A SOCIOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE METAPHOR OF THE LEADER AND THE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: The paper expands upon the assumption that nowadays our society is extremely obsessed by leadership acknowledging that nearly any economic or social problem can be solved by better leadership. Consequently leadership implies an enlightening and refreshing understanding of such an important topic. Mats Alvesson and André Spicer's study forwards the leader as a hero. In order to understand the faith invested in leadership the debate is focused on different types of managers who try to "do" leadership. The six metaphors of the leaders referred to are: as a saint, cosy-crafter, commander, cyborg and bully. These will offer insights into the way leadership does or does not work and also renders a varied, sometimes contradictory or even darker side of leadership.

Keywords: leadership, leader, metaphors, managers

Our society is focused on leadership which is seen as a catch-all solution for nearly any problem, irrespective of context.

The two well-established and leading critical scholars Mats Alvesson and André Spicer together with other professors and researchers forward a study on the leader as a hero. The debate is focused on different types of managers who try to "do" leadership.Mats Alvesson and André Spicer's study would be an ideal correspondent to many of the 'traditional' leadership courses offered for the reason that it opens up discussion about the nature of leadership and the way in which we understand it. The leadership approached from a metaphorical viewpoint contributes to creating a new awareness and understanding of the complexity of various aspects of everyday life and organizations.

Alvesson and Spicer define metaphor as that which "allows an object to be perceived and understood from the viewpoint of another object" (34). It presents an objective reality used for illustrative purposes. It also encloses knowledge that develops or is built up from multiple points of view. Through metaphors the authors present a deductive analysis and association between the leader i.e. the target and the follower i.e. the source. It renders an approach in which various meanings are mixed and also an approach which has its roots in meanings shared between cultures (42-44). The metaphor is capable to express a large amount of information at one time and it can be practically applied across a variety of cultures.

The focus is on the theories related to leadership, analyses business publications and media reports of leaders. All these findings are combined with personal narratives gathered from interviews with different kind of business leaders and their employees. It tackles leadership in terms of six metaphors classified on the basis of people's attempt to define leaders, and the values, feelings and beliefs of what it means to be a leader in the real world. In addition, the authors claim that leadership nowadays is an ambiguous or vague concept and becomes even more complicated due to the definitions and theories applied on it. The metaphors that emerge are not limited and allow a more doubtful viewpoint to come out with that is more descriptive of the reality of leadership and seldom described in literature. They suggest that leadership should be regarded as a complex social construction that is highly contextual. The perceptions of the leadership metaphors will change according to the

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individual's aims, the organization's or personal performance expectations, the stability of the workplace environment; the importance of crisis situations as well as the overall culture of the organization. The study ends explaining the way in which the metaphors may be expressed and understood by leaders and how this scholarship may be used as a resource by students, practitioners and leadership teachers.

Alvesson and Spicer take us through the journey of leadership theory starting with the financial crisis in 2008 which has given the critical management scholars enough material for another decade of work. The introductory chapter impresses through the simplicity of the writing, and the way the authors take the reader through the key debates, theories, and ways in which to understand leadership with its good and bad parts. Alvesson and Spicer make their message clear: too much weight is given to leadership as a concept denoting the solution to all our problems, and leaders are all too often glorified or criticized very harshly. The moment people see that things go wrong they either blame leaders or claim that there is a lack of leadership. By taking us through the main theories, debates and critiques, the authors evince different ways of approaching leadership. The approach to leadership consists of: traits of self or how the leader influences traits in others to develop or emerge, the behavior in relation to the task or people, how leaders operate in different place-time situations, the emergence of leaders from a group where learning has been shared democratically, the change or transformational leaders influencing followers via compensation or contract on one hand or influencing followers via motivation and commitment to goals on the other hand.

The traits of leadershipare those that turn someone into a leader (House & Aditya, 1977). These include: (1) innate aspect of the self; (2) leader motivation such as pro social or power based approaches to set goals, pursuit of goals to achieve desired outcome and ac-quire status to exert onto others for positive organizational purposes (McClelland & Burnham, 1976); (3) self-confidence and (4) flexibility and social sensitivity. All assume that traits are rarely stable over time and may come out as the situation demands.

It appears that behaviour styleof leaders is either task oriented or people centered. The contingency approach (Feidler, 1967) explains how different leaders will operate in different contexts and organizational settings. These behaviors are inconsistent and difficult to measure. The post heroic theoriespresent a shared, distributed leadership in which leaders emerge from a democratized collective or through a peer leadership or mutual learning process. The principle maintains that anyone can become a leader.

Last but not least, the transformational leadershipdebates upon the way in which leaders manage meaning for followers: on one hand followers are managed by transactions or sanctions (transactional) or on the other hand followers feel committed to purpose (transformational). Leaders will influence frames and meanings in followers to define their reality (Smirchich & Morgan, 1982; Fairhurst, 2004).

Understanding leadership as Alvesson and Spicer present it is rather a connection with metaphoric lenses that can be used by leaders to organize their behavior and intention toward particular types of outcomes; followers attempt to understand what leaders are doing; and most importantly and both leaders and followers to see leadership behavior in relationship to the context.

After having briefly summarized how metaphors might be used to study leadership, the authors expand upon various metaphors of the leader and the type of leadership approached: the leader as saint, gardener, buddy, commander, cyborg and bully, which are specified in the table below:

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Types of Leaders	Types of Leadership
Leaders as Saints	Leadership through Moral Peak Performance
Leaders as Gardeners	Leadership through Facilitating Growth
Leaders as Buddies	Leadership through Making People Feel Good
Leaders as Commanders	Leadership through Creating Clear Direction
Leaders as Cyborgs	Leadership through Mechanistic Superiority
Leaders as Bullies	Leadership through Intimidation

Table 1. Types of leaders and leadership

The authors expand on each and present them in ways that make us think about our choices, while using language that communicated more effectively and makes us reflect upon leadership roles, or make sense of intention and behavior of leader's as we attempt to follow their direction.

Mats Alvesson and Andre Spicer present two dimensions:

-recognizing the importance of the relationship of a leadership metaphor with context; and

-exploring the dark side of each metaphor.

Mats Alvessonrenders the 'leader as saint' and the way he is perceived and understood as a figure who is typically more interested in reaching the moral peak of performance than in profits and may appear less frequently at the highest levels of organizations. This kind of leadership is based on trust and authenticity. The dark side of saint-leadership is marked by thefollowers who become too dependent on the saint leader for self-identification and are asked to make unreasonable sacrifices. The leaders may rely on the followers for answers on complex business matters they chose not to understand.

Tony Huzzzard and Sverre Spoelstra debate upon the 'leader as gardener' who guides followers facilitating their personal growth. In this context the employee-follower is the 'plant', working in an environment (workplace culture) created by the organization. This type of leader pays attention to the development and supervises the growth i.e. productivity of the employee-follower through performance goals and appraisals and providesessential support (e.g. knowledge through training or coaching) when the employee shows sign of stress (e.g. lacking in skills to work at a higher level of responsibility). The gardener will empower their employee-followers to reach personal fulfillment while achieving high levels of productivity for the organization.

The dark side of gardener-leadership show that the followers become dependent on the gardener leader for survival but if they grow beyond their desired limit may be brought back into a manageable form (pruned) or eliminated (weeded out).

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Stefan Sveningsson and Martin Blomtackle the 'leader as a buddy' who works to ensure that employees feel good and are ready to deal with the anxieties, uncertainties and changes in everyday workplace culture. Their aim is to improve their employee-follower wellbeing and encourage them to perform their best, while generating performance to meet the organization goals. They do this in many different ways such as 'cheer-leading to lift the spirit of employee-follower', 'supporting the need for recognition' and 'praise and knowing individuals on a first name basis'. They behave as a safeguard between the employees and the absence of feeling and interest of upper level managers. The 'buddy-leader' is empathetic to the needs of the employees, and understands their concerns and personal challenges.

The dark side of buddy-leadership presents the hierarchical relations in which the context matters:

- in the European countries leaders are 'less willing to be authoritarian, describing themselves to be more pacifist and equal, soft, supporting to their followers' (104).
- in knowledge intensive organizations, there is a strong sense of "we", social belonging and identity. These are typically workplaces requiring highly specialized skills and there is a concerted effort to retain employees and create workplace of autonomy (105).
- the fashion of the times creates a society that provides people with comfort and self-esteem. This leadership ethos flows down to the managers who are characterized as being 'egalitarian and buddy-like'. It is a progressive alternative to industrial, hierarchial, non enlightened and in-humane forms of leadership (106).

André Spicer presents the 'leader as a commander'. The emphasis is on leaders who are very dominant persons, driven by an intense desire to achieve, intolerant of failure and willing to break rules, taking quick and direct action to achieve goals. They attempt to set a clear direction by taking command, creating clear demands, using coercive power or physical force if necessary, make quick decisions and enforce social order. With leadership style originating in the military, the commander leads from the front and while making demands of the employee-followers, the leader themselves will work continuously alongside their followers.

The dark side of commander-leadership presents the followers who become dependent on the commander leader for self-identity. The abusive nature of the commander's leadership becomes their norm of socially acceptable behavior for the devoted follower-employees.

Sara Louise Muhr debates upon the 'leader as a cyborg'. The key words are 'rationality' and 'efficiency in the workplace'. The 'cyborg leader' is the one who stands for 'machine like efficiency' and places great emphasis on delivering the results. These types of leaders are recruited by many organizations to enable radical improvement.

The dark side of cyborg-leadership expands upon the followers and leaders who become dependent on each other for self-esteem, social acceptance and confidence. When these dependencies are disrupted, stress and anxiety take hold. The cyborg-leader will sacrifice a lot in order to become perfect and skillful at their job, so perfect they end up roboticizing themselves… leaving a dehumanized impression (139). Followers become dependent on the cyborg-leader for their own identity and cannot survive if severed from the likeminded, high performing collective.

Dan Kärreman renders the 'leader as a bully' and the way leaders often brutally sanction those who follow. This approach focuses on the way leadership involves underscoring norms and keeping up standards through bullying those who do not contribute enough. He concludes that the bully-leader is persuasive and capable of controlling the workplace and able to stabilize changeable situations by neutralizing difficult employee-followers by imposing disassociation from the group. The bully-leader is able to impose

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ideology by casting dissenters as outsiders and put forward the agenda of the organization by intimidating any contrary voices.

The dark side of bully-leadership tackles the fact that the bully-leader is an area in the literature that has explored the dark side of leadership (Einansen et al, 2007; Harvey et al, 2007 and Ferris et al, 2007).

Any employee-follower can be a target and by denying the individual respect it will injure their dignity and lead to exclusion from the collective group. Using intimidation and fear, the bully-leader metaphor parallels the cyborg and commander-leaders. Delegating the strategy of bullying was recommended by Machiavelli as a leadership strategy; the bully behaviour will induce mistrust of the leader amongst all employee-followers, disrupting the work-place and will be discouraged in most democratic organizations.

Alvesson and Spicer, the editors, attempt to bring all the ideas presented together. They rethink the idea of using metaphors when discussing about leadership. They attempt to set this approach in connection to the idea of looking at 'leadership as a language game'. They also present some fascinating combinations of metaphors that could be investigated in future work. They review the central argument of the study focusing on the way metaphors might be used in education and leadership to a great extent, and suggest the need for further exploration of new metaphors of leadership.

To conclude this great study is a must-read for beginners of leadership literature and provides a simple way to comprehend the complex and enigmatic phenomenon of leadership. Applying these metaphors, leaders can decide their own leadership styles and comprehend follower perceptions and expectations of leadership. The employee- followers can identify the reasons and comprehend what the realreason of the actions of their metaphor-leaders is.

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