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Leadership and the Ethics of late Modernity

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Leadership and the Ethics of late Modernity

Six top officials of formal organisations have been asked to develop their views on leadership. Their statements on and around leadership have been interpreted as expressions of the ethical environment in which these individuals live and work. We gain access to the space of norms of late Modernity and we rediscover the Weberian Iron Cage as well as attempts to slip through the bars of the cage.

Introduction[1]

This interview study was initiated within a research project with 'Leadership' as its subject matter. Interviews under way, and transcripts, too, I became acutely aware of the ontological status of leadership (*ledarskap*) that seemed to be talking out of the texts. There is no such 'thing' as leadership. Leadership is a word and it is used to accomplish something in discourse. Discourse itself is produced in a context. Context is never the same. As a consequence, what was initially a "groundless theory" approach was transformed into ordinary (i. e. at least half-conscious) abduction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994, p. 41-47); in this case, empirical work temporally preceding much of the theorising.

The initial purpose of the project was formulated as an inquiry into the views of top officials on leadership, management, and organisational practice, which was planned to be compared to academic knowledge on managerial work. I seemed, however, unable to ask the right questions. Instead, it became apparent that what I was actually hearing in the interviews were the self-presentations of a number of individuals. They were not explicating there own theories to me, they were presenting themselves as leaders. Now, what kind of interpretative scheme might be of value to say something important about these self-presentations?

The Space of Norms in late Modernity

Gustafsson (1988) provides the useful concept 'space of norms' to characterise the state of affairs in modern life. There is no single norm par excellence from which all other norms follow. Instead of imagining the world as people living within and through a one-dimensional

hierarchy of norms, we ought to see it as people living within and through a multidimensional *space* of norms in which there are several ethical structures, i. e. sets of interrelated norms with some common theme. According to Gustafsson, and, just to give another reference, Berger & Luckmann (1966, p. 192-193), we should expect life in this modern state of affairs to be conflict ridden.

Gustafsson distinguishes five ethical structures that seem to have a rather firm position in the modern space of norms. *The Ethics of Credibility*; norms of maintaining the credibility of an individual in the eyes of others. Such norms include 'to tell the truth', 'not to lie', 'not to break promises', 'not to fool others'. *The Ethics of Humanness* focuses on notions of inviolable rights of all human beings; of human rights; care for the weak; various forms of equality. A central notion in this ethical structure is altruism. *The Ethics of Capability* include norms of efficiency, effort and rationality. Capability encompasses both physical action and productive thinking. *The Ethics of the Future* is an ethical structure that tells us that we should think of and act in the interest of future generations. The survival of civilisation, in balance with nature, is a central theme in this ethical structure. *Rituals* are often very strong norms in social situations. Concepts such as politeness, good behaviour, good custom are used to express such norms.

A dominant thought in Weberian sociology (cf. Weber, 1934) and Gustafsson's own work is that the Ethics of Capability have come to dominate the minds of modern people. The process of rationalisation may well have gone so far that many people, especially business people, may well be unable to even understand a question such as "Why should one be efficient?" Is this the case? Is the phenomenon valid only in business settings? We will hint answers to these questions here and we will also supplement Gustafsson's terminology.

Theoretical foundations

The guiding light in this article is a view of reality as social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Language is the paramount tool in this process of socially constructing the world. The view of language used in this article sees language as a intricate set of interrelated definitions searching for its counterparts in reality. Language is neither created as a reflection of reality nor a self-sustaining linguistic universe. Language is a historically produced, rather stable, tool in the hands of the speaker. Language is used to (re)create reality. The function of the tool resides with its built in potential for interpreting the flow of experience and thereby make sense

[1] The author holds a position as research assistant at the Centre for Management and Organization within the Economic Research Institute (EFI) at the Stockholm School of Economics. The author is highly indebted to Daniel Ericsson and Ingalill Holmberg,

of it (in terms of e g 'happiness', 'power', 'status', 'security', 'justice' and many other culturally central concepts).

All statements are made at a specific interval in time and, normally, in a definable place. The first principle of hermeneutics (the interpretation of texts) is that the text must be understood in terms of this historical (temporal and spatial) context (Palmer, 1969).[2] No statement has meaning in a vacuum. Statements, of course, refer to something other than themselves (i. e. to other acts), which makes them intelligible. That something, our postulate states, is not just other statements, but experiences in everyday life, including body movements of self and others, physical objects, as well as various states of consciousness.

Sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969) are concepts that strongly attract our attention. These concepts do not lend themselves to unitary definitions (like most other words, we might add; see Wittgenstein, 1953, e. g point 79). Senzitizing concepts may be seen as part of a relatively stable and encompassing cultural material from which the individual draws to explicate his or her reality. It is the major postulate of this article that by asking individuals to verbalise their views on and around such a concept we gain access to experiences from the more local setting in which the individual spends most of her awake hours. We expect differences between the interviewees to emanate, although we are focusing on one common word. The word is indeed the link between structure and event (Ricoeur, 1974) Structure is here though of as experiences of meaning in everyday life; especially experiences of ethical structures in a space of norms. The event in question is, of course, the interview. Here, we focus on the word 'leadership'.

Leadership is certainly one of the 'buzzwords' of our times. But what do we mean by it? It seems to be a good idea to once in a while step back from advanced theorising to the basic questions: What do people refer to when they use the word? What do people referred to as leaders 'read into' their own leadership? What kind of ethical environment, if any, is it that these statements refer to? And furthermore: can reposing these questions help us see something that has been forgotten in advanced theorising?

It is of importance to remind the reader that what is presented and analysed here are the statements (speech acts), not (other kinds of) actions nor connections between statements and actions. We make no *inference* from these statements to conditions outside the interview. We

both at the Stockholm School of Economics, for their comments on drafts of this paper.
[2] The entire book is a valid reference here. On page 242, however, the conclusion is stated as succinctly as it could be.

have no basis for such an inference. The statements, however, will be *interpreted* in terms of theoretical conceptualisations and in the light of other statements made in the interviews.

Methodology

Interviews are situations in which reality is constructed. It should be considered part of trivia that talk produced in interview situations constitutes reconstructed logic. Talk in interviews can be expected to be a mixture of aspirations, rationalisations and expressions faithful to subjective experience of truth, to a large extent driven by a wish to maintain face.

In this research project, six high-rank officials in formal organisations have been asked to develop their views on leadership and on what constitutes successful leadership, as well as their views on how their organisations work. The managers interviewed have been chosen so as to represent a wide range of societal sectors, all outside or at the margins of the sphere of privately or publicly owned corporations. The interviewees are: a Bishop in the Swedish Church, a General Director at a National Authority, a Secretary of a political party's youth organisation together with one of her colleagues, a General Manager of a nation-wide lobbying organisation, a Regional Director at another national authority, and a Theatre Director.

All interviews have begun with very open-ended discussions of the organisation in question and of the notion of leadership. One more specific question that has been posed in all the interviews is whether the interviewee perceives a difference between leadership and management. (This question was a fundamental part of the original project, but it proved very helpful here too.)

The interviews ranged from one and a half to two hours. They have been tape-recorded and full transcripts have subsequently been typed by the interviewer. The interview transcripts have been read through time and time again in order to get deep knowledge of what has actually been said.

The interviews will be presented one by one in separate sections. Description and (deeper) interpretation is mixed in these presentations. Comparison between the interviews will be used to formulated concluding interpretations in a separate section.

The Managers' views

The General Director

The General Director easily rabbles the facts of his organisation; what they do; how work is formally organised; how many and how much of what that is done. The interviewer, trying to pose a question, is interrupted:

> "I just want to say that when we started this we had to build up internal administration. There was nothing here, huh, so we had to build up a finance department, personnel- and wages administration, a personnel policy, a work environment policy, the computerisation situation that I mentioned… the negotiating culture within the Authority. All that has been done simultaneously."[3] (The General Director)

The General Director of the newly formed National Authority (a merger of several smaller government agencies) further tells us that he became formally responsible for one of the most criticised organisations in the government sector; an organisation that had undergone a long period of deterioration in quality and acceleration of costs. He assembled key personnel from all over the country (more than one hundred people) to a three-day conference, at which he performed massive preaching about the absolute necessity of increasing productivity in the handling of routine matters, in order to meet demands posed by Law. The changes that followed, the director claims, is in large circles referred to as a revolution.

I asked if there is a difference between being a manager and being a leader.

> "A good manager is a leader. A bad manager is not a leader. Formally, you can be the manager. It is a position you are given. I mean, if the board appoints you as CEO of a company or if the government appoints me as General Director, they have made me the manager. But, those appointing someone as manager is at the same time hoping to have provided the organisation with a leader. That is the most important aspect of recruiting mangers; to hit the right spot, to get a manager who is also prepared and able to be a leader."[4] (The General Director)

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[3] "Jag vill bara säga då att när vi nu startade det här så fick vi ju också bygga upp den interna administrationen. Här fanns ju ingenting med vad, utan vi hade att bygga upp en ekonomiförvaltning, en personal– och löneförvaltning, personalpolitiskt program, arbetsmiljöprogram, ADB-sitsen som jag nämnt… förhandlingskulturen i myndigheten etc. Allt det där har skett parallellt."

[4] "En bra chef är en ledare. En usel chef är ingen ledare. Formellt kan man vara chef, det är en formell position man ger någon, va. Jag menar, om styrelsen sätter dig som VD i ett företag eller om regeringen utnämner mig till GD så har de utnämnt mig till chef, men den som utnämner någon till chef har ju samtidigt förhoppningen att man också då förser verksamheten med en ledare och det är ju egentligen det viktigaste inom området chefsrekrytering, det är ju att man träffar rätt, att man får en chefsperson som också kan… är beredd och har förmågan att fungera som ledare."

I went on to ask what kind of abilities one should have to be able to exercise leadership in this kind of organisation. The General Director responded by giving me a résumé of his own career. Then, the conclusion:

> ”That is the first thing, to make clear for oneself what assignment one has or has taken or has been given. Secondly, to be prepared to communicate that mission to the organisation one has been put to lead.”[5] (The General Director)

And again:

> ”[…] when you are clear on this [the assignment], to be prepared to clarify and translate the message, the assignment, out in the entire organisation. And in various ways see to that this is known and that one is keeping up. Because if you do not have the organisation with you the top brass will float on top, thinking that one is completing the assignment.”[6] (The General Director)

Translating, in the sense of writing documents and talking to co-workers in various settings.

> ”Well… I think that an important part of a leadership is also to be adequately forward or unafraid when it comes to the rules and money. […] One has to keep a reserve so that one can take initiative or satisfy good propositions, requests.”[7] (The General Director)

The interview has a pattern. The General Director obviously tries to present the organisation in a very elaborate manner. He is also quick to relate his own background and experience of leading positions in the public sector. Formal competence and formal organisation seems important. He also repeats his view on the importance of the assignment. This is the Ethics of Capability and merit. That is not the end of the story however. The General Director, only after an hour of conversation, shifts to the ethics of humanness and to another variation of the Ethics of Capability, in the sense smartness (you have to keep eyes and ears to the ground, you have to reserve some spending money, you have to get around professional rivalries).

The General Director tells us about an experience from a time when he was heading another large organisation. New on the job, he quickly observed that there was something wrong with

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[5] ”Det är alltså det första, att man måste själv så att säga var klar över vilket uppdrag är det jag har eller jag åtar mig eller har fått? För det andra, att vara beredd att kommunicera det här uppdraget ut i den organisation man är satt att leda.”

[6] ” […] när man är klar över detta, att man är beredd då att tydliggöra och översätta budskapet, uppdraget, ut i hela organisationen. Och på olika vägar se till att detta blir känt och att man hänger med. För att om man inte har organisationen med, så kommer så att säga ledningsgarnityret att flyta ovanpå och tro att man klarar uppdraget.”

[7] ”Ja… jag tror att ett viktigt inslag i ett ledarskap också är att vara lagom framfusig eller orädd när det gäller regelsystemet och pengar. […] Man måste alltså alltid spara ett utrymme så att man vid behov kan ta initiativ eller tillmötesgå bra uppslag, önskemål.”

the way the organisation was working. What it was, he did not know. Under hard pressure to reduce spending, he spent several months analysing the organisation's way of functioning, suspending practical work. Finally, he found what he believed to be the problem. One small centralised planning department, and one individual in particular, was seen as the root of most troubles. The department was simply abolished. Staff were relocated within the organisation, with the unique exemption of the one individual who was characterised as a "power person" with extreme negative influence on the organisation. Satisfactory cost reductions were consequently achieved.

Drawing on his profound experience of long-range planning within the government sector, he states that long-term planning is basically a waste of resources. On the contrary:

> " […] an important component of leadership is to have all senses attend to trends, political signals, or other things of importance to the organisation one is leading, in order to as quickly as possible form a strategy for handling changes in the environment, increasing demands, or increasing expectations."[8] (The General Director)

> "Yes, the most important ingredient of leadership is indeed to be clear on the overarching, principal issues."[9] (The General Director)

The General Director uses this example to illustrate a general point. He has come to be very sceptical towards the phenomenon of complete reorganisation. He feels that many managers would have taken drastic measures right away if they had been in his shoes, not being patient and diligent enough to perform a thorough investigation into the functioning of the organisation.

> "Throwing out all the old stuff is foolish"[10] (The General Director)

Indeed, throwing out all the old stuff would certainly undermine the most elementary demands of an Ethics of Humanness; such acts it would imply that what had gone on beforehand had been completely stupid, thereby putting many other people in a very poor light indeed.

[8] " […] en väsentlig komponent i ett ledarskap att ha ögon och öron på vid gavel så att man fångar upp utvecklingstrender, politiska signaler, eller annat som är av betydelse för den verksamhet man leder, så att man så snabbt som möjligt formar en strategi för hur man skall agera för att möta ändrade omvärldsförändringar, hot, ibland, eller ökade anspråk eller ökade förväntningar."
[9] "Ja, lederskapets viktigaste ingrediens det är ju att vara tydligt i de övergripande, principiella frågorna."
[10] "Att slänga ut allt gammalt är dumt."

This story, however has more to it than that. It also implies that the General Director is capable, indeed more capable than many others. This kind of claim is of course a breach of an Ethics of Humanness, but it is one towards which we would probably be more lenient since those who are belittled in comparison to the General Director himself are other people on top of the social ladders, i. e. other managers. (It is also a way of indirectly establishing 'the manager' as an institution, but that is another story…) The capability of the General Director is also implied in the first quotation (see above). The personal capability theme is apparent also in the giving of his own career résumé as an answer to the question of what abilities one should have to be a leader in this kind of organisation.

The General Director seems rather proud to have managed to bypass old inter- and intraprofessional rivalries by opening up activities to international (mostly Nordic) influences and inspection; by a process of standardization of work procedures and procedures for measuring the quality of work in Nordic co-operation, the local i. e. national rivalries have been diminished.

Towards the end of the interview, focus has shifted, however, from leadership as preaching to leadership as supporting other people, to back them up, to give preconditions for others. The General Director claims that most people can and want to be leaders if only the preconditions exist. This may well be seen as a shift from the Ethics of Capability to the Ethics of Humanness; from emphasis of the worth of the General Director himself to the worth of others.

The General Director often says "we" to indicate that a number of people at the manager office have been involved in some particular effort to exercise leadership. When discussing the formulation of mission, he states:

> "That presupposes a dialogue with one's colleagues, because you can't sit there in your Ivory Tower and sort that out. It is a combination of finding out where you are, how you perceive the mission and what you want to do… in a dialogue with and influenced by your closest co-workers."[11] (The General Director)

This might be interpreted as references to the Ethics of Capability, in the sense of making use of available resources. It may also, and simultaneously be interpreted as a reference the

[11] "Det förutsätter ju en dialog med sin närmaste medarbetarkrets, för man kan inte kan inte sitta enskilt i tornets topp och reda ut det här, men det är alltså en kombination att reda ut var man står och hur man uppfattar uppdraget och vad man vill under… i en dialog med och under påverkan av den närmaste medarbetarkretsen."

Swedish Jantelag, according to which one should not think too highly of oneself, at least not publicly. Jantelagen would probably have to be assorted both to the Ethics of Capability and to the Ethics of Humanness – by acknowledging your own limitations, you are simultaneously opening up for the worth of others, thereby upholding a sense of equality. Jantelagen, itself, may be seen as a solution to an ethical problem; a subscription to Jantelagen serves to pay reverence to several ethical structures. It may well be interpreted as a temporally and geographically established attempt at solution of the problem of living in the space of norms of late Modernity.

Now, we may further ask whether Gustafsson's terminology is exhaustive to round up the views of the General Director. I think not. I would like to introduce the notion of an *Ethic of Servility*, which sets the basic tone of much of what is said in this interview. In his many references to 'the assignment', the General Director seems to be trying to affirm that he is in effect implementing the will of someone else in his activities as a leader. This notion of leadership is indeed a notion of servanthood. The leader is not the ultimate leader, but rather someone who better than others execute this or that particular will. In this case, it is the will of the government that is this ultimate will, to which the lower-level leader is servile.

The Secretary

In the political youth's organisation, the "glow" is said to have been fading away in recent years. There was an unwillingness to accept assignments, old members were dropping out and new members were few. Analysis led to the conclusion that leadership was the problem. In order to come to terms with it, the Secretary instigated a Leader Development Program with one full-time employee located at the central office.

A major part of the Secretary's own activities is made up of travelling around among local organisations, setting up and participating in new forms of meetings. Various modes of play, "brain-storming", "pep-talk" and confidence-building exercises are currently being tried, supposedly with great success. At one instance, representatives from all local and regional level organisations were gathered to a planning conference at which a number of these new forms were used, supervised by an external consultant specialised in leadership issues. The Secretary is very pleased with the resulting level of creativity.

A new concept has been invented to signify the new kind of leadership: Co-creative leadership.

> ”Co-creative leadership… It has to do with ‘I want’, ‘I can’, not ‘I must’, and that you feel a part of the organisation. You are working with what you wish and you are getting something out of it. You say that you are going to organise a course and you are supposed to get everybody to say what they want to do without having to give orders to anybody. ”[12] (The Secretary)

> ” […] a leader does not have to be a manager, but a manager must be a leader.”[13] (The Secretary)

The Secretary speculates that there is a marked difference between profit-seeking companies and non-profit, voluntary organisation when it comes to motivating people. In the voluntary organisation, there are no economic incentives for working, a fact, she argues, that makes the degree of fun at work all the more important. Her perceptions of herself as a leader may be understood in light of this:

> ”How do you wish to be perceived then? (The Interviewer)

> ”Well, as thing are, I think that I am perceived as a positive person who can inspire and lift people’s spirits, I think, and as one who can break down organisational hierarchy. That’s what I think.” (The Secretary)[14]

Here, the Secretary was actually not asked how she thinks she is perceived, but rather how she wants to be perceived. A shift from ambitions into judgements of factual matters is made in what might be understood as preconscious or conscious image-management, within the frame of the Ethics of Capability.

In the case of the political youth’s organisation, focus is different indeed from in the Authority. Who are we? What is our purpose? How are we to realise that purpose? Surprisingly, these questions, that seem to be the most important ones in an ‘idealistic’ organisation, are not resolved internally, but rather with the help of external actors. At the aforementioned conference aimed at producing a plan of action for the next year, an external consultant seems to have played an important part indeed:

> ”Furthermore, all the time we had that guy from [name of consulting firm] who listened to what we said and summarised it so that we could understand ourselves what we meant. That was like his role. So, he gave us assignments, and we made them, and he summarised. He was in fact the

[12] ”Medskapande ledarskap […] Det är det här att man känner ”jag vill”, ”jag kan”, inte ”jag måste” och att man känner att man är med i en organisation. Man arbetar med det man vill göra och man får någonting för det. Man… man säger att man skall ha en kurs och så skall man få alla att säga vad de vill göra på hela kursen utan att behöva ge order till någon.”
[13] ”Ja, en ledare måste inte vara chef, men en chef måste vara en ledare. ”
[14] ”Hur vill du bli uppfattad då?” ”Ja, jag tror att som det är nu att man uppfattar mig som en positiv människa som kan peppa folk tror jag och en som kan bryta ned organisationshierarkier. Det tror jag.”

> leader of discussions made it all come together, that's a way to put it. But, all the time it was we who came up with the ideas and decided what we were thinking and so forth."[15]

This quotation includes a turn; the words said at the beginning seem to be saying something like "we have abdicated from leadership". The second half of the passage is an attempt to turn around the implication of the already spoken. The Secretary lives in a space of norms including the Ethics of Capability; if you claim to be a leader, you have to take care of some things yourself. One of the important things to take care of is the (contextually) defining activities of leadership itself.

This turn may well have another dimension. Not only do the words at the beginning of the quotation seem to undermine the Secretary's claims to leadership, it also seems to be putting the formation of collective purpose in a political party's youth organisation in the hands of an external actor. This may perhaps be seen as yet a breach of the Ethics of Capability; in a democratic political party, the members are supposed to arrive at collective purpose themselves.

Purporting to be supportive of thoroughgoing decentralisation in society, the Party and its youth organisation, both remain classic political organisations with a rather strong central office in the Capital. The Secretary, when asked, is ready to accept that there is a certain kind of tension between the activity of advocating decentralisation and the top-down manner in which current developments in the youths' organisation are directed. The very program of developing 'co-creative leadership' was initiated, and is run, from the central office (by a colleague who was interviewed together with the Secretary), and with the help of external consultants. After some discussion in the interview situation she arrives at the conclusion that there is a difference between leadership and 'professionalism' (interpreted here as synonymous to 'good management'). More or less against her own ideologically motivated will, the manager must in all instances keep on doing her job. Management is necessary, even in a voluntary organisation. It is interesting that the Secretary develops a distinction here. It seems to come over her that an important part of her leadership is actually made up of activities to set up situations in which co-creative leadership may be exercised. These activities, however, are not in themselves expressions of co-creative leadership. Perhaps, she therefore feels compelled to call it professionalism. But, then again, she is not very systematic in her use of words:

[15] "Sedan hade vi hela tiden han från Ledarinstitutet som lyssnade på vad vi sa och sammanfattade vad vi sa så att vi själva förstod vad vi menade. Det var liksom hans roll då. Så att han gav oss uppgifter, vi gjorde dem och han sammanfattade. Han var ju

> ”If we ignore this thing leadership. What is management?” (The Interviewer)

> ”It is to… to see visionary how one is to develop one’s company, one’s workplace or one’s organisation. Hm, to lift your eyes, kind of to see what it takes for us to get there. Look at what paths of change one has to go to develop, get more products sold, get more members…”[16] (The Secretary)

Towards the very end of the interview, the Secretary mentions that she has the ambition to organise work in the organisations ”in accordance with Life”. This is the first, and only reference to an explicit connection between the party’s ideology and party work itself that is of non-instrumental character. Throughout the interview, ideology is dealt with as an aim, a goal of party activities (forming plans of action, having fun, supporting, being co-creative etc.). The sudden talk of ”in accordance with Life” is, at least in my mind, a clear reference to the Ethics of Credibility. ‘Live as you learn’ is perhaps the most central norm in this ethical structure. It might be considered surprising that such a reference comes so late in a self-presentation of a political activist. What it marks, however, is the strong position of the Ethics of Capability (where instrumental rationality is central). The ”in accordance with Life” expression may also be seen as a reference both to the Ethics of Humanness, as well as to the Ethics of the Future. This particular expression has many potential functions in discourse.

The Bishop

> ”I think that for me leadership is something more than management, Management, that is to make certain decisions. It is about being superordinated… systems of rules. Leadership is something more. It contains many, many elements. It is a question of a kind of holistic picture. It is to have an experience to offer. It is a question of having an interest in looking a bit further ahead. Tomorrow’s issues and problems. This goes for management as well, of course, but what I am saying is that there are more elements in leadership. It is about ideology, one would say. To have a profound reflection, not just that, but also an identity in the context of beliefs of which you are part. I think that we in our society should have a little *Erenrätt* for this to be a *förebild*. Well, those are some thoughts that I have. I mean, that is, that it is more than being a manager.”[17] (The Bishop)

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samtalsledare och fick ihop det hela om man säger så. Men det var ju hela tiden vi som kom med idéerna och bestämde vad vi tyckte och sådär.”

[16] ”Det är att… att se visionärt hur man skall utveckla sitt företag, sin arbetsplats eller sin organisationen öh lyfta blicken, liksom se vad det är som krävs för att vi skall komma dit. Se vilka olika förändringsvägar man behöver gå för att utvecklas, få fler produkter sålda, få fler medlemmar…”

[17] I: ”Om jag säger ledarskap, vad tänker du på då?” ”Jag tror att för mig är ledarskap någonting mer än chefskap. Chefskap det är att fatta vissa beslut. Det handlar om att vara överordnad, regelsystem. Ledarskap är någonting mer. Det innehåller många, många element Det är fråga om en slags helhetsbild. Det är att en ha en erfarenhet att bjuda på. Det är fråga om intresse att blicka lite granna längre. Morgondagens frågor och problem. Det gäller naturligtvis också en chef, men vad jag säger är att det finns fler element i ledarskap. Det är frågan om ideologi, skulle man säga. Att ha en ordentlig reflektion, inte bara det, utan också en

In Swedish, there exists a concept of *förebild*. To be a *förebild* means to be someone from which other's can or do learn. The English term role-model is not always a good translation here; a role-model is someone who acts as a model for someone else in terms of a specific role (e. g. formal position). A *förebild* is someone who substantially influences the other's identity (self-image), not only in terms of a specific role, but in terms of being a whole person.

> "When reflecting upon myself, I find it to be an obvious fact of my life that there have been people… some of whom I have met, some who are still in existence, and some about whom I know only what is written… I believe that we are shaped by *förebilder* and I believe we ought to acknowledge that. I do not want to do that in a moralising way, that is 'now be like the *förebild*, a kind of self-denial, that is not what I am talking about, but more generally I am talking about the fact that I have met people who have been *förebilder* for me, without whom have would not be able to understand how I have become the person I am. Being a *förebild*, I believe, is an important part of leadership, but it is difficult to talk about. It is hard to transform it into formulas. Still, I am becoming more and more convinced that being a *förebild*, that task, ought to be revaluated a bit."[18] (The Bishop)

The *förebild* number one is of course Jesus Christ, the Bishop's saviour–and yours and mine, he would claim. This quotation moves us from the Ethics of Capability (and its instrumentalism). But where does it take us? According to Gustafsson's conceptualisation we are now within the Ethics of Humanness. It is considered the inalienable right of every human being not to be treated as an instrument (the Golden rule of the Bible, later formalised by Kant), but rather as an end in herself. The concept of *förebild* establishes the non-instrumentality both of the Bishop himself as a leader and of the followers; the latter have a choice in how to follow their leader, how to be moulded by their *förebild*. The word *förebild* hits the rhetorical spot, so to speak.

The Bishop says that an important element in leadership is to have "an *interest* in looking a bit further ahead" (emphasis added). He does not say a *capability* to look further ahead. This reference to interest is also a clear marker that we are not speaking within the Ethics of

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identitet i själva det trossammanhang man ingår i. Jag tror att det faktiskt också har inslag av förebild. Jag tycker att i vårt samhälle vi skulle få en liten erenrätt för det här att vara förebild. Ja, det är några sådana där tankar jag har. Jag menar alltså att det är mer än att vara chef."

[18] "Om jag tänker på mig själv så tycker jag det är alldeles uppenbart att det i mitt liv har funnits människor som… somliga har jag träffat, somliga inte, somliga finns fortfarande kvar och jag täffar dem och så där men ochså människor som har levt före mig om vilka jag vet egentligen bara det som är nedtecknat… Jag tror att vi formas av förebilder och jag tror att vi borde lyfta fram det. Då vill jag inte göra det på något slags moraliserande sätt, allstå att "var nu som förebilden", inte en slags självförnekelse, det är inte det jag talar om, men jag talar mera allmänt om att jag själv har mött människor som har varit förbilder för mig, utan vilka jag inte skulle kunna förstå hur jag blivit den jag är. Jag tror att detta att vara förebild är en del, ett element i ledarskap. men det är svårt att tala om. Det är svårt att sätta det på formler. Men, jag blir mer och mer övertygad om att förebilden, den uppgiften, den borde värderas upp lite grann."

Capability. Everyone can have an interest. It is a matter of choice, or perhaps, of *calling*. As we all know, Christian belief implies that the individual must make a choice whether or not to listen to such a calling. Again, the specific terminology used is of utmost importance, at least in my ears.

> ”I think the Bishop’s tasks are to… the meaning of leadership is somehow to combine identity and relevance.”[19] (The Bishop)

The Bishop talks about the forthcoming separation of the church from the state (scheduled to take place in the year 2000). The Christian Church has a longer history than almost any other formal organisation. That history gives its present officials a sense of identity and purpose. That identity, however, must also be made relevant in the present context.

The Bishop has no direct authority over the congregations’ activities. More informally, however, he claims to be perceived as a leader and he interacts with congregations to that effect. The Bishop proudly informs us that he has taken up a traditional form of interaction between bishops and congregations: the Visitation. The Visitation was once an institution feared by priests; the bishop was coming to inspect their congregation, with a purpose of establishing control. Developments in a democratic direction led to the abolishment of the Visitation. In its revitalised form, the Visitation is a somewhat formalised visit by the Bishop at a particular congregation. First, one day is spent getting to know one another. A month or so later, the Bishop returns to the congregation for three days of intensive discussions of the congregation’s activities; its problems, strengths and possibilities. A few months later, representatives of the congregation come to the Bishop for a meeting of reflection upon the conference, with the explicit purpose of formulating a plan for future activities.

Here, we have the Ethics of Servility again. The congregations are presented as free to accept the Bishop as their leader. They are given a choice to accept the Bishop as their servant. This kind of mechanism is repeated in what the Bishop says of his own colleagues and their manager; the Arch Bishop is the *primus inter pares*, the first among equals, in the group of Bishops. The Arch Bishop does not have formal authority over the other Bishops. The Bishops, as a group have a choice in accepting the Arch Bishop as their leader/servant.

We are also, I would claim, within the Ethics of Capability. The Visitation is an expression of the Bishops capability in terms of good thinking; the recycling of a traditional form and

[19] ”Jag tror att biskopens uppgifter ligger... eller ledarskapets innebörd ligger någonstans där att förena identitet och relevans.”

concept in new ways is the perfect illustration of good thinking on the part of the Bishop as well as an effective illustration of the general thesis that the Bishop's task is to " […] somehow combine identity and relevance."

The Ethics of Capability do not, however, stand alone. The Bishop, using an expression he picked up from another officer of the church, refers to the job as the "Office of Encouragement". He also expresses an explicit view on the importance of mentoring, of the leader having a group of individuals supporting and advising him, a belief that he claims to have almost enforced on his own organisation. His own ideas of what the office is was formed in an ongoing discussion with several people and he continues to interact with some *confidants*, inside and outside the church. These may all be seen as references to an Ethic of Humanness, references to the value of others.

The General Manager

The General Manager is the top man in a lobbying organisation. The organisation is formally a federation of a number of geographically defined societies of members (20000 in all, both physical and juridical persons) throughout the country. The central office has a staff of 25 to 30 people. Many of them are well educated.

After an initial description of the formal structure of the organisation and of ongoing changes in the business sector in question, the General Manager was asked if he sees a difference between leadership and management.

> "Someone who is formally a manager does not necessarily become a leader. You do not have that natural authority for leadership or you are not able to build your role as a leader. […] to be a leader, it is a way of being as a person, while management is something you are formally."[20] (The General Manager)

His own view of leadership is explicitly defined in relation to his predecessor on the job. The predecessor is seen as a member of "the old school", emphasising authority and meddling a lot with details. The transition to another kind of leadership has not been easy.

> "I see myself as a coach and head of team and I live in the faith that we can accomplish a whole lot more if each and every one gets the opportunity to develop in their work. That each and every

> one feels they are working in a learning organisation. Each and every one feels forced to take an increasingly large responsibility. So I think […] that this organisation can accomplish much more than if every one is just sitting and doing what they are told. It is in that perspective that I see my responsibility as a leader."[21] (The General Manager)

The General Manager informs us that the role of the central office in the organisation is changing radically. Because of economic and political changes, a formerly regulated societal sector is becoming much less regulated. The central office was once focused on lobbying activities, but is now heavily engaged in providing actors in the sector with various services, such as education. Much of the lobbying activities are being decentralised to the regional and local levels, where many important decisions are now made.

However, there seems to be a strong demand for leadership. Even though the General Manager is formally the manager only of the central office of the organisation, he has been given the informal role of leadership for the entire organisation.

> "Of course, when you are the responsible manager of the central office […] you sort of become the informal leader of the larger organisation. Consequently, I feel responsible for pointing out the direction for the local organisations, especially in these times of radical change. We are supposed to be on the frontier, trying to see what the future holds, and to be able to communicate it, not only to the people I am formally superior to, but to the entire organisation."[22] (The General Manager)

This is the heart of the Ethics of Servility. Whatever you are doing as a leader, you are doing of behalf of others. You have been asked to office and you are indeed a servant (albeit a well paid one).

The General Manager claims that he spends 90% of normal working hours either attending internal meetings or travelling. Internal meetings come in many forms; formalised, such as top management meetings, middle management meetings, board meetings and general staff

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[20] "En som formellt är chef behöver ju inte nödvändigtvis bli ledare. Man har inte den här naturliga auktoriteten för ledarskap eller man klarar inte att bygga upp sin roll som ledare. Jag vet inte om jag därmed har… alltså att vara ledare, det är ett sätt att vara personligen, medan att vara chef det är någonting som man är formellt."

[21] Jag ser mig själv som coach och lagledare och jag lever nämligen i tron att vi kan åstadkomma väldigt mycket mer om var och en får möjlighet att utvecklas i sina jobb. Att var och en känner att man jobbar i en lärande organisation. Var och en känner att man tvingas ta ett allt större eget ansvar. Så tror jag att det sammantaget för en sådan här organisation går att åstadkomma väldigt mycket mer än att var och en skall sitta och göra det de blir tillsagda. Det är lite grann i det perspektivet som jag ser mitt ansvar som ledare.

[22] "Det är klart att man som chef och ansvarig… jag är ju då formellt chef för förbundskansliet… med den här uppbyggnaden som blir man ju också på något sett informell ledare för en mycket större organisation. Jag känner ju då kanske att det ligger ett stort ansvar på mig att peka ut körriktningen för alla föreningarna inte minst i den här tiden när det sker så mycket förändringar. Vi skall ligga på gränsen och försöka ana vad som kommer och kunna tala om det, inta bara för dem jag formellt är chef för, utan för hela organisationen."

meetings, and informal, where individual employees simply step in to the office to get the managers point of view or help. He claims that he mostly functions as a 'sparring partner' in all these discussions.

The General Manager emphasises the importance of (formalised) knowledge. He is a manger of an organisation with a high proportion of academicians employed. He himself must therefore be knowledgeable of several academic disciplines, in this case, economics, technology, and law. He is an engineer (a profession he has never practised) and he is also in possession of a degree in business administration. He sees himself as the only one in the organisation able to be a 'sparring partner' to the technical, juridical, and economic expert employees.

In interaction with outside agencies, such as local governments, the General Manager emphasises that credibility and competence is of utmost importance. This emphasis can be contrasted to another vital task of leadership.

> " […] always to, officially, defend one's employees. That is an important part of leadership. In relation to the outside, always to defend one's employees, even though one realises that some employee has made a fool of himself […]. But that you must discuss between four eyes with that person."[23] (The General Manager)

Lying with skill and with the purpose of upholding the self-confidence of employees as well as a consistent image outwards is important. This is clearly a case where the Ethics of Capability override the most fundamental demands of an Ethic of Credibility.

Having exhausted my questions, I asked if something ought to be added to the preceding discussion of leadership.

> "I think that we who are leaders or managers never can, or rather, we never do understand well enough that we become *föredömen* in our organisations, whether we like it or not, or whether we are aware of it or not. 'The boss does it, therefore it is all right for me to do it.' It really important to be aware of this, I believe. The way I am dressed […], at what time I come to work in the morning. If I come in at nine, it somehow becomes legitimate to come in at nine."[24] (The General Manager)

[23] " […] att alltid utåt försvara sina anställda. Det tycker jag är en viktig del i ledarskapet. Att gentemot omvärlden alltid försvara sina anställda, även om man inser att någon anställd kanske har gjort bort sig som jag talade om tidigare. Men då får man ta det mellan fyra ögon med den personen."

[24] Jag tror att vi som är ledare eller chefer kanske aldrig tillräckligt kan… eller rättare sagt… vi förstår nog inte tillräckligt att vi i våra respektive organisationer blir föredömen, vare sig vi vill eller inte, oavsett om vi är medvetna om det eller inte. "Så gör chefen, alltså är det tillåtet för mig att göra så också "Det här är det väldigt viktigt att man är medveten om, tycker jag. Hur jag är klädd,

This is instrumental rationality *par excellence*; The General Manager makes his entire being a managerial instrument. He claims to be exercising leadership in almost everything he does. The Ethics of Capability and the Ethics of Credibility fuse in one complete rationalisation of the whole being in the service of members. This fusion has a cost attached to it:

> ”[…] I don’t have time to take care of my body in a way that I would like to. I don’t have time to exercise. I don’t have time… I don’t have to opportunity to manage how I want to eat or drink. This means that you tear on the body, you weigh too much, you don’t have the kind of fitness that it would really take.”[25] (The General Manager)

This is perhaps the ultimate way of showing capability; bodily sacrifice. Why this sacrifice? one might wonder. Is the high salary the simple answer? There is one passage in the conversation that implies something else.

> ”Is it fun all this?” (The Interviewer)

> ”In fact, it is. I guess that is the driving force. […] You influence developments. You accomplish changes. I wonder if that last is not the most obvious. It is something of a kick that when you see something happening, that because of what we have done those political decisions are made. You start doing things that way in the marketplace. Because of what we have said, what we have done.”[26] (The General Manger)

The General Manager follows up by telling a story of how he rediscovered a method of doing things in the business, lobbied for changes in legislation, contacted a large firm member of the federation to develop the method, and, finally, how the method is now in usage and increasingly so. Apparently, no one asked him to do this. This what not the act of a servant. Perhaps it was the act of a *leader*?

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för att ta ett vardagligt exempel, det präglar ju lite grann ens… när jag kommer på morgnarna, när jag går hem på kvällarna. Kommer jag efter nio på morgonen så blir det på något sätt legitimerat att komma efter nio på morgonen.

[25] ” […] jag hinner inte sköta kroppen på ett sätt som jag skulle vilja. Jag hinner inte motionera, jag hinner inte, har inte möjlighet att själv disponera över hur jag vill äta eller dricka. Det betyder att man sliter på kroppen, man väger för mycket, man har inte den kondition som egentligen skulle krävas.”

[26] I: ”Är det kul det här?” ”Det är det faktiskt. Det är väl det som är drivkraften. Det är det som drivkraften för att man lägger ned 60-70 timmar i veckan. Och det som är roligt i det är att man märker att man genom att vara ungefär på det sätt som jag beskrivit, att bygga verksamheten på kompetens och kunskap, att vara konsekvent, att försöka vara trovärdig, så märker man att vi får respekt för vad vi gör. Man påverkar utvecklingen. Man åstadkommer förändringar. Jag undrar om inte det sista är det allra tydligaste. Det blir lite grann en kick det där att man ser att någonting händer, att på grund av det vi har gjort så blir det de politiska besluten. Man börjar göra på det sättet ute på marknaden. Därför vad vi har sagt, för vad vi har gjort.”

The Theatre Director

After having given a elaborate picture of activities in the Theatre, the Theatre Director was asked if he finds it difficult to have a clear overall view of the seemingly complex organisation. He responded:

> ”No, I don’t think so. But that can depend on the fact that I have… no, no, I don’t find it is hard to grasp, I really don’t think that. Hum… but that might depend on the fact that… I have thirty years’ of experience of the theatre. I am so to speak brought up… or born into the theatre or that I am not really, but I mean I have been active within the theatre practically all my life huh and that means that I am somehow… well, if we come to a point where we are going to talk about something that has to do with the theatre, then I know what I am talking about huh. I know how it is done… I know… no, I don’t think that. Many people find it very big and difficult to grasp, but I really don’t think that. I find it rather easy to get a good overview.” (The Theatre Director)[27]

The theatre is not difficult to grasp as an organisation for the Theatre Director. For others, however it is, something which clearly establishes the superordinate capability of the Theatre Director.

Besides the multiple repetition of the aforementioned opinion, notice the change of words from ‘born into’ to ‘have been active’ in the theatre. The expression ‘born into’ would, of course, be a serious breach of the meritocratic imperative which underlies an Ethic of Capability. ‘Having been active’ is much more aligned with an individualistic ideal of capability and merit which is founded upon the idea that every person is what she makes of herself, a fundamental belief in the Spirit of Capitalism (Weber, 1934; Bendix, 1956)

> ”When I say leadership and management, how do you understand those two words? Are they the same or do you feel…?”

> ”No, for me, they are not. For me, leadership is about having this somewhat grater overall view […] and to lead the company or in this case the theatre in a direction with a worked through idea or philosophy about how it may be developed as a unit. Management is exercised towards individuals and co-workers huh. That is, I am of course a manager in the sense that people come to me and say ‘Paul, what do we do in this situation’ Or they want you make a decision on a given issue and then I exercise my management huh. I am a manager… I would like to say that I

[27] ”Nej, det tycker jag inte. Nej. Men nu kan det bero på att jag har… nej, nej jag tycker inte att det är svåröverblickbart, det tycker jag faktiskt inte. Öh. men det kan bero på, jag har ju alltså trettio års erfarenhet av teater, så jag är ju s a s upp… eller född in i teatern eller det är jag inte egentligen, men jag menar jag har sysslat med teater i stort sett hela mitt liv va och det innebär att jag på något sätt… ja, om vi kommer till en punkt när vi skall tala om någonting som gäller teater så vet jag vad vi talar om va. Jag

am superior in the sense… in the sense of decision-making with regards to another person. But, what really interests me is the leadership issues, that is, to lead an entire, large company as a whole and much more in fact than these managerial functions. And that is why I apply to a large extent so called delegated responsibility. I rely on… that is, it is working until it is not working so to speak huh. That is the way it has to be. I act… if it is possible huh, but I… I fiddle very little with details, but rather…" (The Theatre Director)[28]

The role of the Theatre Director, traditionally, has been one of being something of a father *vis-à-vis* the staff of actors; creating just the right combination of stimulating challenges to the actors while simultaneously giving comfort in times of sadness as well as providing overall safety (e. g. stable income), i. e. to treat them as children, brought up with a combination of frustrating experiences and love:

"… then [in times of upheaval] it is experienced that the manager, who is the father figure, cannot protect you. When there is a crisis, for example when suspicion arises that some may have to be let go and those kinds of things, then criticism is often directed at the manager… at management because… it is the same in most companies huh… because you cannot protect your own." (The Theatre Director)[29]

"So that is probably one of the roles I am to play, to be able to protect my own."[30] (The Theatre Director)

When protecting his own, he is playing a role. He is playing according to an Ethics of Humanness, of comfort, trust, and encouragement. That playing, in itself, belongs to another ethical structure; it is the instrumentalism of the Ethics of Capability.

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vet hur det går till, jag vet… nej, jag tycker inte det. Många tycker att det är väldigt stort och oöverskådligt, men jag tycker faktiskt inte det. jag tycker det är ganska lätt att ha en stor överblick."

[28] "Om jag säger ledarskap och chefskap, hur förhåller du dig till de två orden? Är det samma sak eller känner du…?" "Nej, för mig är det inte riktigt det. För mig är ledarskap handlar om att ha den här kanske något större överblicken och ägna sig åt s a s att vara… att leda företaget eller i det här fallet teatern i en riktning med en s a s genomarbetad idé och filosofi kring hur den kan utvecklas, hur företaget kan utvecklas som enhet. Chefskapet utöver man mer gentemot individer och medarbetare va. Alltså jag är naturligtvis också chef i bemärkelsen att man kommer till mig och säger: "Peter, hur skall vi göra här?" Eller så vill man inte ta ett beslut i en viss fråga och då utövar jag mitt chefskap va. Jag är chef… jag skulle vilja säga att jag är överordnad i bemärkelsen… beslutsbemärkelsen gentemot en annan person. Men, det som egentligen intresserar mig är ledarskapsfrågorna, alltså att leda ett helt stort företag som helhet och det mycket mer egentligen än de här just chefsfunktionerna. Och därför så jobbar jag väldigt mycket med ett så kallat delegerat ansvar. Jag litar på att det… alltså det fungerar ända tills det inte fungerar s a s va, det är så det måste vara, jag ingriper… och det är möjligt va, men jag, jag pillar väldigt lite i detaljer utan tar…"

[29] "Och då… öh… alltså då kan man uppleva t ex att chefen, som är fadersfiguren, inte kan beskydda en va. Alltså när det uppstår en kris som t ex när man börjar misstänka att folk får gå och sådant, då vänds ofta en sådan kritik gentemot teaterchefen, teaterledningen därför… det tror jag gäller vilket företag som helst va, därför att man inte kan beskydda de sina va."

[30] "Så det är nog en av de roller som jag skall spela, att kunna beskydda de mina."

The Regional Director

I started the interview with the Regional Director of a national authority by asking her to tell me something of the organisation and her own work there. She started what was to be an hour long presentation of the organisation's activities, including almost anything but a description of her own work. I was unable to redirect the interview toward her own role(s) in the organisation. This might be interpreted as a result of my shortcomings as an interviewer, but it is an equally interesting interpretation that the Regional Director lives in a world permeated by the Ethics of Capability. This interview was not much more than yet another situation in which to display capability (manifested even in an incredible speed of talking).

To give an example of my attempts to get the Regional Director to talk about her own work and leadership:

> "And what about you, what do you do?" (The Interviewer)

> "What I do? Well, my God, if you knew [laughter]. I can divide what I do into different parts that are connected but still separate form each other. I can say that the organisation that we live in today, with this co-ordination and so forth [referring to a recent merger of local offices of the Authority under one command] it is not to recommend, exempt short-term, because it tears very much on top officials, it consumes a lot of energy."[31] (The Regional Director)

The only information that I get about her work is, indirectly, that she is working very hard, i. e. that she is a good person according to the Ethics of Capability.

The Regional Director is personally convinced that the authority she is working for is performing services that are beneficial to society. She perceives a clear positive value in having these services produced within the public sector (the unique status of the Swedish way of producing these services is emphasised). There is not much need to elaborate on that; the rhetorical device is the silence of the self-evident; this organisations does good things. Given that, most other talk is focused on showing obedience to the Ethics of Capability. The mission of the organisation is consequently formulated in terms of performing the services so well that the organisation were to survive even if competition was legally sanctioned.

[31] "Och du då, vad gör du?" "Vad jag gör? Ja, herregud om du visste, he he. [Tankepaus] Jag kan dela in det jag gör i olika bitar som hänger ihop men ändå är från varandra skilda. Jag kan säga att den organisation som vi lever i idag med det här med det här med samordning och så, den är inte att rekommendera, annat än mycket kortsiktigt, därför att den sliter oerhört hårt på ledningspersonalen, tar väldigt mycket kraft."

The description of the organisation come across as highly rationalistic; written policy documents that speak for themselves. Throughout the interview she refers to policy documents of various kinds; the basic message, as I hear it, is that operations of the agency are adequately described in these documents.

When it comes to her own views on leadership:

> ”[…] leader traits, what’s that? Leader traits, what are you like…?” (The Interviewer)
>
> ”It’s indicated here [referring to a policy document]” (The Regional Director)
>
> ”Mm” (The Interviewer)
>
> ”This is compressed as you can see huh. Will and ability to build enthusiasm and to co-operate. To share your knowledge. To be focused on goals and results. Develop and change. That’s a great compression indeed.”[32] (The Regional Director)

This shorthand definition of leadership is presented as if it were self-evident. The referral to the document, together with a quick and light-voiced verbal listing of it is the basis for this interpretation. The underlying message that I hear is that this is really not a problem; everybody knows what this is. The challenge is to find out and recruit the individuals exhibiting and having potential to exhibit these traits. When presenting the process of doing so, the Regional Director changes her tone of voice and facial expressions. She makes it clear that this is something important.

The Regional Director is eager to talk about the process of recruiting managers from within the organisation. Of special importance, she finds the use of ‘assessment centres’, in which (in-house) applicants to managerial positions are summoned to three days of intense discussions and practical exercises, all of which is observed by a number of evaluators. The Regional Manager is always present during the first day of the assessment centre. She opens up proceedings with a speech on the view of leadership within the organisation, and she participates as an observer. She also meets with all the applicants after the conclusion of the assessment centre to discuss the outcome.

[32] I: ”Om vi börjar med ledaregenskaperna, vad är det för någonting? Ledaregenskaper, hur är man…?” ”Det står här.” I: ”Mm.” ”Det här är komprimerat som du förstår va. ”Vilja och förmåga att entusiasmera och samverka. Dela med sig av sina kunskaper. Vara mål- och resultatinriktad. Utveckla och förändra.” Det är ju en väldig komprimering.”

She was asked to explain how one can establish whether or not a person is leader material. She begins explaining an entire Leader Supply Program. In the explanation she refers to technical concepts often associated with the practice of Human Resource Management, and she exhibits no doubts that I am grasping what she is saying. However, when she refers to the concept of 'assessment centre', she stops to ask if I know what that is. This may of course be purely coincidental. She is an attentive communicator, asking more than once if I am able to follow her reasoning. It is an equally interesting interpretation that she might consider the assessment centre to be something more important than the rest of the Leader Supply Program. It might be that the use of the assessment centre, in which she participates personally, belongs to what she sees as her own distinctive professional competence. It has a modern (fashionable) touch to it, as well as an international one (English terminology), and she may well, through asking, be exhibiting hopes that I would not know what it is, thereby establishing her distinctive managerial competence, not only in relation to me, but to a lot of people.

After an hour or so, our discussion was interrupted by the phone ringing. I was still in the room and I could understand that some problem had come up involving a dispute between a couple of senior officials of the Agency. I tried to ask the Regional Director about what happened and if it was in any way related to her own leadership. I was unable to detect an answer to my question. In fact, she explicitly stated that she sees her organisation as something of a "well oiled machine". Again, the Ethics of Capability, and a particularly formalist variation of it, speaks through her.

Life in the Space of Norms of Late Modernity

Our interviewees live in a space of norms. The strategy for handling that situation is attending most laboriously to the demands of the Ethics of Servility and the Ethics of Capability first. Then, and only then, may other ethical structures be brought into discourse. Sometimes, they are brought in as complementary elements of the Ethic of Capability, sometimes they are simply added to the self-presentation.

Leadership has lost its magic. Five of our six interviewees make no attempt to purport to be leaders with a some sparkling ethical vision of the future. Quite strikingly, there are no references to the Ethics of the Future, nor to Rituals. There are no attempts at formulating leadership in terms of guiding people towards a better future for mankind, of doing what is right, of saving the world, or even tradition and its rituals. To me, this is most strikingly evident in the conversation with the Secretary. She is trying to make me enthusiastic, but not of

her party's ideology (vision for the future), but rather of the administrative forms that she is trying to implement in her organisation.

There are a few references to an Ethics of Humanness and quite a lot of references to an Ethics of Credibility. These latter references, however, are constructed within a instrumental rationality of an Ethics of Capability, which in turn is commonly overarched with the Ethics of Servility.

This rather harsh convergence of discourse is implied in the Weberian notion of the Iron Cage (cf. Weber, 1934). Even a Bishop feels the need to use rationalistic business oriented terminology to explain his views to me. Rationalisation seems to be reaching its final destination; the silencing of other discourses.

There is, however, one attempt to slip the bars of the Weberian Cage. Compare the Bishop's notion of *förebild* to the notion of *föredöme* used by the General Manager! Both men are talking about influencing others by the way they act as leaders. There is, however, a non-trivial difference in focus and choice of words here. The General Manager is talking in rather specific terms about setting precise behavioural standards within his own organisation. A *föredöme* is a standard in comparison to which others are to be judged (*dömda*) The Bishop clearly has a more holistic phenomenon in mind. A *förebild* is like a work of art which is there to be experienced by others. From the image (*bild*) of the Bishop one may find inspiration and guidance. The *förebild* is much more open to interpretation than the *föredöme*. The difference is in the degrees of instrumentality, which one might suspect is matched by a difference in morality.

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