Preface:
In Defense of Simplicity

Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.

—James MacGregor Burns (1978, p. 2)

This book aspires to respond to Burns’s decades-old observation about “the crisis of leadership” (1978, p. 1). It is a response enabled by a phenomenon not uncommon to human experience, that of a breakthrough in knowledge that advances resolution of intimidating challenges. Notably, such breakthroughs are most dramatic in effect when distillation and interpretation of patterns of information transform understanding and, thereby, behavior. The breakthrough in knowledge, in this instance, pertains to the nature of the human brain and the intelligence it enables. This new knowledge has widespread implications for human understanding and behavior, including Burns’s concern for a failure to “grasp the essence of leadership that is relevant to the modern age” (1978, p. 1). Indeed, emerging information about the brain presents unparalleled opportunity for insight into the essence of leadership, insight such as that anticipated in John Archibald Wheeler’s reflection:

To my mind there must be, at the bottom of it all, not an equation, but an utterly simple idea. And to me that idea, when we finally discover it, will be so compelling, so inevitable, that we will say to one another, “oh, how beautiful. How could it have been otherwise?” (quoted in Wheatley, 1992, p. xiv)
The task we have set for ourselves in this book is the creation of a framework that bridges reflection about effective leadership practice to breakthrough knowledge about the nature of human intelligence. To that end, we propose a structure that facilitates alignment of leadership behavior to the nature and nurture of human capacity to learn and achieve. It is a simple framework, but one that both mirrors and accesses the natural and powerful operations of the human brain.

Is this a framework that supports the distillation of essential insights that will transform leadership behavior? Does the framework itself represent a breakthrough in perception about leadership purpose and practice? The answers to these questions reside in the mind of the reader—answers that will unfold in your mind as you process and apply the information that follows in *Connecting Leadership to the Brain.*