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Silke Scheer, *The entrepreneur as business leader: Cognitive leadership in the firm*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009. 171 pp. ISBN 9781848443334. £59.95 (hbk)

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Theories on leadership are plentiful. Early theories of leadership took the leader for granted and focused on traits, skills and behavior. Newer theories on leadership are more process oriented: relationships with, and the perception of, the leader are the center of interest. However, there is insufficient understanding of how leadership affects performance and theories addressing this are welcomed. This book attempts to fill this theoretical gap; Scheer aims to contribute with an alternative leadership theory and to empirically test its effects. So the question naturally follows: Do we need it? Do we want it?

The Entrepreneur as Business Leader offers and develops the theory of cognitive leadership. By conveying the firm's conception to the employees, Scheer argues that the firm founder stands a better chance of tackling and solving issues such as coordination and motivation. Traditional leadership theories are not able to do this, especially not for a leader who is the entrepreneur and firm founder. She argues that the employees of the firm have to adopt the business conception of the cognitive leader (that is, the entrepreneur/firm founder). This leads to shared mental models and organizational culture, and a collective identity. The process through which this takes place is a communication and learning process.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part theoretically frames cognitive leadership and is the more convincing of the two. The theoretical arguments for cognitive leadership and how it works in dyadic processes and in group processes are strong. Much of this reasoning is based on thorough theoretical reviews, covering cognitive, social and organizational psychology. The reader is taken step-by-step through these arguments in an attempt to convince them that cognitive leadership is a relevant leadership alternative for entrepreneurs as business leaders. Scheer raises a lot of important issues worthy of lengthy discussion: Is it possible for a leader to convey his or her mental mode to others? Is it possible for a group to likewise convey this to a newcomer in the group? Such a discussion is important since Scheer in her arguments builds on the fact that the leader has position power, rather than personal or referent power. So maybe we are talking about the stronger part (the leader or the group) exerting power over the weaker part (the newly recruited person) rather than a relationship on equal terms? It would be very useful to see how cognitive leadership relates to established leadership theories. Despite this shortcoming this theoretical part definitely offers food for thought. Scheer's book is therefore a welcomed and wanted contribution. One that fuels the discussion about leadership, a discussion that seems to have reached a dead end.

In the second part of the book, Scheer sets out to test empirically the characteristics and the effects of cognitive leadership with the help of 14 hypotheses. I applaud her for doing this, since most authors are either theoretical or empirical in character; and here Scheer provides both in order to make her theoretical discussions more solid. However, this second part is weaker in comparison. Early in the book, Scheer has made it clear that cognitive leadership is for firm founders, who she equates to entrepreneurs. However, in the empirical study, the choice of participants is a sample of 'firm members that head a group of subordinates'; there is no elaboration on whether these people are firm founders or not. It simply confirms that 57 percent are CEOs. This raises the issue of who is a leader and who is an entrepreneur? Is a firm founder an entrepreneur – and a leader? The second part seems to combine the two and sees them as inseparable. Maybe it is wise of Scheer to leave this discussion for another forum; however, the absence of such here hinders the flow from

the first to the second part. Further, all of her hypotheses are made in comparison to 'other leadership regimes' (than cognitive leadership) in which cognitive leadership is superior to other leadership regimes. It is to me, as a reader, unclear whether her result is related to such 'other leadership regimes' or if that part of cognitive leadership is still open for investigation.

The chapter where Scheer discusses the results of her study is seemingly rational in character. Even if Scheer tries to convince the reader that the communication and learning processes are two-way, the underlying assumption seems to be that cognitive leadership is mainly a top-down process. It is the leader and the group that transfer the mental mode to the newcomer and the newcomer adapts through a set of psychological adaptations. As such cognitive leadership seems to be built on transaction leadership and Scheer draws some conclusions that are surprising, for example, that homogeneity is to be preferred above heterogeneity. Cognitive leadership seems to encompass all leaders, and therefore this chapter could be a discussion in any current leadership book on charismatic, ethical or transformational leadership. The novelty of cognitive leadership here loses a bit of its freshness. However, the reader can find some useful practical insights of the relevance of cognitive leadership, regardless of leadership position.

It is time to come back to the question of whether a new theory of leadership is needed. After being introduced to cognitive leadership I would say definitely 'yes'. This book on cognitive leadership has promising features and, above all, it is a strong contribution to the cognitive side of the leadership debate, one that has been recently neglected. Do we then want it? Yes, provided the reader can concentrate on the book's empirical effects and implications and discard the traditional conclusions that riddle the current leadership theories.