

## **The Power of Leadership and Command: A Historical Perspective**

Leadership in a historical perspective is attracting increased attention within leadership studies (Grint, 2014, 2022; Wilson, 2017). This study seeks to contribute to critically oriented leadership studies by exploring the potential of deploying a historically sensitized sociological perspective on leadership. In particular, I rely on Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991, 1996) in an historical exploration of power in leadership within the Danish military.

Using archival and interview data, I take the Danish military as a case, with the aim of tracking the emergence of leadership as a historically constituted social category within the military field. In doing so, leadership is conceptualized as a relational phenomenon that is deeply intertwined with broader historical power relations. Here, the military, for the purpose of a historical sociological analysis, provides a wealth of archival data available for an exploration of how leadership as an empirical category has emerged and been constituted relationally vis-à-vis other categories in the field. Indeed, I propose, that it can be analytically conducive to study leadership in relation to other social categories endowed with power in the field. In the context of the military, I argue that, the category of command is central if one is to understand the role of leadership. I propose that to explore command as a historical constituted category, and the emergence of leadership in relation to this, can be telling not only of leadership as a micro-practice, but also the broader macro-level shifts which signals changes in the legitimate use of power within organizations. Indeed, taking the Bourdieusian insight seriously, that fields are inter-connected (Thomson, 2014), the *relation* between command and leadership is telling for the macro-level positioning of the military as both different from and similar to the broader society. Here, I propose, that command as a category in the military, entails a field specific form of *power-over*, which, also symbolically differentiates the military from other

fields, while leadership can be viewed as a category, which permeates the military field, with a notion of *power-with* (see e.g. Haugaard, 2012 for a discussion on forms of power), which is symbolically comparable to understandings of legitimate use of power found beyond the military field.

The study of leadership in this manner allows not merely for an understanding of power in leadership and its entwinement with field specific categories. The study of the relationship between leadership and command, also allows for an understanding of how historical shifts in society shapes the legitimate use of power, and how symbolic struggles over differentiation in relation to different forms of power are central if we are to understand leadership as shaped by particular historical contexts. Beyond adding to existing work on the interrelation on leadership as historically constituted, this present take also adds important insights in to the *relationality* between command and leadership as different yet interdependent forms of power in organizations (see also Spoelstra, 2022).

## Literature

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1996). On the family as a realized category. *Theory, culture and society*, 13(3), 19-26.

Grint, K. (2014). The Hedgehog and the Fox: Leadership lessons from D-Day. *Leadership*, 10(2), 240-260.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715014526479>

Grint, K. (2022). Leadership, incrementalism and the repetition of history: A Ukrainian tragedy in four acts. *Leadership*, 18(5), 601-611. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427150221103405>

Haugaard, M. (2012, 2012/04/01). Rethinking the four dimensions of power: domination and empowerment. *Journal of Political Power*, 5(1), 33-54.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2012.660810>

Spoelstra, S. (2022). Leadership and the stings of command. *Ephemera: theory in organization and politics*, 22(1), 155-171.

Thomson, P. (2014). Field. In M. Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: key concepts* (Second ed., pp. 65-80). Routledge.

Wilson, S. (2017). *Thinking differently about leadership: a critical history of leadership studies*. Edward Elgar.

## ISLC 2023 – Paper Abstract Submission

### **Restoring the System of Leadership Beyond Crises through the Quintessence of Military Leadership: The Ethos of Leadership Across Professional Practices**

**Elena P. Antonacopoulou, Katja Einola and Artavia M. Edwards**

*In Professions We Trust*, a report published in 2015 by ResPublica, an independent UK-based think tank (Blond et al., 2015), suggests that the notion of a profession as something which encompasses and adds to the public good is in crisis and that the vital link to public service and the wider common good is at best fragile. In fact, the eroding trust in professions and professionals (bankers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, priests, accountants) due to professional malpractices, at the core of societal, economic, environmental and political crises, is a grand challenge of our times. A key insight is that such challenges cannot be addressed through more regulation using codes of ethical conduct or calls for moral action to underpin professional practice. To combat this crisis of professions and the ensuing malpractice of widespread professional ineptitude, calls apropos for new leadership thinking as a basis for action.

The response so far seems to be focusing on exposing crises so we can distil leadership lessons. Revealing malpractices and misconduct has become the order of the day and yet, there is little sign that lessons are indeed learned, or systemic changes are being brought about. In similar vein, there has been a popularization of values/character-based leadership but again we have limited evidence that this has averted the persistent ineptitude. Does such a model profession of leadership exist? What are we to do ?

-

*Ethos of professionalism as a response to professional ineptitude*

To address these questions we need to rethinking what constitutes the ethos of professionalism. This shifts the focus from specialized knowledge and competence as indicators of professionalism

(Romme, 2016) to professional conduct. Characteristics that create culture and community breeds ethos of professional standards. In the military, conducting one's self in a prescribed manner is not only a matter of behaviors exhibited that may be deemed using any dogmatic framework as a sign of 'good character' (Crossan et al., 2017). It is also a matter of stance. Conduct is such a stance, the active positioning one holds in relation to any given situation. In this respect, professional conduct and the ethos of professionalism is not only character-based. It is a choice founded on reflexivity and practical judgement. Professionalism (or the lack of it) in everyday practice of work is not only demonstrated when addressing tensions and dilemmas. Professionalism is also about averting professional ineptitude. Professional ineptitude (not to be confused with incompetence) is the condition where professionals do not demonstrate their public accountability and responsibility in serving the common good (Antonacopoulou, 2018a). An increasing awareness and exposure of professional ineptitude marks a fundamental opportunity to restore the ethos of professionalism. The latter is no longer a matter of morality

and ethics but a shift towards an axiology that embeds worthiness, dignity and conscience as a critical aspect of leading. A perceptive glance into the military with close scrutiny of the conduct of a military leader exhibits noteworthy characteristics and attributes of the ethos of professionalism. The professional ineptitude of not just about carrying out duties and responsibilities as a military leader could have grave consequences. Military ethos has the requisite capacity to serve as a response to professional ineptitude.

### *Leadership and ethos of professionalism in the military*

The great contemporary leadership challenge (Uhl-Bien, 2021) is not merely recognizing the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) conditions or 'VUCA Primer' as a mode of leading (Johansen, 2012). It is also a call for new modes of learning leadership qualities (Antonacopoulou, 2018b) and rethinking how we understand and work with the fuzzy and increasingly contested notion of leadership. We propose to consider how leadership is embedded and 'put to work' (Smolović Jones et al., 2016) in our times of crises in a profession that has a long history in shaping how we have come to understand leadership. The military presents not only a valuable context but an emplacement of leadership in the way professionalism is conducted through the stance taken and not only decision made. The latter, invites us to delve deeper into what constitutes professionalism in a profession like the military not only when life and death decisions are the order of the day during conflict, but also in everyday life during peace. The Military as a profession with national distinctiveness and a variety of branches not all of which are necessarily aligned offers a valuable profession to explore how the system of leadership can be restored not only because crises are integral to their approach to cultivating and activating leadership. It is also because the very system of leadership in this profession is by no means perfect and has exhibited its own crises e.g. in terms of internal organization that merits examining also how it has sought to address.

Given the rising levels of international tension, challenges and conflicts at a global scale, the role the military plays in today's world is central. Military as an organization both moderates and accelerates the systemic challenges we are facing. Ethical and moral dilemmas abound on how to train for and practice leadership in the everyday work conducted by military professionals. For this, the study of the military is also interesting for informing leadership practice in other professions under mounting scrutiny for more responsible leadership practices.

### *From ineffective prescriptions to facing the challenge of leadership upfront*

To understand leadership anew requires distancing our inquiry from the survey-driven positivist studies, typically detached from everyday life of people, communities and organizations, that are still the mainstream in the field of leadership studies (Wilson, 2016). These studies tend to offer contributions that are incremental add-ons to theories many of which have become highly contested both conceptually and methodologically (Alvesson & Einola; 2022; Carroll et al., 2019; Einola & Alvesson, 2019) and that tend to reify individual leaders' influence on organizational outcomes in commercial firms especially. Imagination, practical wisdom and critical thinking required to produce novel ideas is typically lacking (see for instance Parker, 2019; Tsoukas &

Cummings, 1997) when much time and effort is spent searching for prescriptive solutions based on previous knowledge which may not be relevant, and even less so to help us face challenges in our uncertain and shifting world.

We propose a greater engagement with modes of collaborative inquiry and the reflexive learning that these promote alongside ethnographic and autoethnographic accounts that can help use generate clearer explanations about how conduct is shaped and stance taken (Antonacopoulou et al. 2023). International, interdisciplinary research studying leadership is currently focusing on the lived experiences of leadership when ordinary people do rise to the occasion of leadership and do extraordinary things (Antonacopoulou & Bento, 2003; 2010; 2016; 2018; Chapman & Sisodia, 2015). The system of leadership is emerging as a force of liberating humanity and fostering (re)learning to become human.

We draw on our own lived experiences (autoethnographically, ethnographically in the USA and Norwegian Defence) to explore further the system of leadership and the ways that the ethos of professionalism is cultivated and activated. The military has been covertly evaded as a prescriptive learning model from which to explore as an exemplar of how to rethink leadership. Across branches of the military, the United States (U.S.) military (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force), and the Royal Norwegian Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, Home Guard, Cyber Force) collectively share common threads of core values. The ethos of professionalism shared by these branches of military are essential in providing for good order and discipline, ethics, and esprit de corps (honor, integrity, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, personal courage, excellence, commitment, character, connection to common purpose, devotion to duty, responsibility). Can the model exuded by military leadership be emulated by other professions and professionals?

### *Inculcation of Constituent Characteristics of Military Leadership*

According to former American General, Douglas MacArthur, the hallowed words of “*Duty, honor, country,*” reverently dictate “*what you ought to be, what you can be, and what you will be.*” The underlying respect associated with these hallowed words compels military members adherence to a unified code of ethics. Despite the diversity of functions comprising the various branches of military, their respective codes of ethics exhibit a cohesive unitary bond, which distinguishes them from other professions. The ineffectiveness of these codes is predominantly reliable on the commitment of military members who pledge to live by them. The military profession becomes a successful unitary force by inculcating the codes of ethics, core values, and creed into its military members (Finney & Mayfield, 2018).

Ethical leadership results in beneficial outcomes for everyone (Sosik et al., 2019). When imparting vision, leaders squarely placed ethics as one of the most central traits of leadership (Ciulla, 2005). According to General Charles Summerall, “*Men think as their leaders think,*” (Army Information Digest, 1954, p. 10). Essentially, before men (or women) can be expected to perform their duties under the horrible conditions of battle, they have to be taught what and how to think. Leadership

is essential and requires work on the minds and bodies of military members. Simply put, leadership matters (Akbari et al., 2017).

The bond of leadership between military members is sealed at the outset by oath to country. Codes of conduct, ethics, values, standards, attributes, and skills characterizes the military profession. The duties of the members of this profession are so important that they have to swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution, and to be held accountable when they vow to protect and serve the citizenry of their country (Taylor et al., 2009). The oath sworn by these members includes a solemn promise to obey the orders of those appointed over them (Taylor et al, 2009). The military leaders appointed over military service members must have good leadership. Close perusal of the hallowed reverence of the meaning of the words a military oath sheds light on how the act of obeisance to an oath immediately invokes commitment to integrity and selfless service. The ethos of leadership across professional practices can be restored if a similar commitment by non-military members to a cause greater than themselves were made.

We propose future studies of leadership practice(s) through a lens of professional ethos in the military profession for two reasons: 1) to adopt a deeply contextualized and practice-based approach to tackling contemporary grand challenges, and 2) to address more broadly the state of professions and professionals through the lens of ineptitude pertaining to choices, judgements and stance taking individual professionals are called to make it in the practice of their daily work.

For a continued functioning of our democratic societies, it is important for professions and professionals to reclaim their legitimacy in society as they are required to realize their *impact* to serve the common good. Even though impact can vary across professions, a search for a renewed legitimacy presents a leadership challenge common across the professions, because it seeks to question the very foundations of what being a professional implies and why leadership is integral to professionalism.

## References

- Akbari, M., Amiri, N.S., Imani, S., Rezaeei, N., & Foroudi, P. (2017). Why leadership style matters: A closer look at transformational leadership and internal marketing. *The Bottom Line*, 30(4), 258-278. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BL-08-2017-0021>.
- Alvesson, M., & Einola, K. (2022). The gaslighting of authentic leadership 2.0. *Leadership*, 18(6), 814-831.
- Antonacopoulou, E.P. (2018a). Sensuous Learning: What is it and Why it Matters in addressing the Ineptitude in Professional Practice. In E.P. Antonacopoulou and S.S. Taylor, (Eds) *Sensuous Learning for Practical Judgment in Professional Practice: Volume 1: Arts-based Methods*. (pp. 13-43) London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Antonacopoulou EP (2018b) Organisational Learning for and with VUCA: Learning Leadership Revisited. *Teoria e Prática em Administração* (Theory and Practice Management Journal) Special Issue. 8(2): 10-32.

Antonacopoulou EP and Bento R. (2003) Methods of learning leadership: Taught and experiential. In: Storey J (ed) *Leadership in organizations: Current Issues and Key Trends*. London: Routledge, pp. 81-103.

Antonacopoulou, E.P. and Bento, R. (2010). Learning leadership in practice. In Storey, J. (Ed) *Leadership in Organizations: Current Issues and Key Trends*, 2nd Edition, (pp. 81-102). London: Routledge.

Antonacopoulou, E.P. and Bento, R. (2016). Learning leadership: A call to beauty. In Storey, J. (Ed) *Leadership in Organizations: Current Issues and Key Trends*. 3rd Edition, (pp. 99-112). London: Routledge.

Antonacopoulou, E.P. and Bento, R. (2018) From Laurels to Learning: Leadership with Virtue, *Journal of Management Development*, Special Issue. 37(8): 624-633.

Antonacopoulou, E.P., Bento, R., Edwards, G., Grigg, C. Hawkins, B., Moldjord, C., Sklavenyti, C., Soh, W.G. and Stokkeland, C. (2023) Collaborative Inquiry through Reflexive Management Learning: Changing Change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. Special Issue Collaborative Inquiry. 59(4): 541-555

Army Information Digest (1954). Department of the Army. Index to Volume 9, January - December 1954.

Blond, P., Antonacopoulou, E.P. and Pabst, A. (2015). *In Professions We Trust: Fostering Virtuous Practitioners in Teaching, Law and Medicine*. ResPublica Report. <http://www.respublica.org.uk.ezproxy.liv.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/In-Professions-We-Trust.pdf>

Carroll, B., Firth, J. and Wilson, S. (2019). *After Leadership*. New York: Routledge.

Chapman, B. and Sisodia, R. (2015). *Everybody Matters. The Extraordinary power of caring for you people like family*. New York: Portfolio Penguin.

Ciulla, J. B. (2005). The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 14(4), 343-335.

Crossan MM, Byrne A, Seijts GH, Reno M, Monzani L and Gandz J (2017) Toward a framework of leader character in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*. 57(1): 986-1018

Einola, K., & Alvesson, M. (2021). Behind the numbers: questioning questionnaires. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30(1), 102-114.

Finney, N., and Mayfield, T. (2018). *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession of Ethics*. eBook. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press.

Johansen, B. (2012). *Leaders Make the Future: The New Leadership Skills*. Berrett-Koehler: SF California

Parker, M. (2019). Can We Be Done with Leadership? In Carroll, B., Firth, J. and Wilson, S. (Eds). *After Leadership*. New York: Routledge.

Romme, G. (2016). *The Quest for Professionalism: The Case of Management and Entrepreneurship*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.



Sosik, J. J., Chun, J. U., Ete, Z., Arenas, F. J., & Scherer, J. A. (2019). Self-control puts character into action: Examining how leader character strengths and ethical leadership relate to leader outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 160(3), 765-781

Tsoukas, H., & Cummings, S. (1997). Marginalization and recovery: The emergence of Aristotelian themes in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 18(4), 655-683.

Uhl-Bien, M. (2021). Complexity and COVID-19: Leadership and followership in a complex world. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58(5), 1400-1404.

Wilson, S. (2016). *Thinking differently about leadership: A critical history of leadership studies*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

# **Commanding and Caring during a Crisis – Navigating the System. A Sociomaterial Exploration of the Leadership of Emergency Services in the UK during the Covid Pandemic.**

**Professor Gareth Edwards**

**Professor Doris Schedlitzki**

**Professor Paresh Wankhade**

**Professor Hugo Gaggiotti**

**Dr Kay Galpin**

**University of the West of  
England**

**London Metropolitan  
University**

**Edge Hill University**

During the Covid pandemic, emergency services were faced with an unprecedented leadership challenge – to mobilise resources to deliver emergency care in uncertain, chaotic and dangerous circumstances. Leadership in the UK Ambulance Service was tasked with delivering through its established Command and Control structure but also to maintain care and compassion for both its patients and its employees. Our paper will therefore investigate this tension through an analysis of data gathered during Covid Pandemic. We use notions such as Compassionate Leadership (Bailey and West, 2021) and Caring Leadership (Gabriel, 2015; Tomkins, 2023) to make sense of the data but also provide a nuanced view of these concepts by using a sociomaterial lens through which to reflect upon ideas around compassion and caring in leadership. Compassionate Leadership is defined by Bailey and West (2021) from the perspective of the leader as being present with others, taking time to listen and to understand situations others are struggling with, mirroring and feeling colleagues' distress and helping by taking thoughtful and intelligent action. In a recent review of the caring leadership literature Tomkins (2023) takes a broader view of caring leadership, acknowledging that a more relational approach to caring leadership and a focus on the particular, rather than the general, can illuminate fundamental power imbalances and a presumption of leaders as care givers and followers as care receivers.

Set against the context of a global pandemic, we examine the dialectical (Collinson, 2005) nature of over and under caring, particularly in the context of navigating and self organising caring leadership practices. This echoes Gabriel (2015) who suggests that through an ethics of care, the onus is on the leaders to demonstrate to followers that they care. However, this is not straightforward, Tomkins (2020) cautions that even if we do care we may not seem to care enough. A notion of mutual caring (Sanfuentes, Valenzuela and Castillo 2021) has also been positioned as a result of leaders relinquishing their 'leadership' and a consequence of self

organisation – does this invite a more dynamic, critical appreciation of caring leader and follower relations?

We examine leadership practices 'behind the curtains' through the examination of empirical material generated by over 30 interviews conducted from October 2020 to May 2021 in the Emergency NHS Ambulance Service. Our findings demonstrate that Command and Control can also be driven by a desire to care. In our research, the purpose and desire of leaders and others to care was evident, however, exactly how leaders and other actants navigated the Command and Control system to care for each other was not obvious and not always successful. This offers an interesting nuance to the debate about the need for shared or distributed leadership to be developed to reduce perceived hierarchy and amongst other benefits, to develop leadership caring (Wankhade and Murphy, 2023).

Leadership caring involves a dynamic and shifting relationship that has been described as constructed through narratives (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012). We therefore use sociomateriality (see Hawkins, 2015) as a lens for these narratives and to view the presence or absence of key objects as a manifestation of care. Initial findings suggest that care emerged through both the Command and Control system as well as through more distributed leaderly practices, but was at times both in contradiction and mutually supportive. Perhaps unsurprisingly PPE was a contested object of care – positioned by the Command and Control system through a narrative of 'we never ran out' and countered by alternative narratives that consider truth and lies as moral injury, safety provided and also relinquished for the caring needs of others and as an indicator of the complexity of guidance in national and local contexts. Systemic approaches to caring were deeply engrained into leaders' practices and the need to be present for people was manifested through material means via both technological and physical methods such as leaving mobile phones on, writing letters, making videos, providing information and being physically present at different locations and available by working long hours. The command and control system facilitated the delivery of other technical objects of care such as statistics / data, staff surveys and online support rooms. These were however acknowledged to be both supportive and also lacking from both leaders and other actants' perspectives, and both the virtual and physical caring space was filled by self organised approaches such as informal online drop-in sessions and groups, use of physical spaces walking / welfare rooms, gifts, provision of food and cleaning services for ambulances. This informal material organising also crossed work / home boundaries involving family members and to extended work community members. The material provision of both system based and self organised caring objects were also at times dialectical, providing care at the expense of self-care.

These findings have important implications for the management of materiality as well as the complex relations in extreme contexts. This extends knowledge on leading with care, as a collective, relational and material process, where care can be enabled to emerge or be constrained by a wider system and where practices must navigate both human and non-human networks.

(842 words)

## References

Bailey, S. and West M. (2021) What is Compassionate Leadership ? The Kings Fund [What is compassionate leadership? | The King's Fund \(kingsfund.org.uk\)](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/what-is-compassionate-leadership/)(accessed May 2023).

Collinson, D., 2005. Dialectics of leadership. *Human Relations*, 58(11), 1419-1442. Gabriel (2015) The Caring Leader: What followers expect of their leaders and why? *Leadership* 11 (3).

Hawkins, B., 2015. Ship-shape: materializing leadership in the British Royal Navy. *Human Relations*, 68(6), 951-971.

Lawrence, T. B., & Maitlis, S. (2012). Care and possibility: Enacting an ethic of care through narrative practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(4), 641–663

Sanfuentes, M., Valenzuela, F., Castillo, A. (2021) What lies beneath resilience: Analyzing the affective-relational basis of shared leadership in the Chilean miners' catastrophe *Leadership* 17(3) 255–277

Tomkins, L. (2020) *Paradox and Power in Caring Leadership: Critical and Philosophical Reflections*. Cheltenham. Edward Elgar.

Tomkins, L. (2023) *Care and Caring Leadership: Positive Attractions and Critical Asymmetries* in Schedlitzki, D., Larsson, M., Carrol, B., Bligh, C. and Epitropahi, O. (Eds) (2023) *The Sage Handbook of Leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Sage.

Wankhade, P. and Murphy, P. (2023) *Emergency Services Management. A Research Overview*. (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.) London. Routledge.

## **The Second Coming of the Entrepreneur as Saviour**

Bent Meier Sørensen and Sverre Spoelstra

Walter Isaacson's recently published biography of Elon Musk tells the familiar story of an extraordinary entrepreneur bordering on genius, who has succeeded, and is still succeeding, in making the impossible possible, for instance by enabling the transition to electric vehicles and by sending rockets into orbit. On Isaacson's account, he does this through improbable business visions that aim for much higher prospects, such as a multi-planetary civilization. For Musk, business always plays second fiddle to big dreams for the future of humanity. His success would stem from an engineering mindset that is obsessed with the smallest details in the production process, in combination with wild fantasies that derive from his childhood fascination with the skewed science-fiction vision of Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979). But the biography also tells the story of a 'man-child', as Isaacson puts it, who is haunted by a violent childhood and an estranged father, and who suffers from a lack of empathy, tormenting himself and his environment with 'demonic' mood swings. Isaacson concludes by asking whether this dark side is needed if one is to reshape the realm of the possible and become a ground-breaking entrepreneur. His suggested answer is 'yes'.

The story that Isaacson tells about Musk is familiar, all too familiar perhaps. It reminds us of the image of the entrepreneur as savior. Entrepreneurship studies has constructed a narrative around the entrepreneur that bears a deep resemblance to the way the creator operates in early Semitic and, later, Christian mythology. This portrayal was the dominant conception of entrepreneurship until the early 2000s. Since then, the field of entrepreneurship studies has tried to reinvent itself by moving into a different direction, distancing itself from certain associations and proposing less individualistic, less gender biased and greener concepts of the entrepreneur instead. That it has been at least partially successful in this regard, is witnessed by the fact that we have heard much fewer saviour-like stories about the entrepreneur in recent years.

What is particularly surprising in Isaacson's biography is not just the entrepreneur-as-savior storyline itself, but the fact that we once again find this narrative atop the bestsellers' list. In our paper, we contend that Musk's story doesn't stand in isolation; the entrepreneur as a savior is experiencing a revival, a second coming. The context of this coming of a strongly acting individual is a broadly held perception of general lack of action. In terms of our actual conditions, such as the climate crisis, both the collective and the individual, are characterized by an inability to act. In Hannah Arendt's words: "It is quite conceivable that the modern age—which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity—may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known."

It is this tension between the collective inability to act and the gifted, individual entrepreneur's ability to act that this paper explores.