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BEARING TESTIMONY AS A MANAGER

Spiritual Leadership and Guidance as a Challenge

As a simplistic representation of contemporary leadership of business and enterprise, the “manager” apparently is much good. On the part of enterprises – but also society- an attitude of expecting much from a manager is prevalent which significantly puts pressure on him. The executive should as much as possible lead with the greatest of ease but without neglecting the individual co-worker or the level below him. Furthermore, he should represent his enterprise to the outside world with loyalty. This basic attitude entails not only a spiritual moment – as will be shown- but also a character of testimony. Talking of “testifying” in the field of business and enterprise cannot be taken for granted. The term is specifically theological – as will be shown – but can also be employed in the social and business-ethical debate about the culture of leadership.

The terms of spirituality and testimony are of a theologically specific nature, but they can be employed within the framework of a discourse on management ethics. Showing this up is the purpose of this paper.

Testimony

Seen from a theological perspective, the “witness” is an essential part of Biblical narratives that have to do with miracles which have such an incredible ring there was a need of one or several witnesses to quasi formally, respectively legally, confirm its truthfulness. Another variant is the situation that somebody is not witness of a special event but bears testimony to what is of basic concern to him. The credo of Christian faith is– in terms of existence, sometimes quite a risky undertaking- all the more regarded as a testimony when, at the end, it leads to martyrdom. (in Greek word for testimony). Jesus exemplifies the faithful witness who, in turn, commissions people to bear testimony. Testimony (martyria) is one of the Church’s basic executions and a form of practising faith.¹

Putting testimony - bearing man of the Holy Scriptures on the same level as an executive in a free market economy is a very daring step in this context taken if the term testimony is understood at face value. If one recurs to managers’ bearing testimony from a perspective inspired by social ethics, we draw on criteria which alternate. The difference between the conventional employee on the one side and the manager on the other lies, among other things, in the fact that not only qualities of leadership are expected of the latter but also a creed to the enterprise, the product, and, last but not least, to his co-workers, his charges. Of course, the talk of bearing testimony and martyrdom of the manager is an analogous one, but specific features of testimony befit him to his fully and totally standing up for what he has set out for and, in the end, gets paid for- even if the criteria and challenges are different for the manager. Here count qualities and virtues such as respect, leadership quality, accepting responsibility, authenticity, as well as social and professional competence as will be shown in systematic steps in the following. With all the economic and organisational theoretical accents, there is to be found in spirituality –at least in beginnings- a theological accent which does not play an insignificant role.

Respected, but unloved

The term “manager” does not only denote (rather unspecified) a profession but also aims at a social group that seemingly ranks at the top of the hierarchy as it does not only work very hard but, at the same time, makes decision and also a lot of money – in the opinion of the public at large excessively much. The manager runs a company, a business and bears responsibility. On the one hand, he is a respected personality much flattered and enjoying flattery², on the other, often unpopular. There are a lot of prejudices. The manager is regarded as callous and calculating, interested only in profit and maximizing profit, stopping at nothing and axing jobs. Furthermore, in public opinion, he is regarded as reckless to everything and everybody – except to himself. He allows himself everything, more salary, high and hardly justified incentive payments or luxurious holidays... A professional group obviously is good for an undifferentiated bogeyman. In the end, these are all simplistic statements and hardly represent reality but rather very human phenomena such as envy, ill will, jealousy and a competitive mind-set.

Manager

To explicate in a differentiated way what is behind the term “manager”, it makes sense to recur to the theory of organisation. The term manager originates from the Anglo-Saxon realm, but, meanwhile, has also found entry in other languages (even in the otherwise so linguistically sensitive Franco-phone domain, it is common to leave the term without translation). Already at the beginning of the 20th century, did theoreticians start describing the tasks befitting a good manager. This is at least due to the revolutionary changes of the world of work manifesting in the consequences of the processes of industrialization at the end of the 19th century. Besides the many middle class businesses, large enterprises developed which could not be run as family businesses anymore. From this time, a study by the entrepreneur and theoretician Henry Fayol is of importance who, in 1916, compiled duties of a manager.³

According to him, a manager serves five essential functions (“elements d’administration”): planning, organizing, ordering, coordinating and controlling. Since then, a number of scientists have engaged in extending this list, to refine and deepen it, but, nevertheless, Fayol, from the very beginning, convincingly summarizes what is valid even today. It is clear that the primary task of the manager is to lead and guide. And they should make a good job of it, and – in a figurative sense – bear testimony to their way and manner of acting.

When does somebody begin to be a “manager” – even “top-manager” and what are the criteria to be met by someone to be counted a member of this professional group? Principally, the term ‘manager’ interspersed for that type of leaders who administrate something not in their possession in a leading position. Thus a self-employed entrepreneur is no manager *sensu strictu*, but a leading co-worker of the enterprise may very well be a manager.⁴ In terms of education and social background, there are no rigid rules anymore. Principally, anyone has the chance to become a manager one day.⁵ At any rate, there is consensus that it is primarily the task of a manager to lead and guide, i.e. to swiftly make decisions and to see to it that implementation thereof takes place as soon as possible. However, there is also consensus that not every manager is automatically capable of leading

and guiding. The style of leadership is either authoritarian or participatory or a variation between the two leanings. Each of the styles can be right and appropriate in a certain situation, but can also be completely wrong, and the individual style of leadership becomes a problem.⁶

According to the sociologist of organisation, M. Pohlmann, leadership is

“in a social-scientific sense no ability of the managers but rather the result of a relationship of leading. It does not depend on the qualities of persons but rather the kind of a social relationship. The style of leadership results from this relationship, not the managers’ claim to leadership.”⁷

Thus, leadership taken as such does not yet embody authority, but it is the relationship of leading which achieves authority turning into an acknowledgement of authority. A manager is not a person of authority *sui generis* because if co-workers do not take him seriously or he is even feared, it will be difficult for the manager to motivate his co-workers on this basis via his claim to leadership. But if there is a good work-relationship between the leader and his co-workers, then the authority of the superior is acknowledged and he is respected as a person, even if he shows marginal deficits in competence and decision-making skills. Such a relationship of leading – as any relationship – must be cultivated because it can change quickly. Somebody who makes mistakes in leadership must reckon with first reservations towards him. However, somebody who constantly and confidently gives evidence of his competence of leadership is increasingly awarded respect and acknowledgement. This applies above all when processes of change are initiated within an enterprise and the co-workers are especially sensitive to the way how their superiors implement these changes and what the consequences are for the team. These ambivalences on the level of relationship make plain why managers are judged in rather a differentiated way and markedly emotionally in respect to co-workers’ evaluation and estimates.

“Management means ... a leadership, coordination and control signalling conduct with the insecurity of decision-making of the organisation. For that, there is need of ‘leadership’ and ‘strategy’ whose sociological understanding, at least partially, is orientated to the represented findings of organisation research.”⁸

In management, in concrete terms, a manager as an agent stands for something – be it a product, for business dealings or for a leading position with responsibility. Thereby, he eventually bears testimony to the outside world.

Responsibility

It is evident that implicitly it is the part of the executives to bear responsibility as is commonly done. Leading means engaging in an obligation as to what happens under management – be it indirectly, be it directly for what is done even if one is not personally and actively involved or, in an extreme case, one has no idea whatsoever (taking up “political responsibility” rarely has anything to do with personal failure but rather with the public authority under the superior). Thus it is an essential component of business ethics to question this responsibility within the framework of social

ethics.⁹ Quite a while ago, the sociologist Franz-Xaver Kaufmann placed emphasis on the “key category”¹⁰ responsibility. Responsibility is not only the burden on the shoulders of an individual. Rather should one consider the different levels. Besides the individual responsibility on the level of micro ethics, i.e. the moral responsibility of the individual, stands the corporate responsibility of meso ethics as an action is not only the sum of single agents’ actions but corporate action corresponding to social interactions which must be taken into account. Furthermore, on the level of macro ethics, a systemic responsibility is to be conceded which hints at the complex interdependence of subject and system.¹¹

In respect to the manager, his burden of responsibility on different levels can be adequately measured. If he plays only a marginal role, he is directly affected on the micro level and indirectly touched on the meso level. On the micro level, the manager, as business agent, is in the centre, and acts on the basis of virtuous ethical criteria. On the meso level, he cannot evade his indirect responsibility. If one acts corporately, i.e. jointly, based on individual actions, it happens cooperatively, i.e. in feeder and cooperating work.¹²

However, the sensitivity of managers to take up the required responsibility is developed rather differently. Nevertheless, the manager is better than his reputation. Nikolas Gebhard shows up that responsibility as a principle of action has a high relevance with German top managers though it is not yet possible to talk of a new elite of responsibility.¹³ Thus certain outside factors apparently lead to the fact that personal demands to responsibility and taking it up, de facto, are pushed into the background on account of other priorities. In university studies and education, these comparatively soft factors of the business case “responsibility” hardly play a role, i.e. the manager must harbour the respective ethos or acquire it himself. In respect to the addressees of this responsibility, the co-workers (90% of the board interviewed) rank first, followed by shareholders and investors (53%) as well as customers (30%) and society (25%)¹⁴

Leadership – Authenticity Through Social Competence

To delve into the theory of leadership the term “virtue” is introduced here.¹⁵

Virtue means the ability and propensity of man to a good life. In different set-ups of kinds of virtue, it refers to so-called tables of virtues of the classical and modern virtue ethicists mostly not to the individual but rather to his/her relationships to others. When talking about virtue ethics, one understands by virtue a habitual conduct which first must be acquired because virtue as such is not innate. A learning process is needed to turn inclinations (from lust respectively greed) into a virtue. Virtue is acquired by practice, i.e. controlled steering of inclination.

In a figurative sense, leadership is no virtue but there are virtues helping to cope well with the task of leading and guiding. So there is not only the need for “wisdom”, but for example also “cleverness”¹⁶, “courage”, healthy “ambition” or “justice”. Leadership is a task. Human virtues can be prepared for this task and help work on it. Someone who leads must first acquire the competence of leadership and attain respective qualifications. Principally, every human being harbours the ability to lead quasi as an inclination but, nevertheless, it is necessary to unfold and cultivate these talents to qualitatively and appropriately realize these inclinations to leadership. One must acquire or, at least, vitalize competence.

This is also holds true for the manager. A double competence is needed in respect to professionalism but also to dealing with people in the sense of “social

competence". The term of social competence plays an important role in the theory of organisation. It is evident that only s/he can lead who adequately can deal with people, in concrete terms: with co-workers. Sometimes there might be the case that for certain management tasks social competence is more important than professionalism. Social competence is no fixed characteristic or talent but individually endowed. With an executive, social competence defines as commanding "a resourcefulness of strategies of resolve in problematic, concrete social situations."¹⁷ For this there are criteria compiled by Martin Salzwedel and Ulf Tödter¹⁸, both coaches for executives.

In the first place, there is the ability to empathize (empathy) and the principal preparedness to change perspectives to find plausible alternative suggestions. Furthermore, there must be a clear understanding of roles and the talent to change roles, i.e., on the one hand, one must be conscious of one's own position, on the other, imagining oneself in the position and situation of the other person. More criteria are the ability to find solutions and strategic orientation. Furthermore, of great importance is the ability to cope with conflicts and critique as well as resilience to crises. A manager is expected to also support non-conformist members and to have the characteristic of cleverly and tactically positioning himself and his own team.

These criteria must be met to lead "authentically", i.e. not to be in command of leadership formally but fulfilling one's task of leading at ease and credibly. Competence is not an innate trait of character but a firm will is needed to acquire this competence. Sober expertise is not enough to lay the foundation for social competence but there is need for "spirituality".

Spirituality

The term "spirituality" is a common term, not only in the ecclesiastical realm. The term originates from the theological tradition though. In a dictionary of philosophy, you will not find the term.¹⁹ In theology, the term emerges for the first time at the end of the 19th century in the French-speaking region.²⁰ There are unnumbered attempts at defining and explicating the term, and it is advisable to commit oneself to one of them. Thus, a distinction is drawn between "religiosity and spirituality":

"Religiosity is regarded as the adoption of convictions of the faith as well as participation in activities and rituals of an organized religious community with a specific system of norms and traditions (...). Contrary to this, spirituality is a subjectively experienced meaning of life that can be located within but also outside traditional religiosity befitting all people, not only the religious ones."²¹

Spirituality is a very broad term and cannot be confined to specific religious cultures. In Christendom the idea is an old one but the term is rather young. This form of mind-set to reflect on the meaning of life or give meaning to life eventually is given to every human being more or less. The institute "JUNCTUS" affiliated to the philosophical-theological high school in Münster offers the following formula as a definition of guidance which is helpful for the query:

"By Christian spirituality we understand the continuous transformation (transformatio) of a human being who responds to the call of the incarnated God. This transformation realizes in engaging and responsible relations to the world, to fellow humans and to oneself."²²

In this approach, spirituality appears as subject-related. There may be group-specific spiritualities (e.g. women's spirituality), but it is not the groups but the subjects who form and develop. Spirituality is a characteristic feature of every individual. Furthermore, spirituality is a dynamic event because it can be experienced and lived through. This is no unique, revolutionary event which changes a human's life but a step by step process. On the path of the spiritual, nothing happens by itself but it takes endeavour and costs power. In the church tradition, such processes are no aim but ways to the aim. The purpose is experiencing God, the movement of God. The Bible, for example, reports on such experiences, but autobiographies of important personalities ("saints") bear testimony of this. This is a very specific interpretation of spirituality which can also be found outside the Christian realm. Then it is not that much of an experience of God reported on but perhaps an experience of unity, for example, an experience with nature or totality which has sustainably altered the life of an individual.²³ The manners how spiritual ways are followed are very different, but they have in common that they are never merely about the relation to God and humans or humans and nature. "Spirituality always looks at the other one, the You,"²⁴ Above all things, this becomes clear when one recalls that spirituality is no privilege of religious people, but spirituality is given to every human being – if in different ways. Thus spirituality is broadly established as there are different reference points of spirituality, even within the theological syllabus.²⁵

Leading Spiritually

What connection is there between the ecclesiastical aspect of spirituality and the very profane aspect of the professional picture of a manager? As has been shown, a manager is often not liked but at least respected. He has been entrusted with the task of leading and is expected not only to take these tasks seriously but also to fulfil them well. This requires personal and professional, continuous education. When taking up a job, he mostly meets the professional requirements, otherwise, he presumably would not have landed the job in the first place. When working together with people, be it on a team with a flat hierarchy, be it in an office with rigid structures, he engages in a relationship with the co-workers, which is called a relationship of leadership. For the management to succeed in this sense, it takes social competence which in the best of cases leads to the superior regarded as an "authentic" boss. In the ethics of enterprise or leadership, authenticity is always highlighted as a prerequisite. In this context, there is always reference to the four criteria developed by the social psychologists Michael Kernis and Brian Goldman which contribute to the realization of authenticity: consciousness (of one's strengths and weaknesses), honesty (also of one's own weaknesses) consequence (in action-even if disadvantages are raised for one's own person) as well as sincerity (in portraying one's weaknesses).²⁶ If authenticity is successful – which incorporates a spiritual component, the enterprise, respectively the manager, can bear testimony.

To attain an authentic competence of leadership, it takes a good, spiritual orientation, i.e. it takes a spiritual orientation as is known from the tradition of the great religions and views of the world. Talking of spirituality, the Christian, resp. religious traditions, linger in one's consciousness, however, spirituality is understood as a mind-set also outside the immediate religious components. Somebody in harmony with him/herself and the world is regarded as a spiritual human being. And not only that, the spiritual human has got to tell the world something, s/he impresses

the world and the people by his/her statement. To this aim, s/he – besides a spiritual mind-set – is helped by the virtues as they prepare him for the leadership and guidance. Virtues, as well as spirituality, are no static variables but require an active interaction on the part of the individual. They, too, are not static as is the competence of leadership. It, too, must develop.

In respect to a specific Christian spirituality, one can assume that a corresponding Christian image of man suits it. On the one hand, the above mentioned “continuous transformation” is inspired by the Christian tradition and, on the other, marks the conduct of the manager with other people, be they co-workers, customers or competitors in the free market. Therefore, it shows that there is a connection between learning leadership on the one hand, and unfolding human virtues and a personal spiritual basic mind-set. Spirituality (of a Christian kind), as does leadership, comprises a social component, because in either case it is not about one’s own self but about the others, the person opposite.

There are also managers who are inspired by a non-Christian or non-religious spirituality, understood as a reflected process of the personal interaction with oneself and conduct with others. Even if the image of man is not markedly Christian, there is a variation of the above mentioned transformation which can lead to a humanist image of man which, in a similar way, enables one to leadership and guidance on a spiritual basis.

Testimony By Means of a “Spirituality of Leadership”

Thus, there is – summarizing my explications – a “spirituality of leadership”: a manager indirectly recurs to his (Christian) image of man by leading and guiding thereby drawing on his spiritual action.

The executive harbours a transferred professional and social responsibility. S/he learns, practises and develops management and acquires social competence which, in turn, results from an active, spiritual process. In this way, one can talk of the virtue of designing spirituality. The aim of this interaction is authenticity in the relationship of leadership. Therewith, the manager – in an analogous sense – can firstly, bear a creed, a testimony of what s/he stands for to him/herself and, secondly, to the outside world. S/he stands authentically for a product, an enterprise and for his/her co-workers. A manager must personally back what s/he has taken up his/her position and obliged him/herself to by contract. However, the importance of a manager as a witness, who s/he is to the outside world, is neglected widely in the current debate. This contribution serves to counteract this lack.

Annotations

¹ Grundlegend dazu Edmund Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen. Elementare Handlungen des Glaubens*. (Basics on this, Edmund Arens, Bearing Testimony and Confessing. Elementary Actions of Faith), Düsseldorf 1989.

² There are professional journals for managers as a target group (directly e.g. the “Manager.Magazin” publ. in Hamburg. In the self-presentation one again and again finds the self-confident posture on front pages of suchlike mags – photographed from the bottom up perspective with crossed arms. He mostly appears as self-confident, even when smiling. The manager puts himself in scene.

³ Henry Fayol, *Administration industrielle et générale* (Administration industrielle et general), Paris 1916

⁴ “The separation of management and property found in most middle and large enterprises today has brought forth the manager as a representative of a new professional group, a new social class.” Wolfgang H. Staehle, *Management. Eine verhaltenswissenschaftliche Perspektive* (Management. A behaviourist-scientific perspective), Munich⁸ 1999,10.

⁵ Cf. to the following Markus Pohlmann, *Management und Führung. Eine managementsoziologische Perspektive*, in: *Sozialwissenschaften und Berufspraxis* 30.1 (2007), 5-20. (Management and leadership. A Management-sociological perspective, in: *Social Sciences and Professional Practice* 30.1. (2007), pp.5-20. Same on this et al (eds) *Anatomie einer Elite – Top-Manager in Deutschland: Deutungsmuster, Ethik- und Organisationskonzepte* (Anatomy of an Elite – Top-Manager in Germany: Interpreting Pattern, Ethics and Organization Concepts), Berlin, printing in progress

⁶ The differentiated distinction between “Leadership” and “Management”, in the former refers to society and the latter to business is not carried out at this place. “Post-heroic management is the re-introduction of the difference between Organisation and Society into Organisation.” Dirk Baecker, *Organisation und Störung* (Dirk Baecker, Organisation and Disturbance), Frankfurt/M.2011, 274)

⁷ Pohlmann, *Management und Führung*, a.a.O., 16 (Management and Leadership, *ibid*,16)

⁸ Markus Pohlmann, *Soziologie der Organisation. Eine Einführung* (Sociology of Organisation. An Introduction), Konstanz-München 2. rev. 2016,128

⁹ “Referring to business this means that, as an ethicist of all business relevant orders and institutions as well as structures, functions, processes, actions and convictions, one has to become aware of exploring their normative implications and examine their arguments.” Günther Wilhelms /Helge Wuhlsdorf, *Verantwortung und Gemeinwohl* (Responsibility and Common Welfare), Regensburg 2017, 13

¹⁰ Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, *Der Ruf nach Verantwortung. Risiko und Ethik in einer unüberschaubaren Welt* (The call for responsibility, risk and ethics in an incalculable world), Freiburg/Br. among others 1992, 11

¹¹ Cf. Wilhelms/Wuhlsdorf, *Verantwortung und Gemeinwohl*, 34ff.(Responsibility and Common Welfare, 34 ff.)

¹² Cf. *ibid* 27

¹³ Cf. Nikolas Gebhard, *Das Verantwortungsverständnis deutscher Spitzenmanager*, Konstanz – München 2013. 247. Um sich nicht mit Klischees und Vorurteilen aufzuhalten ist es hilfreich, diese soziologische Studie zu evaluieren, die auf der Grundlage der Befragung von 30 Spitzenmanagern erstellt wurde. Gleichzeitig gibt die Arbeit einen guten Überblick über den Forschungsstand zum Thema der „Verantwortung“. (The Understanding of Responsibility of German Top Managers, Konstanz-Munich 2013,247. In order not to get lost in clichés and prejudices it is helpful to evaluate this sociological study which is based on interviewing 30 top managers. At the same time, this paper gives a good overview of the state of research on the topic “responsibility”).

¹⁴ Cf.*ibid* 140ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Christian Schröer, *Gebot, Tugend, Pflicht – die maßgeblich gewordenen normativen Orientierungsschlüssel angewandter Ethik*, in: Wilhelm Korff / Markus Vogt (Hrsg.), *Gliederungssysteme angewandter Ethik. Ein Handbuch*, Freiburg/Br. 2016, 39-73. (Command, Virtue, Duty – the now decisive normative keys to orientation in applied ethics. A handbook, Freiburg/Br.2016,39-73.)

¹⁶ Cf. Thomas Eggenesperger, *Mit Klugheit führen. Ein sozialetischer Rekurs auf Thomas von Aquin*, in: Hochschulbericht d. Philosophisch-Theologischen Hochschule Münster 2012/13,

Münster 2013, 28-40. (Leading with Prudence. A social-ethical recourse to Thomas Aquinas, in: High School Report of the Philosophical-Theological High School Münster 2012/13 Münster 2013, 28-40.)

¹⁷ Martin Salzwedel/Ulf Tödter, *Führen ist Charaktersache – Überzeugen durch Authentizität und soziale Kompetenz*, (Leadership is a Matter of Character – Convincing through Authenticity and Social Competence), Berlin 2008, 32

¹⁸ Salzwedel/Tödter, *Führen ist Charaktersache* (Leadership is a Matter of Character), *ibid.*, 33

¹⁹ At best one finds in the relevant dictionaries “Spiritualism” as a philosophical movement since the 17th century. e.g, Johannes Herzgsell, *Spiritualism*, in: Walter Brugger/Harald Schlöndorff, *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* (Philosophical Dictionary), Freiburg/Br. 2010, 461,

²⁰ Dictionnaire de spiritualité. Ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire, Paris 1932-1995

²¹ Christian Zwingmann, *Spiritualität/Religiosität und das Konzept der gesundheitsbezogenen Lebensqualität. Definitionsansätze, empirische Evidenz, Operationalisierungen*, in: Helfried Moosbrugger / Christian Zwingmann (Hrsg.), *Religiosität: Messverfahren und Studien zu Gesundheit und Lebensbewältigung*. (Spirituality/Religiosity and the Concept of Health-Related Quality of Life. Attempts at definitions, empirical evidence, operational processes, in: Helfried Moosbrugger/Christian Zwingmann (ed.) *Religiosity. Procedures of Measuring and studies on health and coping with life*), Münster 2004, 215-238, here 218

²² http://www.pth-muenster.de/iunctus_FB (checked 16.8.2017)

²³ Cf. Thomas Möllenbeck, “I am spiritual, not religious!” On a heuristic mind-set .in: same/ Ludger Schulte (ed.) *Spiritualität. Auf der Suche nach ihrem Ort in der Theologie* (Spirituality. On a Search for its Place in Theology), 249-265

²⁴ Dienberg, *Spiritualität* (Spirituality), *ibid.* 37

²⁵ Such is the moment of social affairs in social ethics, point of reference of spirituality for and in social ethics. Cf. Thomas Eggensperger, *Spiritualität in der theologischen Sozialethik. Eine (un)gewöhnliche Beziehung* (Spiritualität, Spirituality in Theological Social Ethics. An (un) common relation) in: Möllenbeck / Schulte, *Spiritualität* (Spirituality) *ibid.* 178-186

²⁶ In original version: awareness, unbiased processing, behaviour, and relational orientation. Michael H. Kernis, Brian M. Goldman: A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity. Theory and research 2006
 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222578792_A_Multicomponent_Conceptualization_of_Authenticity-Theory_and_Research, 12.8.2017).

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