

Book Review: Fitzpatrick, K. (2024). *Leading Generously: Tools for Transformation*. United States: Johns Hopkins University Press

Dan Manolescu
ESL Instructor and Award-Winning Author, USA
E-mail: dan.manolescu@att.net

Received: 27/10/2024
Accepted: 26/01/2025
Published: 05/02/2025

Volume: 6 Issue: 1

How to cite this paper: Manolescu, D. (2025). Book Review: Fitzpatrick, K. (2024). *Leading Generously: Tools for Transformation*. United States: Johns Hopkins University Press. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 6(1), 26-32
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v6i1.95>

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



The idea of building new things by transforming institutions like colleges, universities and similar nonprofit organizations is the central point of *Leading Generously*, an indispensable reference book of facts and opinions written by Kathleen Fitzpatrick. Organized in four chapters (called parts), with an Introduction and ending with a section of Acknowledgements, Notes, Bibliography, and Index, the present volume is an appeal to assess the current situation and at the same time to redesign and reimagine the whole concept of leadership.

Going back to the author's previous book, *Generous Thinking*, with a focus on *why* and *what* changes are necessary, we find the present project has more to do with switching from doing *more* to doing a *better* job. The explanation is clear: "Better requires engagement, connection, sharing, time, in ways that producing more nearly always encourages us to rush past. Turning from more to better can help us access the pleasures – and even the joys – of our work that life on the production line has forced us to push aside." (p. 3) In order to do that, according to the author, we need to start by asking a lot of questions, one of which will necessarily deal with generosity in hard times when people are more concerned about their own resources and privileges. In this context, Fitzpatrick is ready to acknowledge the purpose of this guidebook: "Frankly, I'm far less interested in fostering new individual leaders who can rise through the ranks than I am in building cohorts and collectives, groups of grassroots leaders who can work together to transform the structures that support and constrain those ranks." (p. 7) For better words, we find the author looking for things that need to be changed and for places where such actions are possible.

Although trained as a scholar of literature, Fitzpatrick avers that her "long-standing blogging practice" was fundamental in gathering information and feedback for the current volume. The dialogue between author and various leaders began with the same request: "Tell me the story of your most important experience of leadership in the service of institutional transformation." (p. 11) What came to bear fruit from such an approach was a generous share of stories and ideas that populate the book.

Part I. The Problem is divided into two sections: *Crisis and Leadership*, and the reader is invited to analyze the concept of crisis as presented by two researchers, Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon, in their book entitled *Permanent Crisis*. As intriguing as it may be, crisis is viewed in their opinion as real and necessary:

For nearly a century and a half, claims about a "crisis of the humanities" have constituted a genre with remarkably consistent features: anxiety about modern agents of decay, the loss of authority and legitimacy and invocations of "the human" in the face of forces that dehumanize and alienate humans from themselves, one another, and the world. These claims typically lead to the same, rather paradoxical conclusion: modernity destroys the humanities, but only humanities can redeem modernity, a circular story of salvation in which overcoming the crisis of modernity is the

mission of the humanities. Without a sense of crisis, the humanities would have neither purpose nor direction. (Reitter and Wellmon, 2021, p. 132) (Quoted on p. 18)

“The crisis of the humanities,” whether it is destroyed or redeemed by modernity, proves to be necessary if we are to consider the agents of decay and the loss of authority and legitimacy – at least in the recent past.

As stated in the book, the wild world we live in, the loss of intellectual power to make the right decisions, and an acute sense of dehumanization are all proof that the crisis mentioned above is real. Fitzpatrick looks with fresh and keen eyes at the specific crises and discovers the *labor* crisis, the *economic* crisis, and the *political* crisis – each with its own characteristics. In the world of academia, the *labor* crisis is evident when we assess factors like “job security, an adequate salary, full benefits, and above all academic freedom.” (p. 18) The costs of higher education are now a burden for individual students and their families – not state or federal government – and that is cause for concern that our institutions are faced with an economic crisis. The current situation regarding politics in the classroom, coupled with the tendency to eradicate tenure and the alarming interference in the curriculum, to mention just a few, all point to what can be defined as political crisis. The author also lists issues with attacks on critical race theory, the denial of climate change, the trend toward banning certain books from libraries, and the closing of programs and departments and schools. (p. 20)

For practical reasons, examples noticed over a six-year period in one campus at Michigan State University are given ample description to justify the need for change. A pet peeve seems obvious when the author re-considers our institutions’ mission statements and finds, unfortunately, that the university should not be run like a business. A quick but relevant quotation is brought into the fervent discussion when Frederic Laloux argues that “The primacy of winning over purpose goes a long way in explaining why the ‘mission statements’ that organizations define often ring so hollow ... People have become cynical about mission statements because in practice they don’t drive behavior or decisions... So if the collective purpose isn’t what drives decision-making, what does?” (Laloux, 2014, p. 50) (Quoted on p. 26). And the answer is “It is the self-preservation of the institution.” (ibid) Academic leaders are led to infer that the structures they lead are more powerful and important than other seemingly debatable issues.

Institutions of higher education, therefore, magnify and empower those who cooperate, and as such, are not meant to generate profit. “They are, rather, shared infrastructures dedicated to a form of mutual aid, in which those who have – in this case, knowledge – support those who need, with the goal of producing a more just and equitable society.” (p. 27) The chapter thus re-iterates the idea that it is “not the corporation but the cooperative” that constitutes the ideal model.

Chapter 2, entitled *Leadership*, represents the author’s core principle of the whole project, whose goal is to lay the groundwork for transforming the model of leadership by which we are surrounded: “to inspire the conversations and the gatherings and the plans and the actions necessary to reinvent academic leadership as something generative instead of toxic, something functional and flexible instead of obstructive.” (p. 30) Specifically, we cannot create change on our own, but the current project educates and re-shapes the people’s mind when we understand *how* this can be done properly and efficiently.

As the reader follows the thread, in this case, reasons for saying what the author says, various names of academics join the debate. Referring to Martin Paul Eve (2022) and his comment on Fitzpatrick’s previous work, the author argues that “Universities should *do* better because they should *know* better. They should know better precisely because generating and sharing knowledge is the root of their purpose. And they should be better because their claims to focus on community should be backed by actual care for their actual communities.” (p. 31) Knowledge is here qualified as a safe keeping tool of academic culture and its prerogatives.

It is Fitzpatrick’s conviction – as the chapter progresses – that everyone in an institution can in fact lead and make a personal contribution in shaping the nature of leadership itself. However, the counterargument is that individuals are facing enormous problems and acting alone; one person “can’t do much to change the world. But groups of people can. Groups of people working together can form coalitions and mobilize them to develop new organizational structures with collectivity at their center. Building these coalitions begins with the energy of individuals who decide to put their agency to work in solidarity with others.” (p. 35) Every single person can make a valuable contribution.

When Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline* and senior lecturer at the MIT Sloan School of Management, joins the discussion, the term *leader* becomes a debatable issue, because, according to Senge, the idea of authority is implied because the word is a synonym for top management. Instead, he proposes an alternative:

His goal, in guiding institutions to become what he calls “learning organizations,” is the development of an ‘alternative system of management based on love rather than fear, curiosity rather than an insistence on “right” answers, and learning rather than controlling. (Senge, 2006, pp. xvii-xviii) (Quoted on p. 39)

That is to say that love is preferred to fear and curiosity prevails over insistence on “right” answers.” The alternative concept is followed by an intriguing argument that the word *vision* has been misused and misinterpreted. Deep challenges are faced by institutions when vision is applied to their function. “The prevailing notion that leadership consists of having a vision and aligning people with that vision is bankrupt because it continues to treat adaptive situations as if they were technical: The authority figure is supposed to divine where the company is going, and people are supposed to follow.” (Heifetz and Laurie, 2011, p. 77) (Quoted on p. 40) This can only lead to a failure in understanding the whole process of changing.

The collective success, according to Fitzpatrick, is somehow related and explained by politics. In her work entitled *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young (2011), provides a clear definition of politics: “All aspects of institutional organization, public action, social practices and habits, and cultural meanings insofar as they are potentially subject to collective

evaluation and decision-making.” (p. 9) (Quoted on p. 49) Furthermore, if the concept of justice coincides with the concept of the political, we obviously need to work on enhancing the power of collective assessment and decision-making.

Change, in this context, as it is also in general acceptance, is not easy. But the author presses forward and the reader is reminded that leadership means people, not organizations, that leadership is possible with hard individual and collective work that involves trust, values, and listening, that all these ingredients must lead to *transparency*; that future challenges require *nimbleness*; that *sustainability* and *solidarity* are also required if we really want to transform a campus into a community.

Chapter 3, entitled *People*, starts from the premise that our institutions are living systems, which means that our institutions are made of people and that creating change therein has to be a “people-centered act.” A key claim of the book is that people and coalitions and communities are far more important to cultivate and nurture than any of the other structures and processes and functions that make up our institutions.” (p. 64) In their book *Unmanageable*, Jonathan Nightingale and Melissa Nightingale (2021) explain clearly what they understand when they talk about managing an organization:

We’re being asked as bosses to make choices between the well-being of the communities we live in and the company we help run. In almost every case, the idea that those things are in conflict is a lie. We should all refuse to play that game. But in the cases they are in conflict, or where we are forced to pretend that they are, we have a choice to make. *You* have a choice to make. Companies don’t have intrinsic value. People do. Choose people. (p. 67) (Quoted on p. 66)

It follows that, when challenges and difficult choices appear, according to Fitzpatrick, people are asked to sacrifice in the name of *mission*, because most institutions are mission-driven. Nevertheless, a better alternative would be to talk about “purpose,” which also means that the goal is still there, and our shared principles are “values-enacted.”

When moving from “mission” to “values” and looking for similar opinions, we find Madeline Shaw (2021), who draws our attention to internal interactions and considers the integrity of our leadership practice as well as that of our product or service, if we want to “truly succeed as social entrepreneurs.”

While in the previous pages Fitzpatrick dismissed the concept of vision, now, in the context of leadership requiring leading people rather than leading institutions, the author argues that reframing our sense of purpose also “requires working to maintain a clear vision of the humanity not just of those whom the institution serves but also of the real humans behind the structures through which they are served.” (p. 68) As such, the relationship between an institution and the people who learn becomes paramount with a focus on building a collective sense of purpose, while at the same time “finding ways to help everyone work toward living out that purpose.” (p. 71) Such leadership would be envisioned to favor and support people, as much as, or maybe more than institutions.

The chapter – like every other chapter in the book – concludes when the author poses several questions for reflection and discussion, some related to the difference between manager and leader, others referring to types of leadership and leadership practices.

Yourself is the title of Chapter 4 and the reader will note right away the relevance of the “self.” Sifting through some painful examples of leadership failures, the author admits that they are just a necessary first step in developing better leadership practices. “Be the change” and words like “meaningful” are thought to be clichés but they open up another perspective:

That perspective can be gained in any number of ways, if you’re willing to take it seriously and to work for it. It can come from deep reading and contemplation. It can come from journaling or other forms of creative production. It can come from spiritual practices, including meditation and prayer. It can come from engaging seriously with the kind of 360-degree review that asks not just your supervisor but also your colleagues and direct reports for feedback. (p. 76)

No matter where the solutions come from, we need to get engaged and consider very seriously the new point of view. A similar perspective is analyzed when we are reminded that we need to act on the knowledge of this self-examination, and which translates knowledge into action and that should be and can be done by consistently working hard on turning a person into a leader, a process deemed to be ongoing and never completed.

When firm, forthright, decisive, respective leaders are willing to build relationships and connections, *vulnerability* might become an issue. And this can be described as “intertwined with humility” and “the way that humility feels from the inside.” Chapter 5 proves to be an accurate description of what *vulnerability* means for the true leader. In times of crises, *trust* is the password. Addressing leaders, the author says: “Acknowledging that, admitting mistakes, and expressing your genuine desire to repair the breach can begin the process.” (p. 83) Building relationships and connections may have its own caveat, after all. A word of caution is added when the subject matter is directed towards coalition building and decision-making processes, which also imply inviting critique and remaining open to ongoing communication:

Few things are more infuriating than the performance of vulnerability. Wearing your worries on your sleeve can wind up looking like a transparent attempt to fend off criticism through an appeal to sympathy. Genuine vulnerability is not about display but is rather about being wholly present in a difficult situation, opening up real communication, and inviting participation in thinking through solutions. (p. 86)

The willingness to show up and to accept criticism are the best ways to maintain trust in times of crises. Two succinct chapters (6 and 7) follow, with leadership re-imagined from the point of view regarding togetherness and trust. As a result of several meaningful conversations with her peers, the author embraces the idea and the common goal of “building resilient, collaborative, equity-minded teams.” One pertinent example comes as a result of working as a team when the author delves into the contribution as the director of Humanities Common. “This team is geographically dispersed, with members in Michigan,

New York, Toronto, Montreal, and Thessaloniki (!), and its members bring a wide range of skill sets and backgrounds to the project.” (p. 90) Collaborative processes might prove successful mainly because they entail “developing relationships that can sustain the work.” Working as a team has its perks and privileges, and collaboration can only help in building resilience and equity.

Following a strategic goal, such team work pointed to a common aspect of leadership often considered to be creating “alignment” with the leadership’s vision. Bringing people together also has drawbacks, as the current project acknowledges, but at the same time, it has the potential to lead to shared ownership of the outcomes. The first step in building such collective planning – as evidenced here – must also ensure that all the team members have easy access to the big picture, thereby investing in their institutions and trusting the aforementioned principles.

Trust, in this context, is perceived as a combination of care and reliability, and their intrinsic values: transparency, directness, documentation, and accountability. After a short inroad into possible failures and repercussions caused by mistrust, Fitzpatrick draws a fine line and recommends that building, and sometimes rebuilding trust, be the first priority if leaders are ready to work “toward institutional transformation.” (p. 109) The upside view becomes clear when the author posits her own questions regarding failures and implies that we need to be aware of such unpleasant and sometimes unexpected events. Awareness may show us – in her opinion – how to rectify them.

In a smooth transition to the next sections of the book, we find *Chapter 8* dealing with values, their assessment as a set of KPIs, or key performance indicators, which help us check our effectiveness and our productivity. Although assessment and quantitative measures sometime leave us scratching our heads with disbelief, they also teach us valuable lessons. Checking and articulating our goals, according to the author, “takes time and requires some difficult thinking and negotiation among colleagues.” (p. 115) And in the process we are reminded that *values* and *evaluations* have the same etymological root, which may very well lead us to identifiable metrics for our scholarly values.

A word of caution is necessary to ensure accountability and success: These values need to be assessed repeatedly, and re-articulated as teams and members look for the best way forward. “The process of articulating a collective set of values is of necessity a recursive one, which will likely never reach a finalized state.” (p. 120) What these values are why we need them, and how hard we should think about them, will help us name and define, uphold and reinforce these necessary tools for transformation – as the subtitle of the books so clearly describes the whole story in question.

In an effort to stylize and embellish the concept of *listening*, Fitzpatrick approaches this notion in *Chapter 9* with fresh and keener eyes. At this point in the book, leaders are appraised if they work on developing an attitude that can be referred to as humble inquiry, which Schein and Schein (2021) define as “the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in another person.” (Humble Inquiry, p. 3) (Quoted on p. 122) Following the same train of thought, Fitzpatrick summarizes the input she received from several sources and recapitulates that “active listening requires genuine curiosity and openness.” (p. 124) Leaders, therefore, should be able to leave aside ego, expectations, presumptions; instead, they should absorb as much information as possible when they are approached and when they hear things they might have been otherwise missing. “When you listen to the people most affected by your institutions’ policies and processes, you’re likely to be confronted with a lot of things you’d rather not hear. [...] None of it is cause for refusing to listen. It is cause, rather, for some difficult work, both personal and structural, seeking ways to open yourself to the possibility that everything you’re hearing is not only true but demands action too.” (p. 127) The message the reader is gathering is obvious: that action is the only way we can go through moments of crisis and conflict.

From listening the author switches to a parallel requirement, which was deeply analyzed and quite fairly considered in previous chapters, and which relates to sharing what we know and what we learn “openly and plainly,” and which is *transparency*. *Chapter 10* clarifies this guiding principle when Fitzpatrick explains that “As applied to institutional processes and structures, transparency has value: allowing everyone to see and understand the workings behind decision-making, as well as the information that goes into and supports them, requires making institutional barriers see-through.” (p. 129) In this vein, the train of thought finds transparency to be extremely powerful, mostly because of its values.

As the chapter continues, the notion of transparency is genuinely approached when we read about shared power, not through top-down authority or endless negotiations, but by initiating what is called “advice process.” A practical example is inserted for better understanding: “A self-managed worker who notes the need to make a choice about adopting a software package, for instance, is at liberty to make the decision that is required to seek advice from all who will be affected by it. That advice, once sought, need not necessarily be followed, but the decision-maker becomes responsible for the decision’s outcome.” (p. 131) And as such, the process becomes “key to making self-management work on a large scale.” (Laloux, p. 137) Transparency and shared power only help to magnify the whole process of self-management.

A caveat is rightly added when Fitzpatrick looks at how transparent an organization is. In her view, we have to admit that certain confidential information cannot be shared, and there are good reasons why a restricted distribution might be preferred. Honesty is the best policy in such cases, and leaders are encouraged to explain the decisions that they have made public, because, otherwise, “the glass walls that remain around the process can go unmarked – and unmarked glass walls are exceedingly dangerous, inviting people to run into them at speed.” (p. 132) A greater sense of shared openness is thus created.

In all the above-mentioned cases, another approach is duly suggested: open book management and its application in budgeting, which could be found in many complex situations. As the author elucidates when she resorts to a quotation from Newfield (2016), the open book management can be transformative in higher education as “it might lead to the development of

new values-oriented collective budgeting models, models that neither contribute to the calcification of the status quo nor turn university finances into a re-enactment of The Hunger Games.” (p. 133) When units within higher education institutions managed to weather the storm and the crisis, it was exactly because they had “well-established cultures of open and transparent communication.” When shared insight is built around the decision-making process, we can also build trust, and without transparency, very little can be done and accomplished.

The need for user feedback leads to *nimbleness* and *agility*, which *Chapter 11* masterfully explores in detail. Agility, in its ideological, form – and the author supplies ample proof – requires a kind of flexibility that might be perceived as damaging mostly because such operatives are not sufficiently “agile.” Whereas it is established that individuals who adhere to these perspectives will have to be agile enough to discard traditional culture, it is also clear that “the kinds of agility demanded by organizations and their boards today have little to do with institutional values and goals and everything to do with the market.” (pp. 139-140) Agility was required when the leaders in the academic realm had to drop or add courses, and, in doing so, create a more agile workforce. “According to the American Association of University Professors, fully 73 percent of the instructional labor on campuses across the nation was off the tenure track by 2016, with nearly 50 percent of instructional faculty in either part-time or graduate employee positions.” (Data Snapshot, 2018) (Quoted on p. 140.) Ethical operations are needed when the world of academia has to adapt to changing circumstances. Nowvskie (2022) suggests institutions of higher learning would have to design and build “resilient systems” rather than relying on resilient people.

There is also an argument brought into this creative thinking, which begs us to consider the difference between *agility* and *nimbleness*. Dictionaries agree that “the emphasis in both definitions on quickness and motion is, of course, what the contemporary business world is seeking, a ‘ready ability’ to change directions just in case it should be desired.” (p. 141) According to Fitzpatrick, the focus on learning and wisdom is somehow missing from the concept of *agility*. “In this sense, *nimbleness* lets us draw on the knowledge we already possess even as the circumstances around us change.” (p. 142) When the author looks at practicality in this context, she finds there is a distinction between *agility* and *nimbleness*, which would have a considerable impact on university hiring processes; simultaneously, these practices might need to include training in pedagogy and “a wide range of skills that can ready graduate students for careers that can be deeply rewarding even if they don’t look much like those of their advisors.” (ibid.) What still remains for us to remember is that both notions retain the idea of quickness and motion, even if the focus changes somehow.

In drafting the section on *nimbleness*, the author of the book also resorted to Martin Eve (2022), who acknowledged that our institutions should be enabled to create more full-time positions, and who also described this model of nimbleness as “solidity of employment, but flexibility of role.” (p. 145) The chapter concludes that our institutions can become more nimble and more just in hiring practices if they can ensure “that all jobs on campus are stable, good jobs, not precarious; nimble, not agile.” These are thought to be fundamental contributions to the academic missions in our higher education world.

The corollary of *Chapter 12* shifts to the forms of writing other than the journal articles and monographs and, instead, reflect on an overlooked genre, which is the *narrative*. A key theory of leadership is beautifully developed in front of the reader’s eyes when Fitzpatrick expands the *narrative* to new modes of formative assessment, whereby “we need to get better at telling textured stories about our work and others’ work in ways that compel understanding and engagement. We also need to get better at reading those stories and gathering their significance.” (p. 148) Stories and narratives, therefore, become intrinsic components of the formative process.

The communication of information through narratives is understood here as a tool that requires interpretation and thereby subject to subjectivity. By the same token, writers and readers can utilize narration in multiple ways, like research in the bench sciences, where articles narrate and explore “the presuppositions and questions that led to the research, the method of conducting it, its outcomes, and the questions that remain.” (p. 150), In like manner, most personnel reviews turn narratives into a measurement of the work done, including the goals behind the work, the challenges and the future endeavors – all of the above pointing to stories that may very well become useful strategies for a thought process at work. Compared to numbers, stories may mislead or misinform, but they still need to be tested through interpretation to avoid fabrication.

In order to draw larger audiences, the author of the present volume re-kindles the power of telling of stories in grant applications, in, project proposals, and any other compelling interests in behavioral goals – which, by the way, develop a deeper understanding of the whole process. Competition creates ranking and hierarchy, but in turn they may prove contestable. The significance of stories and narratives can create a meaningful connection with those involved in the transformation process.

If we continue along the same lines, as the author purports, we become aware of the value of sustainability, which is contextualized in *Chapter 13*. The crux of the matter is elucidated when sustainability in community-based systems and structures may present a challenge to those who look at revenues and fund-raising: “Sustainability in this context is double-edged: without the ability to generate revenue, the organization cannot continue doing its work; on the other hand, focusing on revenue generation can pull the organization away from its purpose.” (p. 156) However, sustainability remains highly necessary and valuable if and when we need to transform our organizations.

According to Ostrom (1990) and her long-term study of “common-pool resource management,” there is a reciprocal interaction between *sustainability* and *the public good*. Some declare that what is generally accepted as “the tragedy of the commons”; in fact, Ostrom finds that “community-based systems and structures for ensuring the sustainability of common-pool resources were indeed possible, provided that the right modes of self-organization and self-governance were in place.” (p. 157) There are cases, however, as touted in the same section, when the tragedy of the commons may “become prone to overuse and

eventually become unsustainable.” (ibid.) Sustainability and the public good only benefit from their interaction for the good of the structures, if they are self-organized and self-governed.

The harsh reality, when higher education institutions are compelled to compete with each other, is that this is done by outside forces, governmental and commercial entities, and that is why Fitzpatrick insists that we need “leaders who are able to build and sustain the solidarity required for all our institutions to succeed.” (p. 160) Nonetheless, sustainability might not be sufficient enough; we might also need what *Chapter 14* reasonably acknowledges as equally powerful: *Solidarity*.

The author’s approach to this concept of *solidarity* is described as a requirement “to recognize that understanding the differing and complex concerns that others face is all of our responsibility.” (p. 164) Revising the same idea from previous chapters, the author now states that “all of the people that make up our institutions are its most important component, from the least powerful to the most. All of those people must be considered crucial to the institution’s operation.” (p. 165) When our views regarding tenure differ because of conflicts and employee demands, Fitzpatrick aligns herself with those who are looking “closely at what we expect tenure or its equivalent to do and for extending its most important benefits to all categories of campus employment.” (p. 166) Ergo, all faculty members become inter-dependent, creating thus a real collective, ready to help each other and ensure that all of our needs are met. In other words: *solidarity*.

If we want to synthesize the strong sense of *solidarity* in a few words, we find George Justice (2021), who summarizes the concept in his own words: “being more just, more equitable, and more generous.” These three components are, moreover, deemed as un-separable, because they need to come together. (p. 169) We are now in the position to be able to choose all three if we really want to find solutions to the ever-changing world of academia.

Reworking the whole system of leadership – says Fitzpatrick – may not be an easy task, but faith in our culture and its higher education institutions is found to be the corner stone, with its ups and downs. Criticizing leadership should be replaced by pithy and generous thinking, which can be perused in the last section of the book.

Audacious plans are worked out in *Chapter 15*, when Greg Eow reminisces about the hard work and the collective process in the world of academic libraries. The following three chapters delineate transforming community (Eric Elliott and Benjamin Lowenkron), transforming hiring (Robin Schulze), transforming review (Christopher P. Long, Cara Gilano, Sonja Fritzsche, Bill Hart-Davidson, and Scott Schopieray), transforming leadership in places like *Educopia*, founded in 2006 by Katherine Skinner. They all provide relevant examples of feedback, which in themselves pave the way for *Chapter 20*, entitled *Onward*.

Fitzpatrick finds it hard to come to a conclusion, given the fact that “there isn’t a definite outcome to be highlighted.” (p. 205) Instead, the reader is treated to an enticing and compelling list of things to bear in mind: Start Small – but Think Big, Be Patient – but Not Too Patient, Be Prepared – but Stay Nimble, Play the Long Game, Work in the Environment You Want to Create, and Find – and Share – Other Guides and Sources of Support. The immense transformation that is needed in our higher education system is just beginning.

In a nutshell, Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s approach tackles the concept of leadership in our higher education system with all its failure stories in a highly politicized manner. While, on the one hand, the author of this project acknowledges the values of objective assessment based on numerical evidence, on the other hand, the same author attests to the idea that in fact “what we actually need is more *subjectivity*, more *judgement*, more *politics*,” (p. 149) which basically follows Iris Marion Young’s approach.

The root causes of the current crisis in higher education leadership, in Fitzgerald’s view, would include among other things: the loss of intellectual power to make the right decisions, and an acute sense of dehumanization; the loss of many tenure positions; the profound lack of transparency; the unequal distribution of leadership skills; leaders having too much responsibility and too much authority; not enough trust, directness, documentation, and accountability. Equally important, as the author argues, would be the inability of some people to understand and/or accept climate change, the critical race theory, DEI, and similar concepts; the unwavering support for banning certain books.

The author, however, seems to avoid other serious issues like the indoctrination pushed in certain institutions to teach students *what* to think and not *how* to think. Some students are frustrated and make their opinions very clear: “I no longer have an interest in paying to be told my blackness is a disability and all white people are evil. And asked what my pronouns are when – at least in my opinion – it should be clear as day.” (Pearson, 2023) Furthermore, “More than two-thirds of America’s major universities are prioritizing indoctrination in ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion’ (DEI) ideology over real education. (Minella, 2024) The conclusion finds that 67 percent of major universities require students to take courses in DEI promoting race-based discrimination just to graduate.

Other points of view voice similar concerns: “If our goal is education, not indoctrination, then we must ask ourselves: how can we understand someone’s position if we are unwilling to listen to them? We can’t. However, listening to and platforming has become conflated with agreeing with someone. Again, we face a binary choice instead of a nuanced understanding.” (Carver, 2024) If we want to teach our students to be critical thinkers, we also need to allow for different opinions.

But where is knowledge? If teachers spend most of their time teaching students about climate change, white supremacy, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), the critical race theory, sex orientation, etc., when do they all have time to learn anything else?

Otherwise, *Leading Generously* is a very good example of thorough research and in-depth analysis and insight into innovative possibilities for cooperation in exploring the tools that help, preserve, and foster a real, much needed change and transformation of our academic leadership. A reworking of the whole system of leadership is absolutely necessary. The plethora

of solutions found mostly in the second part of the book may very well solve the obvious crisis in higher education leadership. And criticizing leadership, as the title suggests, should be replaced by pithy and generous thinking.

References

- American Association of University Professors. "Data Snapshot: Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed." AAUP, October 2018. <http://https://www.aaup.org/news/data-snapshot-contingent-faculty-us-higher-ed>
- Carver, S., "Higher Education Shouldn't Mean Higher Indoctrination." *Minding the Campus*, October 8, 2024. Accessed January 9, 2025. <https://www.mindingthecampus.org/2024/10/08/higher-education-shouldnt-mean-higher-indoctrination/>
- Educopia Institute. "About." Accessed June 14, 2023. <https://educopia.org/about/>.
- Eow, Greg. "Interview." April 2021.
- Eve, Martin Paul. "As Before ...". Comment on "Leading Generously," Humanities Common, August 2022
- Fitzpatrick, K. (2021). *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University*. United States: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Laloux, F. (2014). *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness*. Belgium: Nelson Parker.
- Minella, T. "DEI Required: 67% of Universities Mandate 'Diversity' Indoctrination." *Goldwater Institute*, April 2024. Accessed January 9, 2025. <https://nypost.com/2023/01/02/why-im-leaving-college-and-choosing-education-over-indoctrination/>
- Newfield, C. (2016). *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them*. United States: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Nightingale, J., Nightingale, M. (2021). *Unmanageable: Leadership Lessons from an Impossible Year*. Canada: Raw Signal Press.
- "Nimble," adj. *Merriam-Webster Online*. Accessed March 3, 2022.
- "Nimble," adj., adv., and n. *OED Online*. Accessed March 2022.
- Nowvieskie, Bethany. "Design – and Sustain – Resilient Systems." *Twitter*, April 2022
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Pearson, C. J., "Why I'm Leaving College and choosing education over indoctrination." *The New York Post*, January 2, 2023. Accessed January 9, 2025.
- Reitter, P., Wellmon, C. (2021). *Permanent Crisis: The Humanities in a Disenchanted Age*. United Kingdom: University of Chicago Press.
- Schein, E. H., Schein, P. A. (2021). *Humble Inquiry, Second Edition: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling*. United States: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Schulze, R. Interview. 2021.
- Senge, P. M. (2006). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization*. United Kingdom: Crown.
- Skinner, K. *Embracing Change*. Educopia Institute, July 2022.
- Young, I. M. (2011). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.