Personal Leadership as Form of Spirituality

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Abstract In theories on leadership a paradoxal development can be perceived. The growth of social constructionist theories on leadership with a strong focus on both leaders and followers goes hand in hand with a call for strong leadership with a focus on skills and traits of the leader. Situational and reciprocal theories on leadership flourish as much as theories on effectiveness of leadership in relation to personality traits and leadership skills. This paradoxal development can be overcome when the paradigms of spirituality are taken into account. In this chapter three perspectives are discussed: the impact of spiritual concepts on leadership, the contemporary developments within religious leadership, and the connection between leadership and learning in the concept of personal leadership. Spiritual concepts open the domain of leadership to growth and values. Contemporary developments in religious leadership reveal the redefinition of traditional forms of religion and the impact on leadership. Personal leadership brings in the notion of learning, and offers a promising way of connecting contemporary needs in a complex world to sources of spirituality.

1 Introduction

In theories on leadership a paradoxal development can be perceived. The growth of social constructionist theories on leadership with a strong focus on both leaders and followers goes hand in hand with a call for strong leadership with a focus on skills and traits of the leader. This paradoxal development can be overcome when the paradigms of spirituality are taken into account. In this chapter three perspectives are discussed: the impact of spiritual concepts on leadership, the contemporary developments within religious leadership, and the connection between leadership and learning in the concept of personal leadership.

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2   Paradoxal Paradigms in Leadership

Traditional and authoritative forms of leadership have failed in the last few decades. It is a broadly and globally shared experience that traditional leadership has led to a deep moral crisis and at the same time to a need of sustainable and credible forms of leadership. The economic crisis, the lack of morality within the financial system, the rise of popular politics are in the newspapers and other media easily connected to the failure of leadership.

Leadership in our times sometimes even seems an impossible task. In many domains, both in the public and in the private sector, leaders experience a great need for charismatic leadership. People want to be inspired; people want to be taken by a bigger story. A story that frees one's own life above the limitations, and gives meaning tot it. This perceived need for powerful leaders sometimes seems to be at odds with what is said in many dominant theories about leadership. In these modern theories (see e.g. Yukl 2010) the emphasis is placed on reciprocity between leader and followers, rather than on strong personalities as leaders. An increasing number of authors stress the importance of the interaction between the leader and follower, above the importance of the properties and personality traits of the leader. This leads to different concepts of leadership. The work of Yukl (2010) is prototypical for this change. Yukl (2010, p. 26)—defines leadership as follows:

> Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.

This widely used definition focuses on leadership as a process. It is about the dynamics of leadership: leader and followers influencing each other. It is not about the leader convincing others smartly based upon a certain set of characteristics or skills, in this definition leadership shows up as a reciprocal interaction process. In this view on leadership, three dimensions interact: (1) the person of the leader, (2) the individual followers, and (3) the structure of the group or organization as a whole. Variables in each of these dimensions have an impact on the effectiveness of leadership. This means that a particular set of properties of the leader is no longer decisive for effective leadership. A particular leader can be successful in one group, but fail in a different context. This model of situational leadership is originally described by Hersey and Blanchard (1977), and expanded and specified by Yukl. This emphasis on interaction meant a paradigm shift in leadership theories. For a long time, all the attention has been focused on the qualities of strong, successful leaders, in the hope of further developing and teaching these qualities. In contemporary paradigm, however, leadership is the process in which leader and followers influence each other, and certainly not (exclusively) focusing on strong leaders or manipulating your group as smartly and efficiently as possible.

This new perspective appears to be a fruitful perspective on leadership. By looking for reciprocity, justice can be done to the ambitions of the leader, the needs of individual followers and the structure and organization of the group.

This shift is already taking place since the nineties. Haslam et al. (2011) calls this *the new psychology of leadership*. It is therefore striking that the need for inspiration and meaningfulness seems to be opposed to this emphasis on reciprocity within leadership. Inspiration by the leader assumes a form of charismatic leadership, with the leader in the foreground. Reciprocal leadership brings the person of the leader more to the background, while the followers become more central. This development in leadership theories is essential to understand contemporary debates on leadership (van Saane 2018).

The paradox in leadership theories can now be seen. The dominance of situational leadership theories does not match with the popular and societal call for charismatic leadership. Situational and reciprocal leadership should shift the focus from the leader to the followers and the contextuality of leadership. This shift takes place, but at the same time a strong and persuasive leader tends to be attractive. In fact, this can be seen as a return to older views about leadership. After all, the attention to personality traits of the effective leader is not new. On the contrary, isolating personality traits and skills to provide predictors of successful leadership has a long history in leadership theories. In some cases, these theories are very detailed. The work of Nauss can be seen as an example. Skills for successful predecessors and leaders of interest are identified by Nauss (1996) as no fewer than 65 variables in 56 dimensions. The most important ones he isolated seemed to be: persuasion, relationship orientation, task orientation, teamwork ability, and stress tolerance. It is in other words, successful leadership has to do with communication skills, social skills and the appropriate cognitive skills. Besides, skills—in contrast to personality traits—can be taught, learned and developed.

This development towards new dominance for the leader's role in the leadership process is confirmed by research of the Center for Creative Leadership (Van Velsor et al. 2010). This center conducts research into leadership in all sorts of domains and concludes in its handbook that there are characteristics that are of importance to every leader: emotional stability, integrity, self-defense, sense of responsibility, interpersonal skills and the right cognitive or technical skills. According to CCL, these traits are predictors for effective and successful leadership in different domains, both in the profit as in the non-profit sector. Training programmes on leadership should focus on strengthening these traits and skills. Leaders in all types of organizations appear to be more effective if they have these characteristics than leaders who score low on these traits. And that seems to be rather obvious. Emotionally stable leaders are leaders who can handle pressure well and remain calm in times of crisis. This is expressed in predictability: these leaders remain consistent in their behavior and choices, which increases the perceived reliability of leadership. Emotional stability includes the ability to take responsibility for one's own behavior, even if mistakes are made. Effective leaders learn from their mistakes and are able to change. In addition to emotional stability, effective leaders are characterized by integrity. Integrity is a concept that is fulfilled in various ways in the research into leadership (cf van Saane 2012; Bass and Steidlmeier 1999; Brown and Trevino 2006). However, it always has to do with the commitment between leader and group. Integral leaders act from that commitment, and do not allow personal interests to

prevail over group interests. This can be reflected in the fulfillment of promises, being open about personal ambition and not having a hidden agenda or hidden financial transactions. Emotional stability and integrity are character traits, characteristics that belong to a person's personality and do not or hardly change over time. In addition to this type of characteristics, successful leaders also distinguish themselves with certain skills. Unlike personality traits, skills are easy to learn and develop. Key skills in leadership appear to be social skills and specific cognitive skills. Social skills, interpersonal orientation, provide the leader to be able to make contact easily, not only with the members of the own group, but also with the outside world. Interpersonal skills improve both external and internal relationships and the right substantive skills and knowledge elements give authority, again both inside and outside the organization (Yukl 2010; Mintzberg 1973; Quinn et al. 2007, 2011).

Obviously, this frame is constructive because of its clearness. Within this frame, the effectiveness of leadership can easily be increased: if we know which traits and skills are good predictors of effective leadership, training programs and selection procedures can become far more efficient.

3 Spirituality and Leadership

So, the call for charismatic, persuasive leadership reveals the paradox within leadership theories. On the one hand, a strong focus on personality traits seems to be constructive. On the other hand, the whole leadership paradigm shifts from the personality of the leader to interactive and reciprocal influencing processes between leader and followers. This apparent contradiction can be overcome when the paradigms of spirituality are taken into account within the domain of leadership. This can be shown by elaborating on some essential concepts of spirituality. After all, the call for strong leaders is in many cases the call for inspiration, for trust, for meaning and for perspective. Spirituality is pre-eminently the domain of meaning and inspiration; a domain that has a very long history here. Despite this long history, theories and models of spirituality have sometimes become somewhat invisible amid the dominance of secular models of leadership and organization. It is true, the theories on Servant Leadership (Greenleaf 1977), Spiritual Leadership (Fry 2003) and Transformational Leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1996) have become part of the canon of leadership theories, but the mainstream of textbooks on leadership (cf van Vugt and Ahuja 2010; Day and Antonakis 2012) have a different focus. That is unfortunate, because the discipline of spirituality offers plenty of opportunities to make an essential contribution to the experienced need for charisma and meaning within leadership. This need for a form of leadership that meets responsibility for the whole and for perspective, can lead to the domain of spirituality. Therefore, the question is how can leadership be inspired by fundamental concepts from religious or spiritual traditions? Inspiration and meaning can easily become empty concepts. Spiritual traditions and models of spirituality, on the other hand, can provide words and

concepts that give meaning to these concepts, so that they actually contribute to the quality of leadership that demands high standards.

How can leadership be inspired by concepts from religiosity and spirituality? First of all, we need some clarification of definitions (see also van Saane 2014). Although religion, spirituality and worldview are interconnected, for the purpose of relating spirituality and religion to leadership we need a broad definition of spirituality, which can be linked to a variety of religious and philosophical traditions. For the definition of spirituality, I follow the philosopher Roothaan, who defines spirituality as an attitude of openness, attention and consciousness (Roothaan 2007, p. 65). This attitude can be based on a philosophical or religious worldview, but that is not necessarily the case. Spirituality can be rooted in more secular worldviews as well.

Spirituality is the constant search for meaning, from an open attitude, with a focus on sustainability and credibility, rooted in self-knowledge and in the desire for growth and development. From this description of spirituality follows a number of characteristic aspects, which are useful to explore when we relate spirituality to leadership.

Spirituality is about the search for meaning. Spirituality is connected with morality, with norms and values that set the satisfaction of one's own needs against the public interest. This may be related to a traditional form of religion, but that is of course not necessary.

Within spiritual traditions, truth can only be personal truth. The truth that one seeks is uncertain in nature, flexible. This truth should not only be found, but also constructed by the seeker. Personal truth offers a renewed perspective or someone's life, a consciousness from which life can be interpreted in different ways. Constantly, the truth must be involved in one's own life and in one's own context. Abstract truth as such is meaningless. This process of construction and connection is in principle infinite, one never reaches the point that the search can be stopped.

From this follows that searching is more important than finding. In many traditions spirituality is conceptualized as a journey or a road, often with a mystical variant as an exemplary highlight. The journey as a search for destination and goals in life can take a lot of time. The difficulties and challenges faced are more important than achieving the goal in itself.

Dealing with difficulties requires a certain openness; openness for the self, for the other, for complexity, for hidden motives. Openness requires a lot of learning and experience. Within spirituality one can grow in attention and awareness. Increasing openness can lead to growth and continuous transformation. A high ideal in many traditions is the acceptance of the inevitable.

What is needed to be able to experience leadership as a form of inspiration and trust? The spiritual traditions offer a number of building blocks to answer this question. From the above description of spirituality the following building blocks can be distilled.

In the first place, a leader should feature a rather high amount of self-knowledge. He needs to know what his own strengths and weaknesses are, where the pitfalls lie and how personal experiences influence behavior. Lack of self-knowledge will result

in lack of knowledge of the other; knowing yourself leads to knowing the other. However, self-knowledge is not the only contribution from spirituality. In the second place, spirituality makes clear that a leader benefits from self-confidence. Self-confidence is self-knowledge in combination with acceptance of yourself. Within spiritual traditions this is an important element, because self-confidence is part of perception of yourself through the eyes of the Other. The perspective of the Other also leads to a third element of spirituality in connection to leadership: norms and values. Failing leadership is leadership that results in immoral behavior. In that case, the standards for right choices are lacking, resulting in prevalence of individual interests instead of the general interest and humanity as a whole. In almost all spiritual traditions it is a recurring refrain: do good, take care of the other person, put the other person before yourself. If the leader, in the fourth place, is an open and learning leader, an opportunity for inspiration and trust can arise. The leader must be able to reflect upon himself and learn from the choices made. However, learning is more than that: it is openness to new experiences and perspectives, so that within leadership process growth and development (of the leader, of the followers, of the organization) are stimulated. The last core element of spirituality as building block for inspirational leadership is very much needed to strengthen the openness: imagination. Leaders with imagination are able to rise above the everyday perspective, they can imagine the apparent impossible, and they are capable of acting from this ideal and visionary perspective. Imagination flourishes from irrational forms of knowledge; imagination is creative and intuitive thinking. Leaders who do not limit themselves to the purely rational reality, leaders who give space to their intuition, those leaders are inspiring and innovative for their followers (Van Saane 2012, 2014; Verstraeten 2003).

4   Religious Leadership

Leadership in relation to spirituality takes two forms: inside and outside religious communities. Above, spirituality has been connected to secular forms of leadership. However, it is also important to focus on leadership within religious communities. This is a different way of connecting leadership and spirituality, besides the input of concepts of spirituality on leadership models as outlined above. Can religious leadership reveal fruitful insights on the relation between spirituality and leadership?

Traditionally, the main task of the leader within a religious organization was keeping the community on course, both in terms of theological conviction as social organization. The core of spiritual leadership consisted of taking care of the believer's soul life. This conception of religious leadership was supported and validated by theologies or ministry that connected the authority of the leader with the divine calling of the leader and its confirmation by the official religious institutions (Barentsen 2011).

This typical theological interpretation of religious leadership fits in a traditional religious context of rather stable religious communities practicing their different

dimensions of religion: rituals, social relations, religious experiences, diaconal services to each other and to society. This theological interpretation of religious leadership, however, falls short of the contemporary changing religious landscape. To be clear, these changes are not unambiguous of nature.

The number of registered members of organized religious institutions is decreasing more and more. This applies to the mainstream Protestant churches, to the Roman Catholic churches, and also to the mosques. It is no longer obvious that children follow in the religious footsteps of their parents. It is no longer entirely self-evident that children take over the religious practices of their parents. The result is that religious institutions lose power and influence. Religious communities are no longer a natural conversation partner of governments and other organizations or companies. This development has had consequences for the position of religious leaders. More pressure arised on them, as a result of which burnout and exhaustion are relatively common in the professional group of religious leaders (Brouwer 1995; Evers and Tomic 2003). Less financial resources, more pressure to perform, more complicated constructions with volunteers: religious leadership offers less authority and more risk than before. At the same time, for those who choose to join or remain within a religious group, membership has become a conscious act that usually goes along with high expectations. If you belong to a religious community, entirely from a free choice, it should be rather attractive, meeting high standards. One seeks high-quality celebrations, balanced rituals, an elaborate narrative, fulfillment of the need for meaning and the availability of appropriate norms and values. Usually, the standards are high. The leaders of these modern religious communities are not always fully equipped for this new context. Within the Muslim community in the Netherlands, for example, a professionalization trajectory for imams is currently under construction, focusing on imams who have had a traditional education, usually in the countries of origin of Muslim immigrants. The governmental expectations from the imams with respect to issues like radicalization, conversion and integration go far beyond the boundaries of that traditional education—with much attention to the conduct of prayer and other ritual acts. The professionalization trajectory is aimed to fill the gap between contemporary expectations and traditional education. This casus reveals a first field of tension: the importance of organized forms of religion, and thus of traditional forms of religious leadership, is decreasing, while at the same time the importance of leadership for believers only increases, due to the personal motives underlying religious commitment.

A second field of tension within the religious context comes next to the first one. Leadership is under pressure, in the individualized and secularized modern Western society. Religion is no longer a matter of self-evidence, the religious leader is no longer an authority a priori. Although in the secularized Western European context, such as in the Netherlands, different ways have been developed to respond to this— developing for example religious entrepreneurship and missionary leadership, or connecting new individual spiritual questions with old religious traditions—, faith communities fail to have constructive and sustainable answers to these societal developments in society, while those answers are really asked for.

5   Leadership and Spirituality in a VUCA World

The super-diverse modern Western societies no longer provide for coherent "big stories" leading to social cohesion and stability with their shared values and convictions. On the contrary, modern society is referred to as a VUCA world: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The world is rapidly changing, within uncertain conditions and with ambivalent outcomes. Society is fragmented and diverse in many different ways, which are not always easy to interpret. For example, polarization goes hand in hand with nationalism, global awareness with a tendency towards the local community. Secularisation goes hand in hand with an increasing need for meaning. And strangely, individualisation and de-institutionalization seem to be just as important as the societal impact of an organization.

Van de Berg (2016, p. 92) describes some of these contradictions with reference to Van der Woud (2015), complicating the interpretation of the global context. He points out the role of freedom. Freedom is seen as perhaps the highest value in contemporary society. At the same time and in contradiction, people hope for powerful and authentic leadership that solves their problems. And the freedom to develop yourself exists in addition to the social pressure to succeed. The need for freedom is accompanied by the need for security. In other words, people are looking for open-ended connectedness.

In short, people experience a lot of fear and uncertainty. Old structures such as traditional religion, extended families and geographical proximity are rapidly disappearing. Everything is constantly changing, the politics are fleeting, news reports catch each other at a frightening pace, and can still be fake news as well. People experience a lack of control. As a result, people feel scared, insecure and isolated. Anxiety, insecurity and isolation if fundamental and basic human needs are not met properly. In psychology three basic needs of people are distinguished: the need for solidarity with others, the need for control over reality and the need for self-enhancement. If these three needs are not met, isolation, insecurity and anxiety arise. This pattern leads to the comprehensible urgent need for meeting, solidarity and self-affirmation in the contemporary fragmented and individualized society (McAdams and Bryant 1987). This need can be an opportunity for spiritual values in leadership.

In this context, I especially point out the meaning of rituals. New forms of interdependence can very well take the form of rituals. Rituals help people in times of crisis, tension and transition by satisfying basic needs. In sorrow and crisis these needs are temporarily under pressure, but in modern society one sometimes experiences that these needs are permanently under pressure. Attempts and initiatives to bring people together will work well if they meet the requirements of a good ritual (van Saane 2010; Post et al. 2002). One of these requirements concerns togetherness. Performing a ritual on your own does not contribute much, within the ritual one has to experience being part of a larger whole and being supported by a relevant social group. The ritual should also give space to emotional experience. A proper ritual offers people the space to complain, to cry, to be angry, to be sad or to show joy. Bringing people from different groups together and instructing them to

bridge the differences only works if they also have the opportunity to show their emotions about the other person. If the emotions are channeled and thus stripped of their disruptive function, space is created to learn from each other. Good and valid rituals offer sufficient space for the individual experience without limiting the ritual to the individual emotions entirely. Within the ritual context, the individual experience is always mirrored to a different and often broader perspective.

In this confusing context full of paradoxes and tensions, more and more calls are made to religious or spiritual communities to participate in and contribute to society, with inspiration and vision, with modern traditions, with meaning (Post et al. 2002). For example, religious communities are expected to be able to bring different generations into dialogue, to bridge diversity, to endeavour civic participation. The question is whether that is possible, and what the impact of modern religious leadership can be in secular society as a whole.

As outlined above, the global development of de-institutionalisation puts traditional forms of leadership under severe pressure. Paradoxically, however, this trend does not mean that the role of the leader is getting smaller, but rather bigger. The disappearance of frameworks and meaning systems makes the process of social identification and construction increasingly important. The experience that everything can be deconstructed is a dominant one, there are no fixed truths anymore. This playing field creates room for personal and individual experience, for less rational aspects of human existence, and for inspiration through leadership. In the dynamic interaction between leader and followers, meaning and interpretation arise, as a reciprocal process in which mutual influence ensures continuous transformation.

The conceptualization of leadership as a dynamic process fits into the scientific paradigm of *social construction*. In this paradigm, meaning is not only an attribute of an object, but also something that is created in the perception by the subject. Meaning is subjective, and occurs in the interaction between the subject and his or her environment.

Leadership as social construction is not so much about the personality of the leader anymore, the social perception and reception of the leader by the followers are central factors. Following the paradigm of social construction, in those perception processes leadership is created. The decision about effective or failed leadership cannot be judged objectively, it lays very much in the perception of the subject. This formulation already shows that the predictability of effective, successful leadership within this paradigm of social construction is much lower than in the paradigm of the effective leader. More variables than only the personality traits are taken into account in this new paradigm: the perception process, contextual factors, characteristics of the observer, characteristics of the leader and uncertainty about the purpose of leadership. All these variables affect the effectiveness of leadership.

The paradigm of social construction thus offers opportunities for leadership besides the person of the leader, but leadership also becomes more complex and uncertain. The context of social construction makes leadership possible, but at the same time, this context sometimes problematizes leadership. If social construction is taken seriously, leadership itself is a form of sense-making. Leadership does not

exist outside our perception or construction, leadership is a form of perception and interpretation.

This fits with the modern network culture, reinforced by digitization and the dominance of social media. Personal preferences and affinity are leading for the network. The commitment is provisional, and exchangeable. Leadership in uncertain context like this focuses on inspiration and empowerment. People need to be empowered in their choices, while their personal choices have become leading motives.

These constructionist concepts of leadership have consequences for religious leadership as well. John Eliastam (2018) describes this process of sense-making as "discursive leadership," underscoring the social, linguistic, and cultural aspects of leadership. This theoretical perspective brings Eliastam to investigate the role of narratives in leadership. He shows that the leadership discourse provides for narratives helping people to connect different experiences. These narratives offer conditions to make sense of people's lives and situations. Narratives are the told stories and myths within an organization. Leadership occurs when people recognize themselves in the narrative values and ideas that are put forward to solve problems or to achieve goals. In this perspective, leadership itself becomes a social activity of reality construction and meaningfulness. From this paradigm, Eliastam reveals opportunities for religious leadership that provide new narratives replacing existing dominant stories, opening the way for development and freedom. By the way, Eliastam connects this opportunity to the evolutionary principle of survival stating that a multiplicity of connected narratives creates a need for new sensemaking processes in order to assimilate the various stories. According to him, this need is rooted in the human need to survive or adapt to changing environments.

6   Personal Leadership

We have seen so far that there is a need for strong leadership in all kinds of societal domains. This call is in itself somewhat strange or paradoxical, since the contemporary theories and models of leadership move towards a reciprocity between leader and followers, rather than to strong focus of predictive personality traits of a successful leader.

This paradox can be dealt with in two ways. In the first place, it turns out that the research into the personality traits and the characteristics of effective leaders is a continuous line, despite the development of social constructivist views on leadership. The Center for Creative Leadership research (Van Velsor et al. 2010) forms a clear example of this ongoing line of research. In the second place, the inclusion of spirituality in leadership seems to offer an opening for this field of tension. After all, meaning and inspiration can be derived from spirituality, without being handed over to the so-called "strong leaders." There appear to be various inputs for spirituality in the leadership debate. Spirituality offers clear building blocks for a leadership concept that is focused on openness, growth and attention. The connection of

leadership and spirituality can also take place by paying attention to what is happening in contemporary religious communities in terms of leadership. Within these communities, one can find a development towards professionalisation—a strong requirement in the modern complex context-, as well as developments in religious leadership, focusing on the translation of traditional religious answers to existential questions for contemporary people. Examples of these "translations" are modern rituals, symbolic actions, story telling and art.

What else do we need now if we want to make a fruitful connection between leadership and spirituality in the complex context of a VUCA world? The VUCA world is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. This means a perception of constant change, of complexity and chaos, of social constructions that are mainly uncertain and can disintegrate just like that. In this VUCA world there is a great need for spirituality. However, that spirituality must be flexible and personal, which is not always the case when spirituality is derived from traditional forms of religion.

The concept that potentially connects these different movements and needs is learning. In all these different processes, learning plays a central role; discernment and wisdom require an attitude of learning. For me, learning is part of a form of leadership known as personal leadership (van Saane 2015, 2017). Personal leadership can be defined as knowing yourself, having grip on yourself, on your personal environment, on your life as a whole. Personal leadership is thus connected to a form of learning, especially to forms of engaged or integrated learning. Personal leadership connects society, thinking about leadership and spirituality.

7 Personal Leadership: An Unknown Country

Personal leadership seems to be a promising concept to fill the gap between leadership and spirituality within the complex context of the VUCA world. Nevertheless, this statement needs further research.

I want to mention a number of aspects of personal leadership that require further research and further operationalization. The first aspect of personal leadership is transformative learning. In society, circumstances are constantly and rapidly changing. These changes require a capacity for ongoing adaptation. Learning is a process of differentiation of meanings. This means the core of learning is a process of change and transformation. This can be about small and everyday things, but also about comprehensive aspects of life. If providing for new visions is accompanied by a process of self-reflection and self-examination, space is created for exploring new options of the construction of meaning to life. Exploring new possibilities can lead to the genesis of a new frame of reference (Mezirow 2012, p. 82). A frame of reference is a meaning perspective, the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter our impressions. If one's own values, convictions and presuppositions are examined through processes of critical reflection and rational discussion, frames of reference can be changed and meaning perspectives can be transformed.

What is needed for this? Mezirow (2012) shows that hospitality and openness are important, so that people feel invited to participate. There must be reciprocal receptiveness to new ideas and perspectives, with the willingness to question assumptions (Graham 2012). Transformations cost effort and time, changes evoke resistance. A light tone of reflection and a sufficient degree of self-critical humor are facilitating (Mezirow 2006).

The second aspect of personal leadership includes a learning strategy known as self-directedness in learning (Mezirow 2012; Gijbels et al. 2014). This learning strategy means that one can take responsibility for the own learning process. Key concepts in self-directed learning are self-regulation and self-control. This requires some resilience, because after all, one has to be able to receive feedback, and accommodate or adjust the learning process based upon the critical feedback. The self-directed learning style includes a proactive attitude, constantly being adaptive to the environment and being aware of changes in perspective and context. Self-directed learning does not stop with the person himself. It is precisely from self-awareness that responsibility can be taken for itself and for the greater whole. Knowledge of itself then immediately is accompanied by consciousness of the other person, with openness, meaning and a broadened horizon. This leads to recognition of the individuality of the other. You underestimate the other person if the individuality of the other person is not recognized. This starts with the own individuality: self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem (Tennen and Affect 1993). This includes a balance between identification and separation (Ruijters et al. 2015; Baumeister 2011), between cooperation and empathy in the interaction.

For me, self-directedness in learning belongs to personal leadership because this is inextricably linked to an adult life attitude, which leaves room for responsive and sensitive leadership, for resilience. By learning to accept oneself, by establishing good relationships with others, by getting the best out of yourself, by giving meaning to your life and by maintaining a certain autonomy, regardless of the context, you can use the full potential, on an individual and social level (Ruijters et al. 2015; Ryff and Singer 2013; Ryff 2014).

The third and last aspect of personal leadership can be described as wisdom. Wise people are people who are careful with automatic answers because they realize that every reaction is relative and dependent on the context (Ruijters et al. 2015). Wisdom has to do with ambiguity and ambivalence. Wisdom is the integration of knowledge and experience, in a way that not only benefits you but also others (Ruijters et al. 2015; Sternberg 1990). Sternberg defines wisdom as "the application of tacit as well as explicit knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests, over the short and long terms, to achieve a balance among adaptation to existing environments, shaping of existing environments, and selection of new environments" (Sternberg 2001; via Ruijters et al. 2015, p. 439). That is the core of personal leadership: being able to see both the own interests and the interests of others in a specific context. Sternberg has made his life's work of developing a model on wisdom. He (Sternberg 2010) calls his model the Wisdom, Intelligence and Creativity Synthesized Model. With this model he wants to contribute to a better

world, breaking the circle of self-interest, violence and destruction. However, he himself already distinguishes (Sternberg 2004) five biases leading tot underdevelopment of wisdom: unrealistic optimism, self-centeredness, a sense of omniscience, a sense of omnipotence and invulnerability. Wisdom will therefore always remain an endeavor, but an endeavor that helps to distinguish and discern in our contemporary complex society.

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