, you can't do without a crisis. That's why times of crisis are the hour of great charismatic leaders. On the other hand, this step also reveals the reason why leaders sometimes need to create a crisis to position themselves sufficiently (e.g., by restructuring a department, by a change of strategy, etc.). Only a crisis created in this way provides the opportunity to form one's own goals, which is vital to charisma.

Charisma requires a crisis.

- It is possible to be a formal leader even without a crisis. In this case, the leader gives instructions and relies on the existing leadership structures. In the working world, this kind of thing happens all the time and the day-to-day work of a manager in a company certainly isn't comprised of nothing but crises. But in times without crises, less leadership takes place and less charismatic leadership in particular!
- **Find an explanation for the crisis and a plausible theory to overcome it!** Once the crisis is there or has been created, you now need to prove that you are the right person to solve the crisis. To do this, you need an explanation for the crisis and a credible theory of how to overcome it. This is the time for endowing the situation with meaning and purpose. In this phase of developing charisma you need to make clear that it makes sense to follow you. If people follow you, they will be able to understand the crisis and see ways of how to overcome it.

Charisma requires an idea of how to solve the crisis.

- **Announce your theory on how to overcome the crisis with enthusiasm!** This point refers to the fact that charisma always requires a measure of disinhibition to have an immediate effect. You cannot be inhibited and charismatic at the same time. If you want to create confidence, you can't be inhibited. The greater and more far-reaching your goals, the more enthusiastically you need to be able to announce them so that you are in a position to unleash the suggestive power to make these goals seem attainable under your leadership. People will only follow you if they are convinced that you yourself believe the goal is attainable. The greater your plans, the more power you need to be able to convey to instill this belief.

Charisma requires enthusiasm.

- **Ensure initial successes!** Once you have announced your manifesto, it's time to get to work. To ensure that your theory for overcoming the crisis and your explanation of the crisis don't suffer any damage, the initial activities absolutely have to succeed. You may have to help to organize these successes (in companies, the initial successes of extensive changes are often organized as pilot projects, which are set up in such a way that the people working in them have enough influence to ensure that the project succeeds in all cases). The initial successes feed your explanation of the crisis and your theory for overcoming it and lend them credibility.

Charisma requires the credibility of initial successes.

- **Identify or look for people with weak identities (autonomy orientation), people who long for relationships (relationship orientation), people who lack orientation (balance orientation), and people addicted to new experiences (stimulation orientation)!** Now you need the people who will follow you. As you can see, we have exaggerated the different motivations that we described earlier as the basis of the charismatic relationship contract. In effect, all we are saying here is that you need people who are willing to enter into this relationship contract with you and whom you have something to offer in psychological terms. From a purely practical perspective, you don't have to look for these people every time you start out. You can also interpret this requirement as building on and using the existing orientations that are already present in your team in a suitable manner.

Charisma requires people who are responsive to having their fears removed.

- **Give them positive support so that you become an important entity in their lives!** In the next step you need to fulfill your part of the relationship contract. You need to lend meaning to the autonomy-oriented people, convey closeness and security to the relationship-oriented people, give clarity and structure to the balance-oriented people, and provide enough exciting challenges for the stimulation-oriented people. If you manage to do this, you will have successfully completed the most important elements of the integration work. You have gained a team from which you can expect above-average exertion and an above-average desire to overcome adversity.

Charisma requires fulfillment of the relationship contracts.

- **Make a ritual of setting yourself center stage!** Keeping your charismatic message at the front of people's minds requires symbols and rituals. Create a special aura around yourself! Give big speeches! Make sure people quote you! Your charisma will last longer if you find good rituals to embody your messages. (We don't expect anyone will disagree when we claim that the Catholic Church is without doubt the most successful organization in world history in this regard. It has always understood how to use the right ceremonies to set the stage for its charismatic leaders to retain the aura of specialness and sublimity.)
Charisma requires symbols and rituals.
- **Create an aristocracy!** At some point your organization and your task will become so great that you will need further leaders and followers to carry your message. The reward for this is being allowed to be close to you and belong to your inner circle. In some cases, leaders also control their charisma by allowing certain people close to them and keeping others at a distance ("I'm very sorry, but our CEO doesn't have an appointment free for you in the next six weeks."). If you want to be charismatic, you need a circle of people who strongly identify with your message. You need a rite of initiation so that only the most loyal and capable can enter this circle. Hand out titles and decorations, restrict access to yourself!
Charisma needs to be expanded to a team.

Lastly, we want to refer to the final point in the development of charisma. In places we argued that an enthusiastic or uninhibited manner is a requirement for the charismatic effect. If you observe the career path and demeanor of certain politicians, you can generally see the process in the development of charisma quite clearly. Sometimes charisma doesn't appear until a politician holds a certain office, and with it a certain responsibility. Not all leaders become charismatic first and then begin to lead. Many leaders get a place in the organization and then gradually develop their charisma in this position.
Sometimes charisma doesn't occur until a person is in office.

Example of the Development and Cultivation of Charisma Through a Given Task

The process of developing charisma through a given task can be thought of as follows: Let's assume that Mr. Jones suddenly becomes a top manager in the company. All of a sudden Mr. Jones has high visibility and a wide range of powers in a formal or functional regard. Mr. Jones now makes the following discovery: As soon as he says something, other people do it. When he makes a joke, everyone laughs. When he defines a task, everyone endeavors to complete it as best they can. The following process of realization could now kick in for Mr. Jones: "When I want something, everyone seems to follow me. That can only mean that I'm incredibly charismatic." In coming to this conclusion, though, Mr. Jones underestimates how strongly certain people will follow based on the power of position and formal hierarchy, and how little that may have to do with the way he presents himself as a person.

The conclusion Mr. Jones comes to, however, has the following effect: Mr. Jones gains the self-conviction that he can give something to others. Confidence begins to grow in

Mr. Jones that he has a message that binds other people to him. This increase in self-confidence means that Mr. Jones is actually in a position to state his convictions more enthusiastically and with greater self-assurance. When he states them more enthusiastically and with greater self-assurance, the positive feedback he receives becomes more intense, as his increasing disinhibition also makes him more convincing. This sets off a chain reaction of positive feedback that can result in Mr. Jones actually developing charisma and being increasingly able to give something to others independently of the formal power of his position. Sometimes people become charismatic as the result of the size of a task that falls into their lap through circumstance, even if they were not charismatic when they began tackling the task.

We have described the process of cultivating charisma in such a way that it produces a charismatic leader who is capable of action. However, this development can go wrong at any point. Whether the process of increasing disinhibition creates a charismatic leader or an aggressive narcissist with an inflated opinion of him- or herself is not yet clear. A certain amount of narcissism that generates enough self-confidence in one's own abilities and potential is unavoidable for developing charisma. You need the self-confidence to be able to give something to others. Without this belief in your own capabilities, you won't succeed. A certain amount of narcissism and charisma are not mutually exclusive—one even requires the other. However, all the dynamics we have described in this chapter—the orientations and motivations behind them, and of course the compensation strategies that provide the energy for charismatic development—can develop abnormally and lead to the creation of evil leaders. We look at this aspect of psychological disorders in leadership in [Chap. 11](#).

The process of charismatic development can also give rise to evil tyrants

2.7 Do We Need Charismatic Leaders?

At the start of this chapter, we touched briefly on charisma skepticism, which is particularly widespread in certain countries, especially Germany. Historically this is understandable, but from a psychological leadership perspective, it is not useful. We are absolutely convinced that we need charismatic leaders. When economy, politics, and society find themselves in a crisis of confidence, leaders who merely function get us nowhere, as they do not remove anyone's fears, nor do they pool any strengths for a positive vision of the future.

Purely functional leaders do not help in times of crisis.

We need charismatic leaders to create exertion and the desire to overcome adversity, and who make it possible to attain great goals. Culturally we are in a phase in which the pace of change is increasing everywhere. This remains true, even though it now crops up like banal filler in any and every speech given by politicians or economists. Change comes in the time of crisis. In crises in particular, we need people who are able to remove others' fears, give hope, and inspire the confidence that the crisis can be overcome by combining our strengths. Without charisma there can be no courage, no extraordinary joint efforts, no steering toward a great goal that cannot be achieved alone. When we say that we need charismatic leaders, we are most certainly not calling for seducers and manipulators. The suggestive power of charisma is based on

trustworthiness, integrity, dedication to great goals, competence and strength, courage, the willingness to take risks, and sincere hope for the future. We are strongly convinced that no relevant crisis in the world can be resolved conclusively and successfully without the attributes described here.

Without charisma there is no extraordinary leadership performance.