

THE LEADERS' COURAGE TO ACHIEVE PERFORMANCE STARTS FROM FOLLOWING THE DICTATES OF CONSCIENCE

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Abstract: *Conscience represents the feeling of duty, love and compassion that a leader feels towards all that is life, according to the absolute knowledge of good and evil, as a goal at which he/she aims full of hope, according to his/her free will, i.e. the ability to choose good over evil based at one's own will.*

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT LEADERS AND PERFORMANCE IN MANAGEMENT

While studying performance in a certain field of activity, the psychologist Anders Ericson formulated the empiric rule of the 10,000 hours, which specifies that "You don't get benefits from mechanical repetition, but by adjusting your execution over and over to get closer to your goal." By raising the stake and accepting the possibility of a large number of errors occurring at the beginning, as the horizons extend, almost all of us can achieve the highest level of performance by means of intelligent training, i.e. "deliberate education", where an experienced leader includes his/her most involved peers in well-thought-out education systems for months or even years on end.

The exercise of applying empiricism to management for 10,000 hours certainly cannot create leaders, but only versed Machiavellian people.

Repetitive exercise for hours on end is not enough. The difference is made by the focus on constructive feedback that enables the recognition of errors and the transfer/discovery of the corrective measures. The same as ballet dancers need mirrors when performance is pursued in dancing, performance requires constructive feedback in any other field of activity.

Apart from the persistent training focused on constructive feedback, in order to achieve performance disciplined attention is also required, i.e. the capacity to observe one's own mind in order to determine when it begins to wander away and to bring it back to/fix it on the positive side of the point of interest by relinquishing the egocentric "I" and replacing it with the more friendly "we". Bearing in mind the stake, the effort is worth it, i.e. the neuronal network of the brain that corresponds to the value of the compensatory system, the neuronal network that determines motivation, more precisely the rewards for the efforts made. As long as we maintain a positive attitude, our neuronal systems are rich in hormones (dopamine, endorphins, serotonin) that generate good mood and stimulate perseverance and the achievement of the set and desired goals, thus feeding our will and giving us some sort of pleasure.

Leaders and the 7th sense. Leaders are brave persons. The courage of leaders, which is extremely precious, particularly in dire situations, is based on the spirituality of the evolved human beings who let their conscience be their guide while remaining faithful to their emotional attachments (love/ compassion) to everything that represents life and being willing to sacrifice their personal needs if they endanger any of their fellow men or life in general.

Why is this human typology so rarely seen in the history of mankind and especially nowadays? Where has this courage of sacrifice for a noble cause such as life in any of its forms gone?

It seems that we are equipped with 7 senses: eyesight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, intuition and, last but not least, conscience. The last two are not at all exercised by the majority of human beings, whereas leaders are capable of achieving their entire sensitive potential by living fully and assuming their mission of human beings.

Currently, moral leadership represents the capacity of certain individuals to approach the problems generated by the lack of resources and insecurity in a pragmatic manner, by renouncing to temptation to turn another group than the one they belong to into a scapegoat.

Unfortunately, history has shown us that there are also anti-leaders, i.e. individuals who have no conscience (4% of the world's population is represented by sociopaths), who have the ability to hypnotise entire groups of people and drive society towards catastrophe. Why are anti-leaders more charismatic? The trance state of the conscience of anti-leaders makes them believe that their peers are objects and that is only due to the fact that they hold the authority to induce fear and helplessness with the aim to annihilate their peers' moral compass. The tendency to reduce people to non-beings is unconscious and it represents the basis for a cruel treatment of innocent people that have been downgraded to the status of "not even people", i.e. objects, at a certain point in history by a part of humanity. The list of these victims is shamefully long and it includes all the possible types of categories: black people, communists, homosexuals, Jews, witches, women, Muslims, Christians, Palestinians, poor people, rich people, Irish, English, Albanese, Croatian, Serbian etc. In dire situations, i.e. during acts of torture, war, genocide or economic crisis, individual conscience enters a state of deep trance and the role of leaders as people who are equipped with the 7th sense, i.e. with conscience, is extremely important, because they have the courage to make the difference between the gradual awakening of the conscience of masses and the endless nightmare of amorality.

What should be done? When is it moral to oppose the authority of anti-leaders? What cannot authority impose on us? They shouldn't ask us to cause suffering to helpless people, who are not dangerous or threatening to anyone. Based on the education received, any individual can build his/her own perception of himself/herself as a being with legitimate authority. It seems that 38% of the world population complies with and answers only to moral authority, while the other 62% of the individuals answer to authority in general, thus losing contact with their own conscience. In other words, the 32% of the population are brave enough to follow their own conscience, will act in a moral way and will oppose immoral authority. They will refuse to provoke suffering to helpless people who represent no danger/threat to the people around them.

The challenges a leader faces stem from the fact that he/she follows his/her own conscience and they include:

- the fact that the leader shall take full responsibility for his/her own actions;

- the fact that the leader does not stand out from the mass of peers, from people who lack conscience (apart from charisma, sociopaths also have the capacity to dissimulate moral behaviour, which is the psychological defense mechanism used by sociopaths, this being their ability to become the opposite of authority);

The premises for recognising the difference between a leader and an anti-leader are the following:

1. There's no image of evil;
2. The individual should not be assigned the integrity of the role (the qualities of the role);
3. We shouldn't let the manner in which a person presents himself/herself as benevolent, creative or intuitive distract us from observing their real behaviour; we should only believe what we see, not what that person says about himself/herself;
4. We should recognise when fundamentally positive tools that are used against us for the purpose of holding society together. Among them are empathic feelings, sexual relations, professional/social roles, consideration for the merciful/creative people, the desire to make the world a better place, demagogy;
5. We should recognise the lack of consideration for social contract combined with the use of the contract for one's own advantage, while acknowledging the negative/shamelessly inadequate behaviour with some moments of begging for pity.

2. THE LEADER'S TRUE SELF

The analysis of the self involves bringing to consciousness the aspects that the individual is yet unaware of and the beliefs that are mostly built on his/her preferences for certain empathic answers from his/her genitors.

The true self involves passing from aspirations to the most vital power of early personal grandeur. This is the ideal that could vary from one individual to another, but that remains, in essence, the same, i.e. the feeling of relaxed, peaceful fulfilment that one feels when the layers of the nuclear self are truly involved in the undiscovered and unbuilt structures that are important for the deep layers of the personality [10].

Early crucial experiences, where a certain balanced pride connects with the enthusiasm related to various forms of greatness of others (money, power, kindness, generosity, altruism, etc.), form cohesive considerations and the conscience of the leader. The dedication to such an individual self enables leaders to manifest the type of courage that determines them to consciously risk their own physical destruction for something more important than the survival of the nuclear self through devotion to the ideal. Leaders have multiple selves, which is not a disease or a split personality [10]. They can take advantage of various cohesive forms of themselves that exist at the surface and in depth and that are independent from one another. Furthermore, in the creative leaders there is a tension between two different types of commitments (for example two types of education that make them separate the two types of self throughout their entire lives, without choosing between the two and even gaining an advantage from this). The more central position shall be held by the type of self that is closest to the centre through its quality of point of convergence of the leader's most profound ideals [10].

The leader's healthy self has the insight capacity, i.e. the capacity to courageously self-analyse his/her experiences, consisting of the leader's grand ideas that become his/her main ambitions in life, as well as the most in-depth type of narcissist identification with some idealised, omnipotent figure that he/she identifies himself/herself with (the divinity), which turns into his/her guiding goals, values and objectives in life.

It also involves the functions fulfilled by means of the specific inborn talents that get (or only operate randomly) to be more intensely mobilised and stimulated by the tensions that occur between ideals, such as grand ambitions, and the idealised goals. Thus, an arch of energy is born during the development, through tensions that occur between one's ideality and talents. Once born, it shall remain present throughout the leader's entire life as a healthy individual. This energetic spectrum or tension arch formed early in life, shall forever shape the unfolding events in the leader's life, thus representing the fundamental expression of the nuclear self as a mixture of:

- the leader's fundamental ambitions;
- the person's fundamental goals;
- the functions of the ego that mediate between the two poles (ambitions and goals).

This mixture represents the mental and physical unity in time and space and it consists of the fact that the individual has a past, a future and some sort of uniformity throughout his/her life. Uniformity is built on the immutable foundation of the ego's most basic ambitions that characterise this energetic spectrum. Herein under are the factors that give strength and weakness to the nuclear self:

- the balanced distribution of the ambitions of self-expression (honesty, decisiveness, realism, fairness) in agreement with the idealist preoccupations (to save/support life, love, happiness) by means of properly functional activities of the self and the individual's talents that help him/her express his/her ambitions harmoniously and as easily/efficiently as possible for idealist purposes.

- The fundamental, reflective objects of the self (people inside or outside the parental environment that have the capacity to empathically accept high values and receptivity by encouraging healthy exhibitionist or idealised attitudes and by investing a little bit in the narcissism related to the ambitions and affirmation of the child who shall later become a leader.

The anti-leader is a person that is defined by fragile self-cohesion, i.e. this cohesion depends on favourable external circumstances and it tends to disintegrate when there are no narcissist resources (support, praise or approval) [10]. More precisely, when the idealised object does not allow the close connection required for the merger or fusion to take place, the grandiose self lacks vigour (the signs of disturbance of the self are vague fears, cold and arrogant grandeur, conventional ways of thinking, neologisms and mannerism, a certain insecurity, depression, lack of vitality, lack of initiative). The narcissist anger, which consists of various acute and chronic reactions, such as more or less violent temper tantrums, bitterness, sarcasm, irascibility, arrogance, criticism, are caused by the anti-leader's inability to affirm himself/herself as he/she is, because of the fear of his/her own vulnerability if he/she were to support him/her claims in a resolute and calm manner. This is related to the sensitivity of an individual who hides his/her need to assert himself/herself, who confuses the past with the present and who transfers his/her childhood frustrations caused by an unloving and indifferent mother [10].

In stressful situations, the precarious self of the narcissist anti-leader shall disintegrate, meaning that it shall manifest in fragmented forms, such as: hypochondriac preoccupations, regressive oscillations between self-esteem, arrogant attitudes, weird behaviour, insufficient coherence, clothing disorder, depression, a feeling of emptiness, lack of purpose, hopelessness, depression. All of these manifestations of a fragmented self are not characterised by culpability, but rather by feelings of emptiness, lack of meaning and the loss of vitality. The self can reintegrate itself only after a proper reinterpretation, i.e. the acknowledgement of loss, regardless of the type: lack of parental empathy/attention early in life, lack of support caused by defective empathy, that is sometimes very strong and other times very weak, an imbalanced empathy that causes hypersensitivity.

3. CONCLUSION: THE ACTION PRECEDED BY THE METHOD OF CONCENTRATION ON ONE'S OWN CONCIENCE

Regardless of whether we try to reach performance in sports, music or management, the essential elements of the training process remain the same:

- positive attitude
- inspired strategy
- maximum of attention.

Having a conscience involves the effort made by the evolved individual to raise at the level of his/her human side, which entails focussing on the following three directions:

1. Internal attention (intuition)
2. Attention to others (empathy)
3. External attention (general view)

Korea and other Asian states consider that internet addiction, together with gambling, social media and virtual reality represent a national health crisis that leads to the isolation of the individuals due to the loss of attention to others, as well as the loss of internal and external attention (Daniel Goleman, *Focus-Motivația asupra performanței [Focus – Motivation over performance]*, Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2014, page 18).

Around 8% of the American population aged 8 to 18 that gamble, meet the diagnosis criteria for addiction, which are very similar to the ones used in identifying alcohol and drug addicts. The lack of attention in adults is visible in their incapacity to read more than two pages at a time, in the fact that advertisements must be reduced to one minute and a half only to capture the attention of the targeted public and in the individuals' incapacity to concentrate on the dialogues with other people. "Partial constant attention" is a mental obscurity induced by the overloading with information from other people, plus what we do on our own computers and whatever else we do simultaneously (talking on the phone, reading text messages).

The individual's power of concentration is in a constant battle with all the other inner and outer distractions.

William James, one of the founders of modern psychology, defined attention as "is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what may seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought." There are two types of factors that distract attention:

- Sensorial;
- Emotional.

When leaders, as healthy individuals, concentrate on something, they ignore the sensorial factors that distract attention (breathing, different smells, sounds, shapes, colours, tastes).

The people who manage to concentrate successfully are relatively immune to emotional distraction (emotional factors), thus remaining imperturbable in crisis situations and being able to move on and achieve balance, despite the emotional waves that they are confronted with in life.

When pushed to the extreme, leaving one's mind captive in the same repetitive circles of chronic anxiety is the same as feeling sorry for oneself and giving in to depression, hopelessness and worthlessness, or panicking and acting in the middle of a state of anxiety, or having recurrent superstitious thoughts and reactions, thus becoming the victim of some obsessive-compulsive disorder.

One's state of wellbeing depends on the power to disengage our attention from one thing and to direct it towards another. The more selectively attentive we are, the more intensely we continue to be absorbed by what we have chosen to do.

Concentration makes people abandon themselves and forget about turmoil of their daily lives. Focused people can be easily recognised by their capacity to sink deeply into a conversation, despite the noises that surround them, looking straight into the eyes of the interlocutor and being absorbed by the intensity of their own words.

During intense concentration, the circuits in the prefrontal cortex synchronise with the object of the awareness radar and this is called “a state of fixation”. The higher the level of concentration, the deeper the state of neuronal fixation.

At the opposite pole we have people who cannot concentrate and who are in a constant state of restlessness, looking around in search of something that could arise their interest, thus having dispersed attention. These people have an attention deficit, i.e. a reduced level of synchronisation (chaotic and disorganised thoughts).

During the learning process, people focus their attention on what they are studying. Their brain maps the information that it already knows, thus generating new neuronal connexions. The synchronisation between an idea and a sound is called fixation. The essence of learning is represented by the fact that the mind builds a mental pattern that helps us understand what we are reading and connects this understanding with the universe of patterns that we already possess in relation to that particular topic. Deep thought requires us to maintain a focused unity. The danger of learning being obstructed by distracting elements related to multimedia (simply called the INTERNET) is imminent. In the mid-20th century, philosopher Martin Heidegger stated that “the looming tide of the technological revolution” might so “captivate, bewitch, dazzle and beguile mankind that calculative thinking becomes the only way of thinking”, to the detriment of “reflective, contemplative thinking”, which is the essence of humanity, the foundation of reflection and the capacity to maintain focus on a continuous narrative thread. A profound mind is a focused mind. Leaders are people with a high capacity of concentration, which is fundamental to their motivation and the reason why they love what they do and why they feel so good, pleasure being the personal attribute for “the state of fluidity”. 80% of people are either stressed or bored, while 20% of people lose their concentration at least once a day. Leaders have the ability to concentrate more than the majority of the population due to their authenticity (their capacity to combine what they do with what they love to do), as well as the fact that they build their self-confidence and self-esteem on fulfilling challenging tasks that require them to make the best of their abilities and to carry out activities that they are passionate about and that generate strong satisfaction.

Nowadays, more and more individuals are stuck in a state of “burning”, in which the constant stress overloads their nervous system with waves of cortisol and adrenaline or with lack of engagement and indifference that reach higher and higher levels and loss of purpose.

The concentration exercise involves ignoring everything else apart from the object of our attention, thus creating a constant tension in a large dichotomic neuronal mechanism, where the upper part of the brain is in a constant clinch with the region located at the base of the brain. Leaders are able to record a large number of details that pass through their minds like lightning owing to their open concentration, thus embracing more feelings, sensations and thoughts, without any emotional reactivity, without fixating on annoying things, without focusing on upsetting details, without feeling anger or any other negative emotions. The ability to maintain the attention wide open by means of panoramic awareness enables leaders to maintain self-control, without being led into a trap that would get their attention from the bottom up and without any positive or negative reactions.

3.1 Bottom-up awareness. Most people practice bottom-up awareness almost all the time, which turns them into innocent victims who find themselves at the mercy of the forces that trigger the action of the subconscious [9]. The cerebellum is the area of the brain that constitutes the neuronal equipment that practices bottom-up awareness. Bottom-up thinking is faster (it operates within milliseconds), automatic (involuntary), intuitive (it operated on networks of association) and impulsive, because it is led by emotions. Moreover, it represents a routine performer and an action guide for the individual who performs the actions, as well as a manager for the individual's world-related mental patterns.

3.2 Top-down awareness. Open consciousness is represented by top-down awareness. It is slower, voluntary and spontaneous and it involves a considerable effort on the part of the individual because it is the centre of self-control, which can sometimes put a hold on certain automatic routines, silencing emotionally-drawn impulses, being able to learn new patterns, to make new plans and assuming part of the responsibility for the spontaneous repertoire of the leader.

Leaders practice top-down awareness to a certain extent, as opposed to the majority of people, who practice bottom-up thinking. Keeping one's mind focused on neutral targets (reflective practices based on breathing, touch, taste, rhythmic movement or simply on uttering a request) leads to the completely positive absorption and cease of rumination (disorderly thinking).

The neocortex is the part of the brain that monitors the subcortical equipment and imposes its aims, by practising top-down thinking. The types of attention required for the self-consciousness of leaders are:

- selective attention (focusing on the target and ignoring everything else; it is applied in meditation techniques for purposes of energetic recharge);

- open attention (recording complex information from the environment or from within, thus enabling intuition by choosing subtle signals from the ones received during the wandering of the mind)

Restoring (selective/open) attention is needed to maintain the efficiency of the individual's concentration. This is achieved by suspending thinking during pleasant, recreational activities (strolls, sports, dance, music auditions, reading, drawing, praying etc.).

An optimal executive function is based on the two types of attention, i.e. selective and open, which enable us to assimilate complex information from the environment and from within ourselves, by choosing subtle signals, called intuitions, which we would otherwise ignore.

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