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PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP IN THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

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The article is devoted to the investigation of development of philosophical ideas of leadership. The accent has been made on the historical and cultural specific features of interpretation of the phenomenon of leadership in Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Modern Age and contemporary time. It has been concluded that leadership research can be divided into three main areas: 1) the first direction comes from the interpretation of leadership as a social and cultural universal as an activity inherent in society at all stages of its development and having general patterns of manifestation in all spheres of social life; 2) the second direction is based on the identification of leadership and management; 3) the third direction of inquiries singles out leadership as a separate social and cultural phenomenon with various aspects which it is not reducible either to the sphere of management, or to psychology, or to the activities of state authorities or individual political leaders.

Key words: Leader, Leadership, Hero, Power, Society, Culture.

In the social and humanitarian knowledge at the moment there are a sufficiently large number of leadership theories which can be called “models”. A model is understood as a theoretical system that is related to the similarity with the social and cultural (the phenomenon of leadership) built in order to study the laws of the emergence and functioning of this phenomenon.

The aim of this article is the philosophical inquiry of the main stages of development of theoretical views on leadership.

As for theoretical works which are devoted to the problem of leadership the following ancient and modern authors should be mentioned: V. Asmus [1], I. Diakonov [2], S. Dmitriyev and S. Kuzmin [3], Th. Hobbes [4], I. Kotlyarov [5], J. Locke [6], N. Machiavelli [7], Plato [8], Tertullian [9], L. Vacin [10], M. Weber [11], V. Yemelyanov [12], and others.

Leadership is a phenomenon that has arisen historically in the era of primitiveness. The first leaders were the “big men” and “chief men” described in anthropological and ethnographic literature, and later – the leaders and priests (shamans) or persons who combined both of these roles. Moreover, any leadership model has its own socially-cultural context

and reflects the ideological and historical specifics of the era. Therefore, any leadership model is a social and cultural model.

Leadership and power in the Ancient East always have had a mystical and religious character. Thus, the Emperor in China was a “son of heaven”, a more sacred supreme being (*Huang Di* – “the holy ruler”), although at first the rulers were called simply kings (*wang*). The emperor in the minds of the ancient Chinese had a special blessed power (*Te*) which was passed on to descendants and helps to create an imperial dynasty. But the dynasties in China changed quite often. Hence, the idea of the cyclical nature of history (the theory of the Heavenly Mandate) is based on the principle of alternating periods of prosperity and decline [3, p. 12].

In ancient Egypt the pharaoh was considered an incarnate deity, a special being separate from the entire universe. Pharaoh had no predetermined destiny and therefore, was free. The ancient Egyptian canon prescribed to depict the figure of the pharaoh several times more than the figures of other people. Pharaoh’s body remained incorrupt and after death he was reborn in the world of Eternity. The complete and free-will pharaoh was contrasted in the ancient Egyptian worldview to a changeable and transitory world. This opposition of the conditioned and changeable world and the eternal God later took root in all Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) [2, p. 104].

In ancient India the king was one of the seven elements of the monarchical state which also included ministers, the army, the village, fortifications, the treasury, and allies. The *kshatriyas* (military) representatives most often became kings. In the religious aspect, the king in the ancient Indian state was the sacred center of the world. The ceremony of consecration to the kingdom lasted for over a year and reflected the process of transition from chaos to order (*Rita*). At the same time, the king had to listen to the opinion of the people, and the people in some cases could remove him from power.

The modern Russian orientalist V. Yemelyanov speaking about the anthropological turn in the modern sciences of the East focuses on the fact that the problem of personality inevitably raises the problem of biography. For the Ancient East, only biographies of rulers are possible, which always express only what is due, and not what is, and the task of the source researcher is to consider the model of the ideal ruler of the real life path of the individual [12, p. 139]. The Ancient East as a cultural space was charismatic (from the Greek *charisma* “God’s gift”). Society, natural and cultural realities were perceived there through the prism of faith and mystical views. This influenced the formation of the idea of the divine nature of power, as well as the sociocentric nature of the Eastern worldview. “We” always subordinates the “Self”, unless it is the “Self” of the ruler, emperor, pharaoh, etc. It is no coincidence that in the East, the dominant form of government was despotism. The absolute power of the political leader was

combined with the vertical nature of social ties. The communal way of life and caste stratification was cultivated in every possible way.

On the one hand, the Ancient East gave birth to a socially passive personality type not oriented towards leadership and individualism, towards the manifestation of one's personal will. This was also facilitated by the retrospectiveness of the ancient Eastern worldview with its attitude "the future exists in order to become the past". It is no coincidence that all revolutions in the Ancient East ended with a return to the previous way of life.

On the other hand, modern Orientalist studies indicate that the desire for power, leadership and self-affirmation of their Ego were not alien to representatives of ancient Eastern cultures [10, p. 126]. If a person of the modern globalized world is multicultural and builds its worldview relying on the achievements of various cultural and historical traditions, striving to choose the best for himself from them, then in ancient times a person could draw resources to describe its life and activity only from what was part of itself. Ancient Eastern man was included in the general order of things and events, his mind sought harmony between society, natural being and his Self.

The ancient Greek leadership model had a pronounced political character. This is due to the polis organization of life of the ancient Greeks and the peculiarities of the slave-owning democracy. A minority of the population took part in the election procedures (women, minor children, slaves and foreigners did not have such a right). But at the same time such a system was fundamentally different from Eastern despotism. For a resident of an ancient polis the way to realize his leadership potential was the possession of rhetoric (which was the way of self-manifestation, in particular, in the ability to speak at popular meetings), as well as the worship of the city gods (religion in ancient Greece was a civil matter) and military prowess. The mythology (especially the myths about the heroes) had a significant influence on the antique leadership model. The antique monarch embodied the features of the Deity and the Hero.

Initially heroes in Ancient Greece were mythological characters – military leaders who lived on Olympus. Then Greeks began to call "heroes" real warriors who were distinguished by special courage and military valor. The ancient hero was a person who could inspire other people to win, aroused universal respect, and took responsibility in difficult situations. Gradually, the norms and values attributed to the heroes became a common standard by which all inhabitants of the ancient Greek polis were guided. This led to the emergence of the phenomenon of collective heroism, expressed in the Spartan military formula "Win together or die together!"

In general, leadership in Antiquity was identified with government. According to Heraclitus power should belong to the best members of

society who prefer eternal glory to everything that is transitory [1, p. 24]. Socrates spoke about the predominant meaning of the rational principle in man. This beginning is also manifested in the social structure, at the head of which should be a leader (ruler) who possesses such qualities as education, wisdom and honesty. Plato [8] in his views on the problem of leadership in many ways continued to develop the ideas of his teacher. Plato, in fact, laid the foundation for the theories of leadership and management. The thinker substantiated the natural inequality of people and believed that every person in an ideal state should occupy a place corresponding to his nature from birth. His famous doctrine of the ideal state which consists of philosophers, warriors (guards), as well as farmers and artisans. Leaders are philosophers who are the best representatives of the guards, trained in dialectics (“the art of reasoning”). In the works of Aristotle, the leader (ruler), just like in theory of Plato, must have a certain set of characteristics – goodness, courage, philanthropy, the ability to foresee and to make decisions, wisdom, experience, justice, intelligence and prudence. Aristotle’s leadership model has a more practical aspect. The philosopher divided in essence the ruler skill (*poieisis*) and practical behavior (*praxis*). Practical behavior represents a higher level of leadership than skill since it is this behavior that leads the ruler to the realization of his goals.

In the Middle Ages, the phenomenon of leadership like many other aspects of socio-cultural life was determined by the Christian ideological paradigm, as well as the estate-feudal system, in which the church played a leading role. Tertullian substantiating the advantages of the Christian religion over ancient Roman paganism substantiated the idea of the divine origin of power [9, p. 135]. According to Augustine the ideal ruler should have such qualities as the pursuit of truth, peace and universal unity in the context of Christian teaching. Thomas Aquinas shared Aristotle’s views of man as a “social animal”. People strive to live together and create a state. In state power the philosopher identified three main elements: the relationship between rulers and subjects, governed by laws; the acquisition of power; practical use of power. The last two elements can often take on a sinful character, although in their essence the source of power is in God. I. Kotlyarov rightly notes that the medieval leadership model is the model of the hero-knight [5, p. 23]. The ideal of the hero-knight was largely established in the public consciousness and literature of the Middle Ages during the era of the Crusades (1096–1270).

The Renaissance radically changed the concept of leadership, power and management. Under the influence of social and economic processes expressed in a decrease in the role of the church the growth of free-thinking and a variety of political parties and views, as well as the formation of the doctrine of humanism, the idea of the likeness of man as a Creator on Earth comes to the fore. The individual becomes more independent in relation to

social institutions and is proclaimed the highest value. In the Renaissance the process of the formation of the nation states of Europe as well as urbanization was intensified and there was an active development of crafts and trade. The new historical era required new leaders – intelligent, active, and open-minded.

The Renaissance phenomenon is, first of all, an Italian phenomenon, which subsequently influenced all European countries. In Italy was created N. Machiavelli's famous work "The Prince" [7] which embodied the concept of an ideal leader, which in many respects remains relevant in the modern world. The philosopher sought to describe the ideal of the ruler of a strong secular power, free from religious dogmas and restrictions. According to N. Machiavelli's views a leader should be guided by national interests, and only then by political ones. Strategy must dominate tactics. End justifies the means. To achieve the goal one can even compromise his moral convictions and resort to bribery, lies, violence and even murder, if this leads to the good of the state. The ruler should strive to seize power on his own [7, p. 352] and to be generous, obligatory, pious, and capable of empathy. N. Machiavelli believed that the leader of the state should combine the features of a lion and a fox. A lion is afraid of traps, and a fox is afraid of wolves, therefore, one must be like a fox to be able to avoid traps, and a lion to scare away wolves [7, p. 197].

In the Modern Age, English thinkers T. Hobbes and J. Locke wrote about leadership in their works. T. Hobbes called the driving force of history human aspirations and the right of the strong. In his opinion, "the supreme rulers do not do everything that they want and consider useful for the state ... the reason lies not in the lack of rights, but in the desire to take into account the interests of citizens ..." [4, p. 348]. An adherent of liberalism J. Locke rejected the medieval idea of the divine origin of political power and developed the idea of a civil society, which in all spheres of its life is governed by laws common to all citizens [6, p. 85, 126–134]. The power of the monarch is also limited by law.

The French enlighteners promoted the idea of an enlightened ruler who rules not with the help of intimidation, but with the help of wisdom, reason and the power of persuasion and knows the limits of his power. This approach is reflected in the works of F.-M. Voltaire, C. Montesquieu and other thinkers. In many ways the nature of political and philosophical views on the nature of leadership during this period was formed due to the process of the formation of national states which required new national leaders with progressive views and authority. In general from the appearance of "The Prince" of N. Machiavelli and up to the 19th century in Europe large-scale works devoted to the issue of leadership did not appear. This was due to the fact that the thinkers of this period did not see their task as the study of the phenomena of leadership, power and control, but the

search for ways to create mechanisms and structures that limit power absolutism.

German thinkers have played an important role in the theoretical development of the philosophy of leadership. The philosophy of I. Kant contains an extensive moral justification for leadership. This is, first of all, leadership in the field of education. The philosopher argued that a person is constantly faced with a choice between his sensuality and the spiritual law of reason. One who follows his sensual desires is not a leader but a slave to impulses. True freedom is achieved only by those who observe the laws of reason. Man is both a natural and intelligent being. If a person's moral will follows the law of reason then it acts with dignity, adheres to moral values and is free. Where people act not instinctively but on the basis of reason a human community guided by a moral law – a categorical imperative is created.

G. Hegel wrote about the revival of the German Empire in the form of a conglomerate of independent and sovereign states under the leadership of a single monarch. Such a monarch should be a person who has sufficient charisma so that everyone else should follow his absolute will. At the same time, the leader should be guided by the idea of the national good. Historical leaders are individuals who have realized the patterns of movement of the Absolute Spirit and their own vocation in the context of the historical process.

F. Nietzsche contrasts the leader and the crowd. His Zarathustra is a lonely hero. In the concept of the Superman, F. Nietzsche shows the unity of animal and spiritual principles. The leader is formed by asserting himself as a creator. F. Nietzsche developed the idea that the essence and law of the world is the will to power, the domination of the strong over the weak. In his activity the Superman is guided not so much by rational thinking and moral norms as by physiological needs and the desire for power.

M. Weber [11] developed one of the most famous classifications of leadership, highlighting traditional, charismatic and legal leadership.

In Marxism a person is understood as an active producing subject capable of adapting the world around him to his needs. By its nature is complete and reasonable. Human faith and feelings are either an expression of the rational principle or a consequence of alienation. The alienation of man from the entities created by him is expressed in the fact that the productive forces and relations of production created by man oppose him as external and hostile forces.

In general, the materialistic understanding of being presented in the works of F. Engels and K. Marx includes recognition of the role of a leader in history as well as recognition of the ability of prominent personalities to significantly influence the development of society. At the same time, the emphasis has been placed on the fact that such an influence is possible only if the ideals and actions of such a person are based on a correct

understanding of the interests and needs of the advanced class of society, are an expression of urgent historical tasks, and correspond to the objective course of history. The leader's activity that contradicts the objective historical laws of social development is doomed to failure.

In the second half of the 19th century the issues of leadership and its social and cultural role began to be actively studied by representatives of both philosophical and sociological and political sciences. A number of leadership models (theories) have emerged.

The outstanding personality model is built around the idea that a leader is a person with outstanding innate qualities that elevate him above the rest of society. The origin of such qualities is considered inexplicable and irrational.

Trait theory is also based on the idea that a leader is naturally gifted which gives him a leading position in society. In the context of trait theory many empirical studies have been carried out the purpose of which was to identify the complex of personality characteristics that make a person a leader.

On the basis of the theory of traits, the theory of charismatic leadership was formed. At the same time, charisma is understood as personal uniqueness, including various qualities – up to the gift of clairvoyance, allowing the leader to have a purposeful impact on other people.

In the 1950s the situational model of leadership was widespread (J. Woodworth). It is based on the idea that leadership is a product of the situation. Since leadership is a functional consequence of the situation, it has nothing to do with the talent or charisma of the leader himself. Leadership is a relative and multiple phenomenon. According to this model one does not need to have outstanding qualities in order to be an effective leader, but it is important to coincide with the situation.

The theory of followers (constituents) was developed by M. Kelly. It is based on the idea that following is the main element of leadership, and it makes no sense to talk about leaders outside of connection with followers. You can understand the essence of leadership only if you understand in detail the complex system "leader – follower". Follower theory is ultimately based on the philosophical question of the relationship between personality and mass. She has many opponents who believe that the crowd is blind and cannot determine anything. Such views were held by Cicero, Tacitus, G. Le Bon, H. Ortega y Gasset, and others.

In general, leadership research can be divided into three main areas:

The first direction comes from the interpretation of leadership as a social and cultural universal as an activity inherent in society at all stages of its development and having general patterns of manifestation in all spheres of social life.

The second direction is based on the identification of leadership and management. Management is understood as endowing a person with the

formal status of a manager, which gives certain rights and power, while leadership is understood as a socially-psychological aspect of leadership (management) associated with the possession of authority and qualities necessary in order to manage other people. In the context of this approach leadership is also understood as a social institution that is implemented in the form of government bodies.

The third direction of inquiries singles out leadership as a separate social and cultural phenomenon with various aspects which it is not reducible either to the sphere of management, or to psychology, or to the activities of state authorities or individual political leaders.

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