

# Caring Leadership: A Heideggerian Perspective

Leah Tomkins<sup>1</sup> and Peter Simpson<sup>2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper develops the idea of caring leadership based on Heidegger's philosophy of care. From this perspective, caring leadership is grounded in the practices of 'leaping-in' and 'leaping-ahead' as modes of intervention in the affairs of the world and the efforts of others. This involves gauging and taking responsibility for the ramifications of intervention, balancing the urge for certainty of outcome and visibility of contribution with the desire to encourage and enable others. Our analysis suggests several twists to contemporary leadership debates. We argue that the popular models of transactional and transformational leadership are to be critiqued not for their over-reliance, but rather, their under-reliance on agency. This is a different kind of agency to that of heroic or charismatic models. It involves tolerance of complexity and ambivalence; a rich sense of temporal trajectory; concern for one's presence in the world; and crucially, the ability to resist the soothing normativity of 'best practice'. From this position, we argue that the problem with the growing scholarly interest in an ethic of care is that it provides too tempting a recipe to follow. In a Heideggerian view, caring leadership has little to do with compassion, kindness or niceness; it involves and requires a fundamental organization and leadership of self.

## Key words:

Care; caring leadership; Heidegger; intervention; knowing; temporality; discourse; transformational leadership; authenticity; best practice

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Leah Tomkins, Dept. of Leadership, Work and Organisation, Middlesex University

<sup>2</sup> Dr Peter Simpson, Bristol Leadership Centre, University of the West of England

## ORGANIZATION: A SPACE FOR CARE

In recent years, care has been featuring increasingly prominently in conversations about organizational life, often rooted in Positive Organizational Scholarship or POS (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Frost *et al.*, 2006; Rynes *et al.*, 2012). Care and the related concept of compassion have been associated with organizational commitment (Lilius *et al.*, 2012), containment of work-based anxiety (Kahn, 2001), enhanced workplace self-esteem (McAllister and Bigley, 2002) and, more tentatively, with organizational performance (Cameron *et al.*, 2003) and productivity (Kroth and Keeler, 2009).

As Lawrence and Maitlis (2012) suggest, much of the literature on care and compassion positions them as a response to the pain or suffering of others. This work tends to focus on specific events which trigger a caring reaction, ranging from a single employee experiencing the loss of a family member to larger scale events such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and their effects on the organizations caught up in them. As individual caring responses accumulate into collective, organizational-level caring, the emphasis of much of this work is on the organizational conditions - whether culture, processes or constitution - which make it more or less likely that care will be triggered (Madden *et al.*, 2012).

Focusing less on the notion of suffering and more on the dynamics of relationship is the ethic of care literature, associated primarily with feminist scholarship (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2003). An ethic of care is the outcome of a process of moral development more closely associated with the feminine, in contrast to a more rule-based and impersonal justice associated with masculine maturation. Emerging from this body of work is a sense of care as social practice (Tronto, 1993), which in turn has inspired work on care as organizational practice (Jacques, 1992; Liedtka, 1996), including narrative practice (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012) and the practice of stakeholder relations (Wicks *et al.*, 1994).

In relation to leadership in particular, the ethic of care literature intersects with psychoanalytic theorisations in emphasising the roots of care in our childhood experiences. Gabriel (1997; 2014) identifies four fantasies that followers have about their leaders, relating to notions of care, accessibility, omnipotence and legitimacy, and the ways in which these echo experiences and fantasies of maternal and paternal love; "caring (or the absence of it) is a common feature of many followers' fantasies regarding their leader... Followers are prepared to endure the leader's harshness and, to a degree, arbitrariness in return for fulfilment of a need for protection, rooted in infantile helplessness and dependency. An uncaring leader

does not merely deny his/her followers the satisfaction of a vital need, but forces them to confront their dependency” (Gabriel, 1997, pp.326-7).

Care has also begun to feature in ‘critical’ explorations of leadership discourse as the site of identity work and identity regulation (Ford and Harding, 2007; 2011). Constructions of organization as the space for caring and nurturing provide a range of morality-inspired subject positions, shaping identity work amongst those who hold or aspire to leadership roles (Nyberg and Sveningsson, 2013; Shaw, 2010). From this ‘critical’ perspective, however, caring leadership discourses may well be just as functionalist and managerialist as the models they purport to replace; rather than being emancipating or humanising, perhaps they merely harness subjectivities to a different set of corporate values, or to the same corporate values more surreptitiously (Tourish, 2013).

Although these various takes on care have different emphases, they dovetail with several major themes in contemporary organization studies, in particular, relationships and relationality (Cooper, 2005; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011), practice (Segal, 2010; Zundel and Kokkalis, 2010), ethics (Cunliffe, 2009; Gabriel, 2009), and identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2011). In addition to these general openings for reflections on care, a number of specific gaps or opportunities have recently been articulated. For instance, Lawrence and Maitlis (2012) argue for a loosening of the associations with suffering and big events, and an increased emphasis on everyday, concrete practice within the context of enduring work relationships. Kroth and Keeler (2009) call for the development of the notion of organizational care based on philosophies of care rather than theories of commerce and exchange.

Our work intersects with such calls for philosophically-informed discussions of organization. In particular, we connect with criticisms of successful leadership concepts for their recipe or checklist ethos (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Lawler and Ashman, 2012; Nyberg and Sveningsson, 2013). Philosophical approaches, especially those drawing on phenomenology and existentialism, encourage us to loosen our grip on leadership recipes, because these privilege and promote the transparent, the package-able and the ideal over the grounded, the mundane and the experiential. From this philosophical perspective, leadership studies should look to what happens when there is no functionalist blueprint, no clear sense to be made, no comfort in transparency (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013; Simpson *et al.*, 2002). As Lawler and Ashman (2012, p.337) put it, “humankind is not so flawed that it cannot make ethical choices without a reference manual”.

So, we offer a philosophically-inspired discussion of the idea of care in organizations, and in leadership in particular, drawing on the phenomenological philosophy of Martin Heidegger. There is an extensive body of work in the health and social sciences connecting Heideggerian phenomenology with multiple facets of the life-world, including the lived experience of care. This includes studies of informal familial care (Galvin *et al.*, 2005; Tomkins and Eatough, 2013a), as well as professional care and nursing theory (Benner, 2000; Paley, 2000).

Despite the richness of his ideas, organizational scholars have come late to Heidegger's work (Reedy and Learmonth, 2011). This seems a shame, because there are several themes in his philosophy which are directly relevant to organization, not least his reflections on technology (Dreyfus, 1993). The reluctance to engage with Heidegger is probably due to his notoriously difficult language (Inwood, 1999; Sköldbberg, 1998) and his controversial involvement in National Socialism (Habermas, 1989; Safranski, 1999). Without wishing to belittle either of these charges, we think that both aspects have something to tell us about leadership, and both feature in our analysis here.

Heidegger is the inspiration for this paper because care is truly central to his vision of the human condition. Others have incorporated care into Heideggerian discussions of ethics (Olivier, 2011), mortality (Reedy and Learmonth, 2011) and management learning (Zundel, 2012). However, to our knowledge, there has been no sustained analysis of the implications of Heidegger's vision for the experience of caring leadership. So, in this paper, we explore and problematise the notion of caring leadership using Heidegger's account of care in his most famous work, *Being and Time*. Heidegger's philosophy refuses to yield anything like a definitive reading (Inwood, 1999), but we share some of our own interpretations and reflections in the hope that they resonate with others' experiences of organization and leadership.

The paper is structured as follows. We start with a discussion of how care manifests in practice, in our concrete relations with other people - *Fürsorge*. This grounds our exploration of leadership in the issue of intervention, which Heidegger elaborates in terms of 'leaping-in' and 'leaping-ahead'. At this level of analysis, we can make a like-with-like comparison between these 'leapings' and some of the main concepts in current leadership debates. We then move to a second level of analysis - *Sorge* - where Heidegger explores care in relation to the ontology of Being, considering the non-thematic ways in which our engagement with the world might be revealed through care. The crux of our argument is that both levels of analysis - both *Fürsorge* and *Sorge* - are energised by a similar structural framework, a similar thematic

patterning. We explore caring leadership using this common patterning, and consider how each level of analysis might illuminate the other.

On the whole, we talk about caring leadership rather than the caring leader, because we wish to avoid differentiating between 'leader' and 'follower' based on hierarchy. We think our daily organizational life consists of multiple experiences on both the giving and receiving ends of intervention, irrespective of where we are in the hierarchy. We see moments of asymmetry in everyone's experience of organizational life, rather than the totalising asymmetry of bounded roles. Where we need to differentiate 'follower' from 'leader', we mostly use the expression 'care-recipient'.

## HEIDEGGER AND CARE

We look first at Heidegger's presentation of care as it manifests in practice, and specifically, the way in which it concerns the question of intervention in everyday organizational affairs. With this, we signal an immediate shift from the POS emphasis on care as feelings of pity or sympathy that are triggered by unusual events (e.g., Dutton *et al.*, 2002). In this view, if tragic events did not occur and cause organizational members to suffer, there would be no case for caring leadership. But if care is seen as an extraordinary response to extraordinary events, it becomes separated from everyday organizational behaviour - something that might be outsourced to others, for instance, Human Resources, or involve moving out of 'leadership' into something else to reveal a more human, sensitive side in one's dealings with others.

Even a tentative engagement with Heidegger challenges any such notion of care as detachment from the everyday. For Heidegger, human existence is fundamentally in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) (54-56, pp.79-83).<sup>3</sup> This in-the-world-ness is not a spatial claim, but a relational one. As Cooper (1996, p.25) explains, "I am not in-the-world as a pea in a pod, but more in the sense that someone is in the world of motor-racing or fashion". Heidegger's worldliness is engagement, connection and concern rather than location. Thus, a Heideggerian caring leadership must surely be grounded in what happens in the everyday swing of organizational life, in our practical dealings with projects and people.

For Heidegger, care brings with it two ways of relating to the world - *Besorgen* (usually translated as 'concern') to mean our engagement with things and *Fürsorge* (conventionally

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<sup>3</sup> All direct references to Heidegger are from *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), with the section and page numbers taken from the Macquarrie and Robinson translation.

translated as 'solicitude') to address our engagement with people. Both are derived - linguistically and conceptually - from Heidegger's root construct for care, *Sorge*. In this section, we focus on *Fürsorge*, and we use the word 'care' rather than 'solicitude' to translate this. To our mind, 'solicitude' fails to capture the sense of intentionality and real *involvement* in the world of others, rather than just feelings of benevolence one can have from the wings. Since we want to differentiate Heideggerian care as engagement in organization from POS care as sympathy to disruptions to organization, we believe that this translation decision is important.

With *Fürsorge*, Heidegger presents two ways in which care manifests in our everyday encounters with others, involving different qualities of intervention (122, pp.158-159). The first kind of care intervention is substitutive, where the carer 'leaps in' (*einspringen*) to take over responsibility for a current situation or problem, and to direct its resolution as the carer sees fit. This involves putting oneself in the other person's place for as long as it takes for the issue to be resolved. Once it is resolved, the care-recipient can re-engage in the situation or disengage altogether.

The second form of care intervention is one where the carer 'leaps ahead' (*vorausspringen*) of the care-recipient to show the way towards a range of future possibilities and potentials. 'Leaping-ahead' encourages the recipient of care to connect with this range of possibility in his or her own way, on his or her own terms. It is thus a more suggestive, enabling, facilitating mode of intervention. It is not geared towards achieving a specific action or solution so much as towards opening up options for the care-recipient.

Heidegger proposes that *both* kinds of intervention - and all the various combinations thereof - can be positive and negative realisations of care. Everyday relations take place between these two extremes, that of substitution on the one hand and enablement on the other. Although we will consider each one in turn, we propose that the value for a study of leadership lies in viewing each through the prism of the other. This helps us to problematise different aspects and nuances of the leadership experience, and critique similar-seeming ideas in the leadership literature. In other words, it is the experience of the care continuum itself, with its range of possibilities for intervention, that constitutes our initial articulation of caring leadership; and we use the term 'multiplicity' to try to capture this.

Two particular aspects of this 'multiplicity' will structure our analysis - temporality and knowing. In relation to temporality, we have already noted that 'leaping-in' is mostly concerned with the present and the immediate, and that 'leaping-ahead' involves a greater sense of the future.

So, temporal multiplicity involves nuancing 'leaping-in' with aspects of past and future, and grounding 'leaping-ahead' in the present and past. In terms of knowing, 'leaping-in' has the sense of definiteness and certainty, whereas 'leaping-ahead' involves a greater sense of intimation and possibility. So, multiplicity in this sense involves off-setting the certainty of 'leaping-in' with an openness to alternatives, and infusing 'leaping-ahead' with clarity and focus.

## **CARING LEADERSHIP AS 'LEAPING-IN'**

Within the context of leadership, 'leaping-in' seems like a strong and certain intervention relating to the instinct to control. It plays, therefore, into the Western management emphasis on direct action and a "Cartesian anxiety associated with the cultivated penchant for stability, order, certainty and control" (Chia, 2014, p.9). When one person intervenes to take over from another, be this a task, a conversation or a relationship, there is usually the sense that this is strong leadership, which knows how to manage the challenges and requirements of the situation.

Within organizational settings, 'leaping-in' happens daily, even hourly, as the dynamics of task-ownership shift. From the perspective of the recipient of such intervention, 'leaping-in' can come as welcome relief when a task has become difficult and one is offered the opportunity to step back and let someone else take over for a while. It can, therefore, be a constructive care experience if one recognises one's own need for help and acknowledges the expertise and/or authority of the person providing that help. Well-judged 'leaping-in' allows care-recipients to regroup by being relieved of the immediate challenges of the present. Where it is not handled so sensitively, 'leaping-in' can undermine the care-recipient, emphasising or even creating a sense of vulnerability or irrelevance. In substitutive leadership relations there is perhaps a fine line between relief and resentment.

Heidegger tells us that 'leaping-in' is a dominating kind of care, which risks creating dependency in the care-recipient (122, p.158). As a leadership intervention, therefore, this kind of care requires a particular quality of intersubjective space in which a sureness or strength of intervention does not humiliate the care-recipient. Although much of the literature on leadership space conceptualises it as distance (Collinson, 2005), we are drawn to Grint's proposal that *difference* rather than distance may be the crucial factor (Grint, 2010). Recognition of the independent existence and perspective of the person one is stepping in to replace suggests what 'leaping-in' might entail when experienced as care.

In terms of temporality, 'leaping-in' emphasises the present and the immediate. Seeing leadership this way counterbalances the traditional focus in organizational research which has side-stepped the present in its emphasis on learning from the past and planning for the future (Simpson and French, 2006; Tomkins and Eatough, 2013b). Thus, caring leadership intersects with discussions on leadership as being present (Ciulla, 2009) and the related notion of presence (Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009). It is only from within our present dealings and our current concerns that other possibilities and aspects can emerge.

Our emphasis on temporal multiplicity suggests, however, that this present is not something chronologically distinct from the past or the future. For Heidegger, the future is not later than the past (the 'having been' in his lexicon), and the past is not earlier than the present (350, pp.400-401). Rather, our engagement in the present is infused with the temporal hues of past and future. Our leadership interventions need, therefore, to acknowledge and encompass what has been and what might be whilst being grounded in what is.

Such temporal multiplicity is indicated when Heidegger suggests that the care-recipient needs a way *back into* the situation once the immediate need for substitution is over (122, p.158). 'Leaping-in' is, therefore, only experienced as care if it moves beyond displacement and substitution and into reinstatement or restoration, that is, if it balances immediacy of need with concern for the future. We think this chimes with our everyday experiences of being the recipient of leadership intervention: We may feel relief and gratitude if our leader steps in to direct a particularly difficult task or answer a particularly difficult question on our behalf, but these feelings will be short-lived if no further tasks or questions are directed our way. A caring leader both rescues us and helps to re-establish our credibility as soon as possible thereafter.

Perhaps the most powerful way in which 'leaping-in' connects with current leadership debates concerns the notion of control. Whilst much of the traditional management literature remains wedded to the importance and possibility of control (e.g., Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Kanter, 1983), more recently such ideas have been challenged, not least because the subjective experience of leadership seems much less certain and predictable than the management literature would have it (Chia, 2014). An alternative set of arguments is emerging from a process-philosophical perspective (Chia and Holt, 2009; Langley and Tsoukas, 2010), often informed by complexity theory (Stacey, 2012), communication theory (Habermas, 1990), and/or Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1972), and connecting with the specific literature on leadership through relational leadership models (Hosking *et al.*, 1995; Uhl-Bien, 2006). A process view suggests, for instance, that "in order to truly 'manage'



change, we must paradoxically ‘let go’ of the attempt to control and pre-determine outcomes” (Chia, 2014, p.10). Although this is in the context of change, we think it has resonance for our consideration of leadership, too.

In a sense, the argument that we need to ‘let go’ is similar to the suggestion that ‘leaping-in’ should be off-set, infused and/or even replaced by ‘leaping-ahead’. There is a Heideggerian twist to this argument, however. Our reading of Heidegger suggests that such off-setting is needed *not* for the reasons posited by the process theorists, namely that control is too difficult or too exhausting, or that a control-based approach will not work (for instance, because it will inevitably trigger resistance, Chia, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 1998). The Heideggerian warning here is almost the opposite, namely that control is problematic because it is too easy, not exhausting enough, and all too likely to ‘work’ - at least in our current historical and cultural context.

We make this somewhat provocative suggestion because ‘leaping-in’ relates mostly to our concern for the ‘ready-to-hand’ (*zuhanden*), that is, to our immersion in dealings with matters as they present themselves in our everyday lives. Heidegger’s famous example of the hammer which figures in our world by virtue of its *use* illustrates this absorption in the world of the practical; it is the hammering that reveals the hammer (69, pp.98-99). Thus, our base state as humans is one of absorption (*Verfallen*). This means that we are ‘fallen’, not as in the biblical Fall from grace (176, pp.219-220), but rather, as a way of indicating an immersion in the everyday.

*Verfallen* is a complex idea in Heidegger’s work, involving several nuances of meaning (Inwood, 1999).<sup>4</sup> It is used both relatively neutrally to depict our basic way of being; if we were *not* absorbed in current concerns, nothing would show up for us at all. But it is also used in a more critical sense to suggest the risks of falling prey to what Heidegger depicts as ‘the They’ (*das Man*) (126-130, pp.163-168). This entails going with the crowd, following rules and scripts without reflecting on how it could be otherwise. We are then capable only of doing and thinking what ‘they’ do or think, or rather what ‘one’ does or thinks, since ‘the They’ are not real others, but the faceless, anonymous sense of how things are supposed to be. In organizational terms, this is a powerful challenge to the notion of ‘best practice’; what is ‘best practice’ except the way that ‘one’ is supposed to do things?

We want to probe the question of why the absorption of *Verfallen* is problematic for caring leadership, specifically in relation to the two themes of knowing and temporality. If we are

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<sup>4</sup> Heidegger’s *Verfallen* has been translated in several ways, including absorption; falling; fallenness; decline; decay. We mostly translate it as absorption because we find this the most idiomatic way to depict being swept up in prevailing discourses of the way things are supposed to be.

absorbed too fully or too easily, we lose the sense that there are other facets of existence, specifically for this analysis, other modes of knowing (and not-knowing) and other temporal concerns. The risk of 'leaping-in', therefore, is that its certainty can desensitise us to uncertainty and that its focus on the immediate can blind us to a broader temporality, in which life is grasped in its entirety, as concerned with the past and the future even whilst it is accessible - experience-able - only from the present. If we lose or ignore these other aspects, our actions become automatic, because they are guided by what seems 'normal' or 'natural'. We become disconnected from multiplicity and complexity, and unable to be, think or operate on our own terms.

The notion of control seems to underpin our most 'normal' and 'natural' sense of what organizations are all about. We are, therefore, most vulnerable to the ways of 'the They' when we adopt the more controlling, substitutive, 'leaping-in' mode of intervention, which speaks to our enduring sense that leadership must be active (Simpson *et al.*, 2002). There is an intriguing Heideggerian paradox here, namely, that the behaviourally active can be existentially passive. Thus, our reading of Heidegger suggests that care is realised - and 'leaping-in' is counterbalanced - through a wariness of the obvious and the automatic; and a rich sense of temporal context, in which history, track record, restitution and recovery all feature in one's 'management' of the present. Without such offsetting, leadership intervention loses touch with intimation and moves into the realm of instruction (Glendinning, 2007), interpreting every challenge as a call for decisiveness over flexibility, certainty over ambiguity, control over complexity.

## **CARING LEADERSHIP AS 'LEAPING-AHEAD'**

In Heideggerian terms, then, leadership is compromised by the automatic, single-dimensional and controlling instincts of 'leaping-in'. So, it is tempting to view Heidegger's other manifestation of care, 'leaping-ahead', as a more persuasive blueprint for leadership. 'Leaping-ahead' (*vorausspringen*) is a more complex term, harder to translate, and open to greater nuance of meaning. Following Tomkins and Eatough (2013a), we see three aspects to 'leaping-ahead' - anticipation, autonomy and advocacy. Anticipation reflects a care which takes the potential of the future into account, and tries to think ahead to predict and prevent problems. Autonomy implies an intersubjective space in which the care-recipient is able to work things out for him- or herself. Advocacy intersects with Macann's (1993) suggestion of 'standing up for' as an idiomatic translation of *vorausspringen* (to contrast with 'standing in for' for *einspringen*). These meanings reflect qualities that were important but potentially difficult

with substitutive intervention. If we were to crystallise 'leaping-ahead' into a single expression relating to leadership, we would probably use the word 'empowerment', which is often seen as the main alternative to leadership as control (Ciulla, 2004).

Within contemporary leadership discourse, the concept that is evoked most intriguingly by 'leaping-ahead' is that of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1999). As defined by Bass and Riggio (2006, p.3), "transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization". Transformational leadership is associated with the ability to inspire and motivate others through vision and charisma, not uncommonly hinting at the transcendent (Conger, 1989).

Transformational leadership is conventionally seen as the alternative to transactional leadership. Drawing on Heidegger's manifestations of care, we see parallels between 'leaping-in' and transactional leadership on the one hand, and 'leaping-ahead' and transformational leadership on the other. We hasten to add that such parallels are not perfect, because, for instance, some definitions of transactional leadership emphasise leader/follower independence (Burns, 1978), which is more closely associated with 'leaping-ahead' than 'leaping-in'.

Our mapping of transactional to 'leaping-in' and transformational to 'leaping-ahead' relates more particularly to the main themes of our analysis - temporality and knowing. Transactional leadership and care which 'leaps-in' share a concern for the resolution of immediate needs. By contrast, transformational leadership and care which 'leaps-ahead' reach beyond the immediate and involve a more complex temporal trajectory (Keeley, 2004). Similarly, both transactional leadership and 'leaping-in' belong to the territory of the known - or at least the knowable. Transformational leadership and 'leaping-ahead', on the other hand, emphasise less tangible phenomena of vision and inspiration.

The distinction between transactional and transformational leadership finds its way into a number of variants of the leadership problematic. For instance, Heifetz *et al.* (2009) consider technical problems versus adaptive challenges, underscoring the sense of a basic choice between the directive and programmatic on the one hand, and the creative and visionary on the other. Our emphasis on the multiplicity of care invites a loosening of this sense of 'either/or'. Care is realised in numerous, hybrid ways, through substitution and transaction as well as empowerment and transformation, and through the experience of working through

these positions and possibilities. Thus, the qualities of adaptability and flexibility which Heifetz *et al.* (2009) ascribe just to transformational leadership, we would apply to the leadership challenge *per se*. For us, the experience of the care continuum goes deeper than the 'both/and' formulations of 'full-range leadership' (Bass and Avolio, 2000), in which leaders can switch between transactional and transformational modes depending on the needs of particular projects. It is the continuum itself - the very experience of multiplicity - that begins to reveal what caring leadership might entail.

However, with 'leaping-ahead', we are still in the mode of *Verfallen*, where our most likely way of life is absorption in the ways of 'the They'. Thus, like 'leaping-in', 'leaping-ahead' risks the loss of a sense that there are other ways of leading and behaving. By privileging the intimation of a 'bigger picture' over the more grounded and mundane clarities of engagement in the present, 'leaping-ahead' can compromise the multiplicity of knowing and temporality that we have placed at the heart of our analysis of care. Although 'leaping-ahead' is a more sophisticated, more nuanced care, it, too, risks being simplified and condensed into 'best practice' - perhaps less obviously and more beguilingly than 'leaping-in', because it plays into the contemporary desire for more democratic forms of organizational relationship.

When viewed through our themes of temporality and knowing, the problems of transformational leadership can therefore be seen as an over-emphasis on an aspirational future over a concrete present; on intimation over instruction; and on the celebration of non-resolution over the possibility of resolving at least *some* things. Thus, both 'leaping-ahead' and transformational leadership are vulnerable to the charge of '*laissez-faire*' (Lewin *et al.*, 1939). Although 'leaping-in' can leave the care-recipient with too *little* space for manoeuvre, the lighter touch of 'leaping-ahead' can potentially involve too *much* space. At what point does 'leaping-ahead' become abrogation of responsibility, even negligence?

'Leaping-ahead' does not move towards a specific solution or outcome, but rather, opens up the possibility of several ways forward. Such loosening of the ties of certainty and clarity might be read as modesty and appreciation of complexity. On the other hand, it might also be read as a kind of enigmatic superiority, a leadership that is not held back because of the need to explain itself. 'Leaping-ahead' evokes images of the leader who succeeds because of a special ability to engage with the 'bigger picture' - bigger and therefore less distinct. Thus, the risks of 'leaping-ahead' seem similar to those of heroic and charismatic versions of transformational leadership in their "ecstasy or frenzy caused by a desire for the unattainable" (Tourish, 2013, p.37).

At this point, we want to connect Heidegger with Foucault, and highlight the increasing interest amongst organizational scholars in Foucault's work on *care* (Randall and Munro, 2010). In a sense, Foucault's contrast between techniques of normalisation and care as self-project mirrors our Heideggerian depiction of the contrast between the ease of *Verfallen* and the multiplicities of care. The Foucauldian argument that organising for autonomy can be as alienating as disciplinary structures (Starkey and Hatchuel, 2002) parallels our suggestion that 'leaping-ahead' can be as inimical to caring leadership as 'leaping-in'. Foucault's ethic of care as the attempt to master oneself, transform and give shape to one's life (Foucault, 1985) seems powerfully similar to our reading of Heideggerian care. Taking hold of oneself and one's life is a project of self-awareness and self-control in which self-care is intimately related to care for others (Foucault, 1986).

The connection with Foucault highlights the notion of discourse as a set of meanings, ideas and practices that together produce a particular version of events.<sup>5</sup> We have proposed that the discourses of both control/transaction and empowerment/transformation represent the ways of 'the They' and therefore undermine the possibility of care in a Heideggerian sense. Both discourses have found their way into our default thinking about organization, albeit that each figures more prominently in a particular sub-genre. Our analysis has suggested that both 'leaping-in' and 'leaping-ahead' can be problematic if they are the default, automatic way of intervening in the affairs of others and lack sensitivity to multiplicity of temporality and knowing. But even *with* such sensitivity, both kinds of 'leaping' are undertaken from within the mode of *Verfallen*. They are therefore problematic not just because they are *single* versions of events, but more profoundly, because they are *versions*. Whilst they are interesting and potentially provocative explorations of leadership practice, they are only the beginnings of an analysis of Heidegger and care.

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<sup>5</sup> Our use of 'discourse' in this Foucauldian sense is perhaps closer to Heidegger's 'idle chatter' of 'the They' (*Gerede*) than to his 'talk' (*Rede*), which discloses and articulates our Being-in-the-world.

## BEHIND AND BEYOND 'LEAPING'

At the outset, we referred to the fact that care appears in several guises in Heidegger's work. We have focused our discussion to date on *Fürsorge*, because this is how care manifests anthropologically in our behaviour and relationships. It provides, therefore, a like-with-like way of linking care to prevailing concepts and representations of leadership. In so doing, we follow those commentators (e.g., Guignon, 1993; Olafson, 1998), who have derived an ethics of practice from Heidegger, following an "ontic trail towards social, historical and geographical particularity" (Thrift, 1996, p.17).<sup>6</sup>

At the risk of frustrating readers familiar with Heidegger, we have delayed discussing the most significant way in which care features in *Being and Time* as *Sorge*. *Sorge* is the root for the manifestations of care as *Fürsorge* and *Besorgen*. *Sorge* relates to ontology, the inquiry into Being as such. Moving from *Fürsorge* to *Sorge* is the move from the ontic to the ontological. As Cooper (1996, p.23) explains, "to move from 'the consideration of beings' to their Being is... to enquire into the underlying conditions for their being encountered, their 'showing up' for us at all: an enquiry passed over, Heidegger believes, in the Cartesian tradition."

With *Sorge* it becomes possible to sense the wholeness of Being (192-194, pp.235-8). This wholeness is not a series of pieces that belong to something composite, but rather, a primordial interwovenness of existence (*ursprünglicher Zusammenhang*). *Sorge* is the interwovenness of being 'ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)'. The components of this definition - the vectors of care - relate to three ways of approaching the question of Being, *Verstehen* (understanding), *Befindlichkeit* (attunement) and *Verfallen* (absorption), and to the corresponding temporal emphases of future, past (having been) and present. Only for a creature who understands and is 'ahead-of-itself'; who is attuned and 'already-in' the world; and who is absorbed, immersed and 'alongside' others in their dealings and affairs, can the world and its possibilities emerge. Thus, the significance of the multiplicities of temporality and knowing that we have traced in *Fürsorge* emerges explicitly at the level of ontology, that is, with care as *Sorge*.

The notion of *Verfallen* has underpinned our discussion of the various 'leapings' and their absorption in prevailing discourses of how things are supposed to be. With an examination of how *Verfallen* relates to the other vectors of *Sorge*, we can now approach the question of what lies behind or beyond 'leaping'. As we outlined earlier, for the most part, it is only from

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<sup>6</sup> See Paley (2000) for the suggestion that following such an 'ontic trail' represents a serious departure from Heidegger's philosophy.

within the present, absorbed mode of *Verfallen* that anything shows up for us at all. Thus, *Verfallen* is both an element of ontology (the inquiry into Being as such), and the place or mode of substantiation, thematic knowing and ontic inquiry (the inquiry into actual beings). This idea that a particular aspect of care should refer both to Being and to how Being is realised in derivative, thematic terms is difficult, and indeed represents a “serious structural defect” for at least one of Heidegger’s commentators (Macann, 1993, p.91). However, *Verfallen* is the mode in which we humans find ourselves in the first instance - our starting point for any consideration of what lies behind or beyond (Glendinning, 2007).

If we are *only* absorbed in *Verfallen*, *only* engaged with the ontic, we miss the wider question of Being. Without the future-orientation of *Verstehen* (understanding) and the sensibility of *Befindlichkeit* (attunement), absorption in the flow of life is an automatic and existentially lumpen existence. Absorption in the present can obstruct our view of what has been handed down to us from the past, and compromise our ability to question and choose our own path towards the future. If we are *only* absorbed, we live life as a “cork bobbing on the waves of existence, rather than a figure swimming and diving...a consumer of lifestyles rather than a producer of an individual life” (Paley, 2000, p.73). In Heideggerian terms, such an existence involves the loss of authenticity; however busy or successful or ambitious we may be, if our plans and projects simply mirror the possibilities in the world around us, we remain inauthentic.<sup>7</sup>

But whilst the creature who understands, and is attuned as well as absorbed - who is ‘ahead-of-itself’ and ‘already-in’ the world as well as ‘alongside’ others - is an intriguing philosophical proposition, is such a creature not in practice an impossibility? We are always first and foremost absorbed (*Verfallen*); perhaps there is, therefore, no realistic hope of reaching beyond this towards the possibility of an authentic engagement with care? Perhaps the busyness of our involvements in the discourses and practices that surround us might make us ‘fall’ deeper? In a sense, maybe, the harder we try at ‘leadership’, the more likely we are to fail, or rather, to miss the Heideggerian point. Perhaps it is ultimately futile to attempt to model a Heideggerian caring leader, because all kinds of ‘leaping’ are condemned to inauthenticity and anything that lies behind or beyond ‘leaping’ seems beyond our reach (cf Paley, 2000).

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<sup>7</sup> Heidegger’s *eigentlich* is usually translated as authentic, which carries connotations of true, real, genuine, etc, in popular usage. However, Heidegger explicitly links *eigentlich* with *eigen* (own) and *Jemeinigkeit* (mineness) (43, p.68). Thus, authentic in a Heideggerian sense is better articulated as ‘own-most’. That said, authentic existence is only a modification of, never a total departure from, life immersed in the ways of ‘the They’ (Cooper, 1996).

We are offering a more optimistic interpretation. We believe that the patternings - the multiplicities of temporality and knowing - that we have traced in both *Fürsorge* and *Sorge* mean that they are mutually illuminating. Thus, whilst we cannot fully grasp *Sorge*, we may be able to appreciate its qualities, because they are reflected in the qualities of multiplicity in the leadership practices of 'leaping'. *Verfallen* may well be a 'fall', but it is also our only point of openness to the question of Being (Cooper, 1996). Indeed, we think this is what Glendinning (2007) is getting at with his suggestion that Heidegger's philosophical project is a kind of 'leaping-ahead', realising at the level of *Fürsorge* what he wants to intimate at the level of *Sorge*. The 'leapings' are thus 'only' a derivation, but they reveal the traces of *Sorge* and the question of Being.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATION: RESISTING LEADERSHIP CONSTRUCTIONS**

We can now offer a Heideggerian explanation for the role of care discourses in identity construction and regulation, reconnecting with our earlier reference to the 'critical' literature on leadership. Leadership identity work takes place mostly within the ontic realm, guided by 'best practice' and the most apparently successful and feasible subject positions available. Indeed, *Verfallen* is the organized condition itself, the site of the sort of sense-making that aims for coherent framing and settling of issues (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013). As we have argued, however, from this condition of *Verfallen*, we risk the loss of temporal multiplicity and an insensitivity to other modes of knowing and not-knowing. Thus, if our leadership identity work simply absorbs models of 'best practice', including (perhaps especially) the increasingly popular 'Authentic Leadership', we are being diverted and distracted from the possibility of caring leadership in a Heideggerian sense. Ford and Harding (2007; 2011) problematise caring leadership discourse for creating distress and discomfort amongst those who cannot measure up to such idealised versions of selfhood. A Heideggerian analysis almost reverses this critique: If 'Caring Leadership' becomes too successful an idea, it will not cause *sufficient* discomfort. It may reassure us that we are getting a better handle on leadership for a post-heroic age, but it will discourage us from an authentic, own-most engagement with care.

Of course, this makes the very notion of caring leadership fragile, the anti-thesis of the positive and positivist ideals that feature in instruments such as the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). Without wishing to trivialise the point, a Heideggerian approach precludes any possibility of a CLQ. Moreover, it suggests that many of the key concepts in the leadership literature and on the curricula of leadership development programmes are to be approached with caution; the clearer and more appealing they seem,



the more embedded in the ways of 'the They' they will be. This leaves us with the practical problem of what to call this sort of philosophically-informed approach to leadership (Cunliffe, 2009), as well as how (and whether) it can be taught. But problems with language and representation are not incidental to a Heideggerian analysis. As Glendinning (2007, p.61) suggests, "Heidegger's own understanding of the kind of question he is engaging with is such that he finds it crucial not to position the reader as someone who is simply under instruction, as someone who can come to terms with the matter for thinking without having to work through it for themselves".

At the outset, we signalled a departure from the POS literature because of its conceptualisation of care as an extraordinary response to extraordinary events. Now, with our discussion of *Sorge*, we see that a Heideggerian caring leadership differs from this literature in other respects, too. For instance, the positive movement often positions care alongside the notion of authenticity qua transparency (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008), to promote an "open and transparent manner whereby authentic leaders and followers are posited to share information with each other and close others" (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, p.317). Our view of caring leadership suggests that transparency might even be inimical to care, in that it represents a simple, single-dimensional engagement with leadership, a privileging of the known over the unknown.

In the POS view, the caring leader is someone sympathetic, kind and nice. But, as Ciulla suggests, niceness means not getting involved in differences or disputes, not running the risk of conflict; "niceness comes out of [a] one-dimensional picture of stable equilibrium and harmony. If no one complains and yells at work, then there is social harmony" (Ciulla, 2004, p.63). The Heideggerian caring leader cannot be nice (or at least, not always), since niceness would be a denial of complexity and multiplicity - a 'dumbing down' into the ways of 'the They'. In a Heideggerian world, compassion, kindness and niceness are neither necessary nor sufficient for care.

The POS movement seems wedded to the notion of the 'true-self' (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Kernis, 2003) - an idea which also characterises 'authentic transformational leadership' (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). Even those discussions which eschew the essentialist self in favour of possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986), self-narration (Sparrowe, 2005) and authenticity as felt sense (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010) seem too anchored and comforting for a Heideggerian analysis. The Heideggerian caring leader lacks such teleological confidence and stability, both at an ontic level (through the experience of the continuum of intervention and its

concomitant uncertainties) and at the level of ontology (through the vectors of care, and the interwovenness of understanding, attunement and absorption).

So, a Heideggerian caring leadership seems very different to similar-sounding constructs in the POS (Lilius *et al.*, 2012), ethic of care (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012) and psychoanalytic (Gabriel, 2014) literatures with which we began our discussion. It is both more and less concrete than these; more concrete in the sense that it is grounded in practices of intervention, and less concrete in its resistance to representation as 'best practice'. Frustratingly, it is easier to articulate what caring leadership is *not* than what it is; but this is not incidental to a Heideggerian analysis where, as Holt and Cornelissen (2013, p.531) suggest, "to ask of things what they are is only half an inquiry - the stipulation of presence, of substance, confining sense to something cumulative and documented, as though through learning and scribing with representations, we accrue ever more awareness, we progress, when an integral aspect of our sensemaking comes with contrast with absence".

Thus, caring leadership in this Heideggerian sense involves acknowledging the limitations of the known and the knowable, and embracing the possibility that there is 'something more', which we may or may not be able to fathom. This connects our discussion with several ideas in contemporary leadership thinking. For instance, caring leadership as practice seems to draw upon a 'negative capability' in its tolerance of ambivalence and resistance to the urge for closure (Chia and Holt, 2009; Simpson *et al.*, 2002). This is not a privileging of detachment over action, but rather, an appreciation of the range of possibility from a position of *engagement*, and a capacity to tolerate the anxiety provoked by this range. For Heidegger, anxiety is mankind's fundamental mood, associated with our finitude and the impossibility of achieving wholeness through anything other than death. Anxiety is thus central to Heidegger's philosophy of Being, an indication of the limits of the domain of the known, and hence a form of knowledge in and of itself.

The temporality of caring leadership intersects with Chia and Holt's (2009) view of strategy as way-finding rather than navigation. Way-finding similarly involves an unfolding of the world as we experience it; depends on a familiarity with where we are; and apprehends situations in terms of their potential. Both way-finding and caring leadership require the ability to reflect on one's own leadership habits. They connect, therefore, with work on reflective and contemplative leadership (Case *et al.*, 2012; Smythe and Norton, 2007), albeit that a Heideggerian take on reflection dissolves any distinction between detached thinking and active engagement to present a reflection-from-within (Zundel, 2012). In a related vein, whilst there are some similarities between caring leadership and mindfulness, there are also some

important distinctions. As Zundel (2012, p.114) argues, “the emphasis [in mindfulness] on present consciousness veils other aspects of human existence. What is left out by the continuous reorientation onto what is happening at the moment is our latent past and future which indicates what matters to us: our ends, hopes and fears”. This is very similar to our sense of caring leadership; it is in the opening up of these other aspects of human existence that care emerges.

Caring leadership invites us to be open to ways of knowing that are not mental or intellectual, including aesthetics and embodiment. Leadership is something we feel as much as know, particularly in relation to managing the anxieties of intervention/non-intervention. Here, we dovetail with the literature on leadership embodiment (Sinclair, 2005), aesthetics (Strati, 2000), and the Heideggerian literature on moods (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013). Care is about *matter*ing - being both of-concern and of-matter. It is thus fundamental to our engagement with, and construction of, the world through the medium of our bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962). If we loosen the stranglehold of the intellect to attend to what emerges in the disruption to sense-making, in the gaps in-between sense (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013), we might find that other aspects of our lived experience speak to us instead.

## **CARE: A SPACE FOR ORGANIZATION**

Thus, caring leadership involves the handling of oneself in the face of the normalising and stabilising ways of ‘the They’. It invokes a rich temporality, in which track record and restitution guide one’s ‘management’ of the present, and excitement and vision for the future are grounded in and counter-balanced by the mundanities of the here-and-now. Such a depiction reveals a certain kind of agency. Provocatively, therefore, we are proposing that the problem with many of the prevailing constructions of leadership is not, as Tourish (2013) would have it, an *excess* of agency, but rather, a *deficit* in agency. Our view of caring leadership is consistent with a process-philosophical view that “happenings in the world are often not within our control because the world is perpetually changing, and that uncertainty, incompleteness of understanding and even lack of coherence lies at the core of all human endeavours” (Chia, 2014, p.20). Where we differ is in the suggestion that human agency is therefore “arbitrary ontological incisions” (Chia, 2014, p.20).

For us, the significant leadership question provoked by Heidegger is not whether we have control over events, people or things, so much as how we might approach the issue of control over ourselves. Thus, caring leadership seems first and foremost an organization of self

rather than an organization of others, and this is how we view its agency. In Ciulla's reading of Heidegger, care is "attention to one's own presence in the world" (Ciulla, 2009, p.3). This is not a Cartesian solipsism, but rather, an ongoing organization and cultivation of the self, which is necessarily grounded in the affairs of the world and of others, and/but unsettled by the opacity of its project. It is self-care, an idea that Heidegger himself considers tautology (193, p.237).

For this to have significance for practice, we have to revisit the location and distribution of agency. Thus, we see the agency of caring leadership as something experienced by all organizational members in everyday organizational encounters, not something which signifies leadership as belonging to a few key people. Those in formal leadership roles may exercise decisions between different forms of 'leaping' more often, more overtly, and potentially more consequentially than other organizational members, but the issue of intervention is a common, everyday experience; it seems fundamental to the relational condition of being-in-the-world. Therefore, the agency we are invoking is that involved in small instances of intervention, in fleeting moments of asymmetry, as well as the grander projects of intervention with which those in leadership positions are more publically engaged. To an extent, therefore, our view of care takes us towards the concept of distributed leadership (Brown and Hosking, 1986; Gronn, 2002).

For us, such a nudge towards a distributed perspective does not undermine the agency of caring leadership, but rather re-invokes it. With the 'few key people' approach, no wonder agency has been discredited, for instance, in Tourish's warning (2013, p.5) "against trusting too much in the judgement of others and not enough in our own". But Tourish seems implicitly to be adopting an outsider's perspective on the phenomenon, that is, that leadership is what *other people do* - it is something 'over there'. Indeed, there seems to be a tendency in organization studies to adopt an outsider's rather than an insider's perspective on the target of critique, neglecting the ways in which we might enhance our theorisations if we apply our challenges and criticisms to ourselves (Conrad, 1987; Ford *et al.*, 2010).

But if caring leadership is basically a form of social influence distributed amongst the many, perhaps it makes little sense to call it 'leadership' at all (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). As Pye (2005) suggests, much of what we call 'leadership' could easily be re-labelled as 'organising' to capture the processes and experiences of interpersonal influence in our organizational encounters. Nevertheless, we wish to keep the leadership label attached to our analysis of care, because decisions over how, when, where and whether to intervene in events are not just any form of social influence; when viewed in terms of care, they relate specifically to

relations between people with different capabilities, capacities and/or roles, and are intimately bound up in issues of power.

However, promoting the agency and self-care of leadership feels like a risky business. Here we connect with criticisms of Heidegger using the two themes of our analysis, knowing and temporality. For as a philosopher with special perspicacity, Heidegger can see what others cannot (Glendinning, 2007). As we suggested earlier, whilst not-knowing *might* involve modesty and humility, it might instead involve an unchallengeable tyranny which gets its power from its opacity. Heidegger takes us into a “sublime, primordially operative domain that is removed from all empirical (and ultimately all argumentative) grasp...a dark alliance with scientifically unexamined diagnoses” (Habermas, 1989, p.442). In such a world, privileged access to truth can release the philosopher-leader from the duty of clarification and the scrutiny of open argument. Opacity can serve to separate self-care from care for others.

The Heideggerian emphasis on the significance of the future gives us a world in which ends might well justify means; where for the sake of the ‘grand project’ of destiny, there might be sacrifices along the way. Heidegger has been heavily censored for his ability to focus on ‘historicity’ whilst detaching himself from, and keeping silent on, the actual events of the holocaust (Levinas, 1989). A philosophy of self-care may enable such a differentiation “between the unfortunate superficial forms of Nazi practice and its essential content” (Habermas, 1989, p.447). In transformational leadership, in particular, with its similar emphasis on a ‘bigger picture’ which is hinted at, rather than explained, perhaps we have a contemporary echo of the conditions in which one can argue for historicity whilst ignoring actual history; or as Paley (2000) suggests, Heidegger’s ethics-in-general rather than any ethics-in-particular.

Such criticisms of Heidegger serve as a reminder that the agency we see in his philosophy needs to be a concern for one’s presence in the world, rather than one which legitimises grandiosity and mysticism. But there is another unnerving idea woven through this discussion, namely, a challenge to the very project of ‘leadership’. For our conceptualisations and clarifications of ‘leadership’ itself take place from within the mode of *Verfallen*. As such, ‘leadership’ is simply another discourse produced, reproduced, debated and validated within the realm of ‘the They’, simply another way of bobbing along like a cork (Paley, 2000). If Heidegger’s philosophy is to herald a “twilight of the idols” (Glendinning, 2007, p.90), that is, an exposing of the idols of scientific, naturalistic and anthropological explanation, perhaps ‘leadership’ itself is one of the most cunning idols amongst them.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In connecting Heidegger's depictions of care with ideas relating to leadership, we have offered a philosophically-informed view (Kroth and Keeler, 2009) of what caring leadership might entail, both in our everyday experiences of organization and in the bigger question of how to understand the qualities and possibilities of our existence. Our analysis of *Fürsorge* connects with discussions which ground leadership in the issue of intervention (Grint, 2005; Heifetz *et al.*, 2009), but we extend and unsettle such discussions with a consideration of *Sorge* and the suggestion that there is more to life than what we can capture and conceptualise. We have explored this something-more through the themes of multiplicity of temporality and knowing, both at the level of ontology and in relation to the derived ontic 'leapings' - and crucially, in the way that these two levels of analysis are mutually illuminating.

Our discussion has proposed a number of twists to contemporary leadership debates. We have sought to reverse the argument that both transactional and transformational leadership represent an excess of agency, to suggest that they can instead be critiqued for their derogation of agency; albeit that this requires an articulation of agency in terms of an appreciation of complexity and ambivalence, resistance to soothing discourses of normativity and 'best practice', attention to one's presence in the world, and an organization of self, which applies to all organizational members, not just the chosen few. We have suggested that the risk of the growing scholarly interest in an ethic of care is not that this represents too lofty an aspiration for organizational behaviour, but rather, that it represents too comfortable and copy-able a template, that is, it is not too difficult but too easy. We have connected caring leadership with work on negative capability, way-finding, reflection and embodiment, and suggested that a Heideggerian care has little in common with the POS view of care as related to transparency, niceness or the reassuring anchor of a 'true-self'.

Caring leadership concerns both what we can grasp and know and what we can only glimpse or sense. In practice, it can be directive and transactional, as well as emancipating and inspirational. It demands a balancing of stepping in with standing back; gauging whether and how to remove power from, or grant power to, others; and bearing responsibility for what emerges through both emphatic and vaguer modes of knowing. Engagement with Heidegger's philosophy is unsettling, though, for as soon as we think we might have grasped or captured something, we have probably missed the Heideggerian point. But care is fundamental to how we experience ourselves, our projects, our relationships and our lives. As Heidegger's reworking of the myth of creation tells us, it is Care, the goddess Cura, who

fashions human being from the earth - *ex humo* (198, p.242). It is Care which speaks to what it means for humans to matter.

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