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**EDITORS' SPECIAL**

# Guru of Gurus

## Peter Drucker, Logology, and the Ultimate Leader

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*Since management theorizing began, a trend that clearly separates managers into a hierarchy of leader-managers has emerged: "Leaders" are now perceived as higher order managers, and "bad" managers are now called "managers," and "good managers" are called leaders. The authors suggest that management and leadership theory have already moved from the naming of managers to the designation of the select few as leaders of managers and that a leader of leaders or an ultimate leader will debut. Supported by Burke's theory of logology, the article suggests it is language itself that propels the drive toward hierarchy until it arrives at an ultimate position. The method of text analysis utilized is called scriptive reading, and the article is underscored by the larger methodology of new rhetoric.*

***Keywords:*** *Drucker; leadership; logology; management; scriptive reading; text analysis*

> Years ago, Peter Drucker wrote that the administrator works within the constraints; the manager removes the constraints. Later, Abraham Zaleznik claimed that managers merely manage; real leaders lead. Now we seem to be moving beyond leaders who merely lead; today heroes save. Soon heroes will only save; then gods will redeem. We keep upping the ante as we drop ever deeper into the morass of our own parochialism.
>
> —Mintzberg (1999, p. 27)

In 1955, Drucker (1955) declared that managers, "the dynamic, life-giving element in every business," were the new "leading group," "an essential, a distinct and a leading institution" (p. 1). At that time, he made no distinction between managers and leaders. In the half century of management theorizing since then, we have seen a trend emerge that clearly separates this "leading group" into a hierarchy of leader-managers: "leaders" are now perceived as "higher order" managers (Wallis, 2001) and "bad" managers are now called "managers" and "good managers" are called leaders (Nirenberg, 2001).

As Mintzberg wryly observes, "we keep upping the ante" on leader-managers. It seems, as he describes it, that we increasingly demand higher order roles of them because of our own inadequacies: Our need to be pulled out of our own swampy space imposes higher status on them. However, our article, supported by Burke's theory of logology, suggests that it is language itself that propels the drive toward hierarchy, within the use of a term such as *leadership*, until

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it arrives at an ultimate position where it doubles back on itself. When we explore the rhetoric of leadership from the perspective of logology, we see that it spells out the direction in which leadership theory will inevitably continue to evolve.

Logology tells us that language inherently reaches for "an ultimate," a "god-term" that covers every other category within its domain of meaning. By a "sheerly linguistic route" (Burke, 1961, p. 25), we can move from the idea of a supreme term to the idea of a supreme being and back again. If, as logology suggests, the nature of language is "a process of entitlement leading in the secular realm towards an over-all title of titles" (Burke, 1961, p. 25), then the naming of leaders (and attendant leadership terms) will move in this same direction.

To test Burke's theory, we decided to analyze a series of texts on the subject of management or leadership authored by the same theorist over a lengthy period.

Peter Drucker has been writing about managers and leaders for more than half a century, and his corpus has had a major impact on the development of management theory, so his texts suggested a test site on which we could work with Burke's theory. We selected *The Practice of Management*, published in 1955, as a starting point from which to make connections and comparisons, and then we read our way through the decades, sampling texts that represent Drucker's developing notions of leadership. Reading both chronologically through and topically across his writings, we sought to discover horizontal (standard) meanings that both set in place and reveal the foundations of the hierarchical terminology that emerge from the vertical (embedded) meaning of later texts (Barthes, 1982).

We suggest that management and leadership theory has already moved from the naming of managers to the designation of the select few as "leader of managers" and that a "leader of leaders" or an "ultimate leader" will debut. However, before we run ahead of ourselves, we would like to share the process of discovery we experienced as we explored Drucker's texts and will propose that alternative readings of leadership theory offer leadership research new insights.

## LOGOLOGY

Before embarking on our first reading of Drucker's texts, we explored Burke's theory of logology within the epistemological context of new rhetoric, considering as we did so how our own skills of rhetorical analysis could best engage with and surface any logological development at work within the texts.

Like its classical predecessor, the critical practices of new rhetoric enabled readers to explore the rhetorical resources available to the writer who, consciously or unconsciously, tries to impose his or her fictional world on the reader (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991; Gill & Whedbee, 1997). Unlike classical rhetoric however, new rhetoric attends to the sense-making process that is at work beyond the mechanics of persuasion. As classical rhetoricians sought out these persuasive elements (Foss et al., 1991, p. 31), they tended to maintain a focus on the text as a whole, but when I.A. Richards (1936) first proposed his new rhetoric, he argued that the study of rhetoric should begin with words, the smallest units for conveying meaning. Kenneth Burke (1961, 1969), working with Richards's proposal, went on to develop his theory of logology.

Logology, playing with and supported by the principles and practices of new rhetoric, is based on a series of observations on the nature of language drawn from Burke's study of theology. He states from the outset that he is "concerned not directly with religion, but rather with the *terminology* of the religion; not directly with man's relationship to God, but rather his relationship to the *word* 'God'" (Burke, 1961, p. iv, italics added). He links his study of theology with rhetoric because "religious cosmogonies are designed, in the final analysis, as exceptionally thorough-going modes of persuasion" (p. iv). For example, Burke sees the notion of "God," or faith or doctrine, as possible only because language creates such a possibility. In other words, the existence of "God" is derived from the existence of god-terms (Carter, 1992). Hence theology, by using language to represent "an ultimate supernatural being" (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2002, p. 204), presents the perfect model of how language primarily works. Burke (1961) makes this fundamental assumption because the theory of logology posits an explicit conclusion as to where language will head. He says,

> In being words about so "ultimate" or "radical" a subject, it (theology) almost necessarily becomes an example of words used with thoroughness. Since words-about-God would be as far reaching as words can be, the "rhetoric of religion" furnishes a good instance of terministic enterprise in general. Thus it is our "logological" thesis that, since the theological

> use of language is thorough, the close study of theology and its forms will provide us with good insight into the nature of language itself as a motive. Such an approach also involves the tentative belief that, even when men use language trivially, the motives inherent in its possible thorough use are acting somewhat as goads, however vague. (pp. iii-iv)

"The motive," he later claims, is a drive toward "perfection" in a hierarchical sense. Burke expands on this theory with observations on the notions of "the negative," "hierarchy," "perfection," and "mystery" (Foss et al., 2002, p. 205), which we will summarize insofar as they have implications for leadership research.

In summary, Burke's theory of logology begins with the assumption that theology provides a model wherein all the resources of language have been exhausted, which means theology shows us the end result of language when it is used rhetorically. Several principles of language are revealed through theology. Firstly, the principle of the negative allows commandments or laws to be enacted, such as "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." Secondly, the principle of hierarchy can be observed through human impulse to distinguish themselves through moral action. Following the principle of hierarchy is that of perfection, as the final goal of hierarchy is to achieve the pinnacle of perfection—each after its own kind. The same drive toward perfection is apparent in language: Supreme terms, such as those for God, such as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," reflect the need for language to achieve its "final destination," after which language folds back on itself (Carter, 1992). Finally, the principle of mystery, based on the disparity inherent in hierarchy, permits both obedience and identification to occur. For example, belief in God according to the Bible demands obedience to His commandments. Yet at the same time, believers can identify with God and transcend their humanness to become more like God by emulating His characteristics such as compassion and gentleness.

As much as logology is about the "metalinguistic dimension of language" (Carter, 1992), in theoretical terms, it is also about "motivational systems and orientations through the examination of words" (Foss et al., 2002, p. 204). We took this insight into account as we read Drucker's texts to determine whether or not they displayed the inclinations that Burke's theory of logology asserts. Specifically, we looked for two developments to which Burke had already pointed. We looked first for indications that the word *leadership* had become or is becoming a god-term.[1] One indication that such a transition is taking place would be the word *leadership* taking on a "religious tradition" because

> along with historical trends whereby religious modes become secularized, there is also the contrary trend whereby symbols that begin secularly can gradually *become* "set apart" through the development of a religious tradition. (Burke, 1961, p. 36)

We also searched for any suggestion that the ultimate leader might be appearing in leadership writing or for glimmers of such a "personality" in the process of being created. The clue, Burke suggested, was to trace the assumptions embedded in the terms for "supreme beings" in the natural world:

> The terms for the supernatural, themselves derived by analogy from the empirical realm, can now be borrowed back, and reapplied—in analogy atop analogy—to the empirical realm as when human personality here and now is conceived *in terms* of "derivation" from a transcendent super-personality. (Burke, 1961, p. 37)

We suspected that if Burke's theory could be substantiated, we would see two distinct trends emerging from Drucker's writing on leadership. First, the persona of the manager or leader would progressively move up the social ladder toward the highest position attainable. Second, the concept of leadership would gradually expand to include more meaning or multiple meanings. In the paragraph that introduces this article, Mintzberg's succinct summary of leadership theory development highlights the logological drive pushing up the status of leadership in the context of management. But the second trend, toward the ultimate role of the leader, is ill defined in Mintzberg's teasing antithesis: "upping the ante as we drop ever deeper." Whether Mintzberg is claiming that as the role of leader accrues more and more attributes, it becomes "a morass" of murky possibilities, or that the desired qualities we create in our leaders are a reflection of our own inadequacies, or that raising the status of the leader-manager is a parochial closing in of boundaries, or that paradoxically all these developments are simultaneously possibly and manifest, is debateable. Perhaps Minzberg himself is being intentionally ambiguous because he is not sure which process is working most vigorously and perhaps

because critical explorations of leadership have not yet encountered logology. This suggested to us that testing Burke's theory in the context of leadership studies would be a timely exercise. Logologically, we turned to Drucker, the "guru of gurus" (Boyle, 2001), to discover what logology might contribute to leadership studies. We read Drucker's texts rhetorically and followed the "scriptive reading" (Monin, 2004) process.

## SCRIPTIVE READING

Scriptive reading[2] is a form of rhetorical analysis that acknowledges the role of the reader in interpretive responses to text. *Scriptive* conveys the paradoxical notion that to read is to write, that because each reading act is a unique composite of the reader's life experience and worldview interacting with the ideas, values, and emotions evoked by the text, reading is creative. Readers are active not passive. They may choose, or not choose, to identify with a text rather than simply being persuaded by it. Yet although readers are ultimately the authors of their own texts, most of us agree most of the time on the dominant (standard) interpretation of our texts. It is when we move on to critical readings that dissension begins; and it is when we move on again to reflexive reading, pondering in a sometimes confessional mode, on the values and vagaries that have inspired our particular reading responses, that those more accustomed to the comfort of communally agreed meaning become most discomforted.

Our reading of Drucker's texts progressed through the three-tiered phasing prescribed by the scriptive reading method. We first read each text in pursuit of the author's intended meaning, summarized its dominant message, and assumed that other readers would generally concur with our response at this stage of our reading. Our aim in this reading was to represent standard interpretations of Drucker's texts as conventionally understood by his (noncritical) readers.

We then moved on to critical readings of the same texts, exploring vertically, digging down into the subtexts of the dominant meaning. Reading critically, we paid some fragments of the text more attention, especially where it pertained to leadership, we paid others less, and we left out some completely. The intent of this second phase of reading was to uncover previously unrecognized meaning in the text. We attempted to tease out and surface the strands of logological development that Burke's theory suggested we might find.

In the third or reflexive phase of our reading, we essentially questioned our own findings in terms of the assumptions we brought to bear on our interpretation of the texts and considered the potential impacts of a particular reading experience on reading outcomes. Because we were reading a selection of Drucker's texts, we delayed this third reading until we had completed the first two readings of each individual text and then reviewed our reading of all of them in an overview of our response.

After completing these three phases of scriptive reading, we applied Burke's theory of logology to the surfaced meanings, noting the direction Drucker's writings on leadership seemed to have taken and suggesting the route along which we see it continuing to move. In keeping with reader-response theory, the shift as we read was from the writer to the reader of the text.

## SELECTING THE TEXTS

Drucker holds assured recognition in the canons of management theory, and if any one work firmly holds his place in foundational management theory, it is his book *The Practice of Management* (Drucker, 1955). Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the manager and management at a time when such concepts were relatively new. We begin with this text because in it we find that leading is assumed to be one of the primary functions of the manager. We also found that in this text Drucker's dramatic and passionate assertions of management's importance seemed to be an effort to justify management and the manager's role (Beatty, 1998). Over time, his vision of management's importance has become accepted as "an inextricable part of the common sense of [our] world" (Parker, 2002, p. 2). We examined this image by scriptively reading four more texts authored by Drucker over several decades.

In *The Essential Drucker* (Drucker, 2001), two chapters were of particular interest to us: chapter 19, "Leadership As Work," published in 1988, and chapter 23, which is grandly titled "A Century of Social Transformation—Emergence of Knowledge Society," published in 1995. The topics of leadership and the knowledge society are again discussed in *Managing in the Next Society* (Drucker, 2002). We selected two

chapters from this book on the above topics for comparison: chapter 6, "The CEO in the New Millennium" (1997), and chapter 15, "The Next Society" (2001). The outcomes of a dominant reading of the selected texts have been summarized as follows.

## Dominant Readings

### *"The Practice of Management" (1955)*

Drucker's main point here is that the manager is the "dynamic, life-giving element in every business" (p. 1), that managers therefore determine business outcomes. Management is "a distinct and leading group" that he places in an historical context to emphasize that this is a new and developing role for management. Management is indispensable and fast growing, the survival of the "free world," militarily and economically, will depend on it, and maintaining the pre-eminent economic and social position of the United States will depend on "continuously improved management performance."

The manager is thus introduced as a moral, responsible, and dynamic person "charged" with the task of "making resources productive," and as a group these managers make up a new social class. As a class, management is separate, dominant, and "higher" than other classes of workers. The manager is the natural leader at work, and no distinction was made between the two (Teo, 2002).[3] In fact, our critical reading of the next text, "Leadership as Work," indicates that by 1988 Drucker was beginning to make just such a distinction, but this shift is not apparent in a dominant reading of this particular text.

### *"Leadership as Work" (1988)*

This essay claims that there is no real difference between an effective leader and an effective manager. Leadership is not based on charisma or prominence but something far more mundane such as getting everyday work done. It is pointless to "acquire" charisma when leadership is based on traditional qualities such as integrity and consistency. In contrast to the glamour associated with charisma, Drucker declares leadership is "mundane, unromantic and boring" (Drucker, 2001, p. 268). An effective leader is one who "sets the goals, sets the priorities, and sets and maintains standards" (p. 270). The "ultimate" task of leadership would be to "create human energies and human vision" (p. 271), and to do so, he must "earn trust" by being consistent and upright.

Moving from the manager to the task of management, the next text was selected because it proclaims the rise of a new worker and working class. This text is significant because it creates a new context for business leadership in society.

### *"A Century of Social Transformation—Emergence of Knowledge Society" (1995)*

The boldest claim that Drucker makes in this text is that "knowledge workers" as a class "may not be the *ruling class* of the knowledge society, but they are already its *leading class*" (p. 307, italics added). Moreover, these knowledge workers will dictate the characteristics of society, even if they are outnumbered by other social groups. And because the knowledge society is a society of organizations, management is its "central and distinctive organ" (p. 311) because only management can keep the society of organizations functioning. Thus, managers have to know both the discipline and practice of this social function, which includes defining objectives, strategizing, and instilling "spirit and culture" within the organization. In bringing together both knowledge and the manager, and given what has been said about the pre-eminence of the knowledge society, the composite suggestion is that the knowledge worker is part of the managerial workforce, and together they will lead the other classes.

Set within the context of an intellectually and socially superior workforce, managers gain a central position in the new society of organizations, and their task is now to make "knowledge productive." Such a task is greater and more demanding than merely organizing resources (as described previously) because by making knowledge effective, managers elevate management to "a liberal art."

Managers at this point are dynamic, effective, and skilled in the art of management. The task of management is to manage resources, set goals, and achieve them by gaining trust and managing the organizations in society. In the next two texts, the focus is no longer on managers as a whole but on the leader of the managers.

### *"The CEO in the New Millennium" (1997)*

Here, Drucker zooms in on the new demands facing the CEO (chief executive officer). A CEO, he says,

Table 1
*Summary of Findings at the Dominant Level*

| | *Dominant Level* | |
|---|---|---|
| *Selected Texts* | *Manager* | *Task* |
| *The Practice of Management* (1955) | | |
| The role of management | Dynamic, life-giving | Steward of resources |
| *The Essential Drucker* (2001) | | |
| "Leadership as Work" (1988) | Effective | Set goals, gain trust |
| "Emergence of Knowledge Society" (1995) | Skilled in "liberal art" of management | Manage society of organizations |
| *Managing in the Next Society* (2002) | | |
| "The CEO in the New Millennium" (1997) | Executive | Balance demands |
| "The Next Society" (2001) | Chief of executives | All of above and manage knowledge |

has to "set a clear direction" and "provide a clear understanding" of when to do what: "Tomorrow's leader won't be able to lead by charisma" but will have to "think through the fundamentals so that other people can work productively" (p. 89). The CEO's job is like running an opera where "you have to make sure all the various groups converge to produce the desired result," and running an opera is the "most complex job I know" (p. 90). The challenge for CEOs is to balance the demands of investors with the needs of the organizations.

### *"The Next Society" (2001)*

"The Next Society" pulls together most of the ideas Drucker has previously developed regarding leadership, top management, and the knowledge society. In doing so, Drucker amalgamates the tasks of the manager and adds to it that of knowledge management. "The Next Society," Drucker states, "will be a knowledge society. Knowledge will be its key resource, and knowledge workers will be the dominant group in its workforce" (p. 237). Hence, the implications for top management in such a "radically" different society are twofold. Firstly, it would face the challenge of establishing a company's social legitimacy. In other words, every company would have to justify its existence not just for economic reasons alone. Secondly, "top management will, in fact, be the company. Everything else will be outsourced" (p. 291). Drucker's argument here is that with knowledge workers being mobile and competitive, they no longer have to be employees in the traditional sense but can offer their services where required. Hence, only the top management really "belong" to the company. The overall sense is that management, already a complex task, will only increase in complexity because "the central feature of the Next Society . . . will be new institutions and new theories, ideologies and problems" (p. 299).

At the dominant level, we can see that the manager is a hardworking, effective, unglamorous executive within an organization. The task of management is difficult but necessary even as it develops in complexity and scope. The manager is no longer just a steward of resources but must also balance competing demands and manage a radically new society based on knowledge. The findings of the dominant readings are summarized in Table 1.

Read critically, these same texts reveal a leader of managers becoming more distinct and the job of a leader taking on more significance.

## Critical Readings

Going back to the first text, "The Practice of Management," the manager is introduced in a grand gesture by Drucker's opening: "The manager is the dynamic, life-giving element in every business" (Drucker, 1955, p. 1). The words *dynamic* and *life-giving* project a sense of energy and an image of the manager being the source and impetus of business. The two words also collectively suggest a more philosophical usage of *inspiration*. Beatty (1998) says the words suggest that the manager is "a bringer of life." The philosophical and theological implications of Drucker's description of a manager also indicate an underlying assumption that the manager is a moral and upright person, as the manager "leads by integrity of character" (Beatty, 1998, p. 105). The same sense of accountability and authority over resources is also evident in Drucker's description of management.

Management is "explicitly charged with making resources productive" (Drucker, 1955, p. 2). As unpacked by Monin (2004), *charged* is an extraordinarily powerful word because the word *charged* is invested with the notion of *received*, or at least inherited or passed-down authority, a divine contract to deliver. But *charge* also suggests electrical energy, the power to energize and make something happen. When management, in the same paragraph, is said to "reflect the basic spirit of the modern age" and is presented in biblical language, "begotten," there is a relentless build toward acceptance of the "divine right" of managers to manage. In the one word, *charged*, read contextually, managers are assumed to possess power over resources (which includes workers) that are divine, legal, and physical.

In other words, managers are a group set apart, much like priests, to be stewards of the resources they have been given. By setting management apart from work, Drucker implies there is a class of workers who are above other workers. *Class* denotes social, not organizational, hierarchy, and the group of people who are to be led by management has been classified into the social stratum. By positioning management in the social stratum rather than outside of it, Drucker also positions management as a social aspiration.

Management, the "dominant institution" of our time, and for the foreseeable future of Western civilization (p. 1), has, in addition to its economic role, the right to inherent physical, social, political, and spiritual power. Managers, a new leading group, are the possessors of this enormous power; workers and their work are classified into a lower order.

In "Leadership As Work," the concept of a leader as being different from a manager emerges in the text, although, as we noted in the dominant reading, Drucker insists there is no difference between an effective leader and an effective manager. The image of an effective leader that surfaces is one of prominence, morality, and intelligence. The leader held the power to "create human energies and human vision." This is a major distinction between previous descriptions of the manager and the effective leader. Previously, the manager was the essence, the life-giving element of a business, and his or her task was to make resources productive. Now, the leader's ultimate task is to create vision—a distinctly higher calling.

When Drucker goes on to isolate the characteristics of an effective leader, he depicts a leader with personality traits similar to those of a charismatic leader. For example, he portrays an effective leader as thoughtful, responsible, trustworthy, and upright in word and deed. Charismatic or traits leadership theories also cite the same qualities as being those that a good leader should possess (Dubrin, 2001).

On the one hand, Drucker maintains that leadership is "mundane, unromantic, and boring," and yet the composite picture that he draws of a leader is anything but mundane. Drucker's effective leader is responsible, moral, and intelligent. In addition to these sterling qualities, he also depicts a leader's tasks as high and lofty. For instance, Drucker claims that the leader's first task is to be "a trumpet that sounds a clear sound." From the many connotations and associations that his image of the trumpet's call conjures up, the heralding of a new era, and with it notions of a higher calling, seems to speak most loudly. And when he arrives at the "ultimate task of leadership," which is "to create human energies and human vision," far from contexting leadership in a mundane and boring environment, he places it in the company of leaders such as General George Marshall and Winston Churchill, dynamic and colorful personalities. Thus, rather than working for his case, the leader who emerges from Drucker's descriptions is precisely the one he seems intent on humbling in the dominant reading.

Here, the leader is elevated. When we read that "he [the leader] realizes that it is a much smaller risk *than to be served* [italics added] by mediocrity" (p. 271), the assumed hierarchy in *served* suggests a leader who is positioned as a king to his subjects. The word *knows* also appears frequently when Drucker refers to the leader. The impression that forms is that of the leader who is not only knowledgeable but also wise because "the effective leader has thought through what is right and desirable" (p. 271). The figure that emerges is one of prominence, significance, and importance.

In the next two texts, Drucker further develops his notions of the role of the leader in the knowledge society. With the rise of a knowledge society, a manager must manage a society of organizations and make the collective knowledge useful. The manager and the knowledge worker must also lead the other classes of workers.

Our dominant reading of "The CEO in the New Millennium" did not seem to contribute much to notions of leadership. It highlighted the demands created by changes in society and the implications of this for the CEO. However, exploring beneath the text, we found Drucker still writing about leadership and specifically appealing to his target audience—the CEOs of business organizations.

First, by dismissing the talk of the "end of hierarchy," Drucker endorses and affirms the place and position of top management. After all, he says, "as our corporate institutions become increasingly complex . . . the more we need to know just who the ultimate authority is" (p. 79). The ultimate authority is the one who makes the decision as implied in his opening analogy of a crew on a ship: "When the ship is going down, you don't call a caucus—you give a command" (p. 79). CEOs are the ultimate authority because they make the decisions. Drucker maintains this assumption of authority through the rest of chapter and writes as a leader advising other leaders.

When writing this chapter, Drucker did not define leadership, leaders, managers, or management, but leadership, prestige, and power are inherent in the title of CEO. The CEO as the ultimate authority oversaw large organizations made up of exceptional workers called knowledge workers and made critical decisions for the future. The CEO's task had also become more complex as it now required that the CEO balance multiple demands from various pressure groups. The CEO also had to lead top management, but this hierarchy applied only within the organization.

In "The Next Society," Drucker paints a top management that is "separate, powerful and accountable" (p. 287). In the process, he moved the hierarchy of CEO and top management out of the organization and into society, the "Next Society." This is a significant move on Drucker's part when considered in the light of his initial pronouncement that management would be the leading class because what had originally been an assertion, a statement at surface level, is now an underlying assumption.

Drucker assumes that CEOs are knowledgeable and competent. When he talks about the "critical jobs ahead for the CEOs," he does not elaborate on the *how* of these challenges, implying that he expects the CEOs to be able to accomplish the jobs on their own ability. In "Leadership As Work," he spells out what an effective leader was. Here, he does not even refer to effectiveness but merely assumes that with the position of CEO, one is naturally able and competent. However, like the leader who emerges from the essay "Leadership As Work," the CEO here is also portrayed as separate and special. The difference this time is that the image is more subtle and buried within the text.

We find, for example, that Drucker makes a distinction between "financial people" and CEOs. To him, "it is virtually impossible to make a financial person understand business" (p. 81). He contrasts these people to "corporate leaders who wrestle with these (business) issues everyday" (p. 81). The implication is that the corporate leader, or CEO, is not as narrowly focused as the financial people. As a result, one of the CEO's tasks would be to "educate" these financial people. Embedded within that piece of advice is the assumption that the CEO knows more and knows better than others; hence, the CEO is, by implication, superior. Drucker makes the same kind of distinction when he compares the chief financial officer (CFO) and the chief information officer (CIO) to the CEO. Of the former two, he says, "neither of these officers knows one blessed thing about information" and hence cannot give the CEO "the information he or she needs most" (p. 84). CFOs and CIOs are generally in top management as well, but in this case they report to the CEO and still fall short of the CEO's needs. The CEO emerges as clearly superior even though Drucker does not explicitly make this claim.

The "Next Society," built on the foundation of the knowledge society, was envisioned as a universal phenomenon. When Drucker first introduced the knowledge society and knowledge workers, he noted that the knowledge society would generally apply to the "developed free-market countries," which was really only "one-fifth of the earth's population" (Drucker, 2001, p. 299). In "The Next Society," Drucker confidently declared it "will be with us shortly," applying it almost universally. In doing so, he created a new social context within which management acquired an even higher social standing. Knowledge, "the key resource," connotes not just intelligence but also rationality, wisdom, and understanding. As the "central and distinctive organ" of the knowledge society, management is thus elevated to the top and the CEO as the highest member of top management truly reigns supreme.

Comparing the various texts (see Table 2), Drucker's assumptions about leadership appear more deeply embedded in the later pieces. In "Leadership As Work," he speaks about the characteristics of an effective leader but did not name the leader. Leadership was also not depicted as a position within a hierarchy. In the later writings, Drucker names the CEO as the ultimate authority and establishes the CEO's position firmly at the top of top management. In "The CEO in the New Millennium," he no longer writes of trust or followers but about the decisions CEOs should make for the followers, assuming they will "enthusiastically follow" (Mintzberg, 1999, p. 26). Initially, Drucker states that effective managers are

Table 2
*Summary of Findings at the Critical Level*

| | *Critical Level* | |
|---|---|---|
| *Selected Texts* | *Leader* | *Challenge* |
| *The Practice of Management* (1955) | | |
| The role of management | Manager is the leader | Make resources productive |
| *The Essential Drucker* (2001) | | |
| "Leadership as Work" (1988) | Visionary, benevolent | Create vision |
| "Emergence of Knowledge Society" (1995) | Forms core of society | Make knowledge productive |
| *Managing in the Next Society* (2002) | | |
| "The CEO in the New Millennium" (1997) | CEO—leader of top management | Manage complexity |
| "The Next Society" (2001) | CEO—superman | Unsustainable |

Table 3
*Summary of Findings at Dominant and Critical Levels*

| | *Dominant Level* | | *Critical Level* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Selected Texts* | *Manager* | *Task* | *Leader* | *Challenge* |
| *The Practice of Management* (1955) | | | | |
| The role of management | Dynamic, life-giving | Steward of resources | Leader at work | Make resources productive |
| *The Essential Drucker* (2001) | | | | |
| "Leadership as Work" (1988) | Effective | Set goals, gain trust | Visionary, benevolent | Create human vision |
| "Emergence of Knowledge Society" (1995) | Skilled in "liberal art" of management | Manage society of organizations | Forms core of society | Make knowledge productive |
| *Managing in the Next Society* (2002) | | | | |
| "The CEO in the New Millennium" (1997) | Executive | Balance demands | CEO—leader of top management | Manage complexity |
| "The Next Society" (2001) | Chief of executives | All of above and manage knowledge | CEO—superman | Unsustainable |

effective leaders. Later, he conflates the two roles or functions by simply naming the leader-manager "an executive" (p. 80). When he adds *chief* to that name, it is elevated to a title and position of unquestioned authority. Set within the context of what Drucker has said about the knowledge society and management being the "central and distinctive organ," the position of CEO sits at the pinnacle of work aspirations.

## Summary of Findings

When we bring together the dominant and critical readings, a composite picture of a manager and leader and of the task of management emerges. This is summarized in Table 3. At the dominant level, the manager has moved from a generic entity to the attainment of a specific title and office and the task of management from that of managing resources to that of managing knowledge. At the same time, a critical analysis reveals that the notion of leadership becomes more deeply embedded and associated with management. The leader-manager is gradually imbued with almost saintly qualities, for the CEO takes on superhuman tasks, and management is no longer just about making resources productive but about making society at large productive.

## Reflexive Reading

Looking back on our reading experience, we see that two factors have particularly influenced our interpretations of Drucker's texts. Firstly, because we were looking for what Drucker had to say about leadership, other ideas and concerns that Drucker raised in his texts were not included in our analysis. For example, Drucker's opinions on the role of business in society spoke eloquently to us, but as they were not directly relevant to our topic, we set them aside.

Second, we are aware that our expectations of a Drucker-written text influenced our interpretations. We have always enjoyed reading Drucker and have come to expect an interesting and thought-provoking read. However, when reading critically, we often found ourselves negatively responding to his writing style as it affected the sense-making process. We became increasingly frustrated by what seemed to be a decreasing attention to structure and word choice. In "The CEO in the New Millennium," for example, Drucker raises five points that would affect "an executive's career" (Drucker, 2002, p. 80). The five points are not placed in any particular order, and he offers no links between the points. Our expectation was that the writing would improve over time, but we found his earlier works more rhetorically appealing than his later ones.

Although on one hand we recognized Drucker's established reputation and strongly held opinions (Beatty, 1998), on the other hand we felt that his authorial voice did not need to be projected quite so loudly because his previous work had no need of it for impact. As a result, the critical readings of the later texts may have been subject to more criticism (in the negative sense) than the earlier ones. We had sought to disassociate Drucker as author from the analysis of the text but found it increasingly difficult to do so. Drucker's concepts and analyses are still cogent and highly influential to date, but given the expectations set up by his earlier writings, his later writings seemed to us to lack the same incisiveness and clarity.

Having completed the three phases of scriptive reading, we applied Burke's theory of logology to our findings and arrived at the following conclusions.

## CONCLUSION: THE LOGOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP IN DRUCKER'S TEXTS

We looked first for trends that would indicate that Burke's theory of logology was well founded. The first trend we looked for was a hierarchically moving image of the manager, specifically up the social ladder. The second trend we considered was whether or not leadership was becoming a god-term. The main indication of such an occurrence would be the discovery that multiple meanings have been attributed to leadership.

From the dominant and critical readings, it is apparent that social stratification is taking place within the texts examined. We are told the effective leader is visionary and creates "human energies." He or she is intelligent, moral, and benevolent. When compared to the "dynamic, life-giving" manager in *The Practice of Management*, the "vision" aspect of a leader's work is in addition to a manager's work. The difference is significant, as it signals a subtle shift from a manager and leader being the same entity to a leader becoming distinct from a manager. With the rise of the knowledge society, the leader-manager gains even more prestige because managing this new society requires more capacity than managing previous ones. Management forms the core of this new society, once again confirming management's importance and significance to society.

In addition, we have seen the image of the manager move from being a leader of workers, to a leader of managers, to a leader of leaders (e.g., top management), finally culminating in the position of the CEO. Thus, Drucker's vision of the ultimate leader is the CEO of a large corporation in the knowledge society. He cites the emergence of "CEO supermen" and mentions Jack Welch of General Electric, Andrew Grove of Intel, and Sanford Weill of Citigroup as exceptions, not norms. Clearly a CEO superman is higher than just CEO, but Drucker does not consider supermen a viable option for leadership ("the supply is both unpredictable and far too limited"). Instead of faulting the CEO, he blames the American system for producing "impossible jobs" for the CEOs. The "superhero CEO" signals a "folding back" (Carter, 1992) of language on itself because it has already reached its end. Logologically speaking, the position of CEO can go no further because for Drucker to push the term any further, he had to borrow the analogy of superman, which in itself is an analogy. As Burke has indicated, when something like that happens, the presence of an ultimate term is likely.

The term *leadership* follows a similar path of progression to that of the manager. However, rather than tracing leadership's deepening social acceptance, we looked for the widening of leadership as a central concept and the accumulation of meaning under its umbrella. In logological terms, we wanted to know if leadership had become a god-term, and one sign would be leadership being set apart or, as Burke calls it, "developing a religious tradition" (Burke, 1961, p. 36).

Leadership was first introduced as management in *The Practice of Management*. Management as an expression of work implied "divine appointment" and stewardship of resources, and managers, a distinct social class, were designated leaders. In the text

"Leadership As Work," the term *leadership* appeared to be similar to management in our dominant reading but connoted a difference when we read critically. Leadership had now come to include "effectiveness," "vision," and "subordinates." Moreover, by titling the piece "Leadership," Drucker was also setting the term apart from management. With the naming of the CEO as the highest leader, leadership became synonymous with top management. The association added more power, authority, and prestige to Drucker's previous usage of the term. As an indicator of class, leadership was a class within the class of management. Alongside leadership and management, Drucker also raised knowledge as a new concept and context for leadership, an association that again enlarges the scope of leadership.

Hence, we saw the beginnings of leadership being set apart, and we suspect that it will eventually develop its own "tradition" (Burke, 1961). For example, should knowledge be fully incorporated into the context of leadership, one could argue that leadership is all set to become a god-term. Knowledge, in its broad usage and social desirability, and when considered in relation to the place knowledge occupies in Genesis, would again enlarge leadership's significance. In biblical terms, *knowing* has transcendent implications. In time, leadership could come to mean omniscience, or vice versa, but for now, and within Drucker's writings, the two entities are still perceivably separate.

In our dominant readings, we saw a gradual change in the manager's role and task. In the critical readings, we saw the leader emerging from the depiction of the manager and management. When knowledge is yoked to leadership, it "ups the ante" of leadership significantly. With the CEO named and placed at the apex of business and social importance, there is no alternative but to create the analogy of a CEO superman to move the leader up the scale. However, as we have argued, such an occurrence indicates a term has reached its end point.

We conclude that the ultimate leader has already arrived in Drucker's writing with the CEO, in terms of name and position, being the entelechial destination. Any movement beyond CEO would require either an additional analogy, as we have seen with CEO superman, or a complete name change.[4] Similarly, leadership as a term is also progressing toward its own end. In the wider context of leadership literature, the proliferation of leadership theories emphasizing spirituality,[5] and the high expectations placed on leaders, indicates that leadership might have already established a religious tradition of its own. Moreover, the logological drive in the language of leadership has also been noticed by other authors. Bos (2000), for example, in his study of discourses on business leadership, detected the utopian nature of leadership discourse. Bos notes that leadership is presented as "something so mysterious that it cannot be taught at all and can only be learned by a few" (p. 78). If this is the case, then leadership already sounds like a priesthood and leaders like its priests.

Yet one could argue that the conclusions at which we have arrived are pertinent only to Drucker and that logological effects of language do not necessarily apply beyond the texts that we have read. We hope future studies will explore other areas. For instance, tracing the literature surrounding knowledge could reveal directions and implications for the knowledge-intensive industries. Alternatively, logology could be applied to the discourses of leadership across the disciplines. Within or beyond leadership theories, it would be interesting to continue tracking the progress of leadership and its attendant terms.

The logological drive of language, as explained by Burke's theory of logology, provides an alternative approach to leadership studies, particularly in the context of text-making in leadership theory. We are excited by its possibilities.

## NOTES

1. Burke does not elaborate further on "god-term," but he provides some direction by pointing to "logos," his "master analogy." He starts with the theological doctrine of "The Word" as expressed in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He then says The Word is related to the verbal as being an "uttered word" and hence should not be solely equated with "Reason" which is Aristotle's understanding in his theory of rhetoric. Going back to a translation of "logos" (λόγος), we find that it means "the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known." This was the verbal element to which Burke was referring. The translation from the Greek also acknowledges the meaning of the inward thought being "of reason itself." Hence, the word *logos* suggests both the rational and the verbal (Latin ratio and oratio). When applied to The Word, the Greek form Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ is translated as "GOD THE WORD" (as opposed to "the word of God," which refers to the scriptures). The relationship between God the Father and God the Son was thus as intimate as "the thought that leads to utterance is to the uttered word that expresses the thought" (Burke, 1961, p. 13). In this sense, when *ology*, meaning "the study of" is

added to logos, then logology would essentially mean the study of GOD THE WORD. From this understanding, when a word becomes a god-term, it is as far reaching as a term can be. Burke (1961) sums it up this way: "What we say about words, in the empirical realm, will bear a notable likeness to what is said about God, in theology" (p. 14).

2. Scriptive reading is fully explained in Monin (2004).

3. When management and organizations were relatively new concepts, there was no distinction between the manager and the leader because the role of the manager made him or her the natural leader. A more detailed account of leadership in the context of management is given in Teo (2002).

4. *Fortune* had an issue on CEOs who, in wanting to distance themselves from recent scandals, named themselves "The New Breed."

5. Four books were reviewed on spirituality and leadership in *The Leadership Quarterly*, 2001, Volume 12, pages 369-378.

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