

Going On

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"Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction." (Bakhtin, 110)

Antony Gormley's sculpture *Drift II*, 2007, resembles a 3D maquette of a cell system one would see in a biology text, but blown up to a very large proportion. The intricacy of these cells, despite simple repetitive polymer designs, evokes the conglomerates of neural pathways or fractals. These naturally occurring networks are complex, yet Gormley's technique of representation successfully maps order within what appears to be chaos. Similarly, the Node Modality Project investigates the migration of knowledge and represents its rhizomatic dissemination. This is not a linear exchange; knowledge is represented as a network, with many different potential pathways and splits. Ryerson University students participating in the Node Modality Project exemplify how information is not fixed through the diversity of their responses. The project inquires into students' conception of 'leadership' by asking two questions: 'Define leadership as a role,' and 'Define leadership as a relationship.' The written responses were then charted to represent text as a node modality network. This "... offers many possibilities for interpretation and reading, which would normally be suppressed by the dominant narrative." (Dop, 10)

The Node Modality Project is an exploration into rather than an explanation of leadership, investigating concepts "... instead of trying to 'represent' something or someone; [this] conversation is a trace of becoming, [...] a polygon, a shape with multiple sides, which breaks the circle. [It is] an interconnected rhizomatic structure, which opens up to multiple propositions." (Paranyushkin, "Text Network Analysis") What is charted is the migration of knowledge, or the "... distance between the possible meaning and various ways of making sense exemplified in the image of a network. The diagram acts as a dysfunctional interface, which compresses the time into one moment, opening it up for multiple interpretations." (Paranyushkin, "Text Network Analysis") The network is composed of nodes and lines of varying size and thickness. The thicker the line, the stronger the connection between terms; likewise the larger the node, the more important it is. To have high levels of between centrality refers to "... the innovative potentiality of the words, [it is] not necessarily the actual connections that are made, but the possible ones, [not] constructing a building so much as having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible

buildings.” (Wittgenstein, 24) Nodes with high levels of 'between centrality' are represented as important, therefore larger, because they act as linchpins through which knowledge can spread more easily within the network. The propensity for meaning to evolve is not an isolated process, it requires community and dialog; linchpins are bridges of potentiality, creating opportunity for ideas to migrate between connecting nodes.

Mikhail Bakhtin suggests "... that [a] dialogic truth has a twofold nature; the nature of truth itself (the 'object' in itself), and the nature of thinking about truth (the subject's relation to the 'object' or the 'object' for-itself)." (Dop, 14) The intention of this paper aligns with a point made by Bakhtin "... that the proper understanding of an object, or a concept such as truth, lies in the necessary determinate relationship between the particular and the universal." (Dop, 14) The universal notions of leadership are those definitions collectively agreed upon and generally held to be true. Frequently occurring associations in the network include the largest nodes 'role' and 'relationship'; this is due to students responding to questions that prescribe leadership as such. However, beyond the themes that leading questions create, there are a variety of commonly agreed upon universals which come through the network. That said, of specific interest is the peripheral or the particular; what can be said about leadership that is not commonly associated with the term. The reason for this interest in the particular is that it opens up room for innovative thought so that one can apply concepts in a different way. It is the interplay between the particular and the universal that opens up the dialog. "Indeed, to the extent that our 'inner' lives are not a matter of tranquil, private calculation within already decided systems of meanings, but reflect in their functioning the same ethico-political and rhetorical considerations as those influencing our transactions with others out in the world, they too are not exempt from the same conflicts and struggles. (Shotter, *"Now I Can Go On"*)

The potential for language to embody opposites and multiplicities enables it to subvert the dominant narrative."Early Platonic-Socratic dialogues, according to Bakhtin, showed that there was a 'folk carnivalistic base' to the dialogic thinking about truth- that is, the dialogue did not abstract away the 'primary realities' of 'my word' and the 'other's word'." (Dop, 7) Viewing the network map reveals that some interesting clusters of meaning are formed. Already mentioned was the term 'role'; this cluster has many particular terms. Some of these include 'take' and 'support', seemingly dissonant linchpins within one cluster of meaning. The ability for opposites to be true at once is embodied in the Greek term *pharmakon*. This *pharmakon* is a gift from the god of writing, Theuth, as the myth goes,

Has much in common with [...] the Egyptian god Thoth [who] often calls himself the son of the sun god, Ammon-Ra: [...] 'the hidden'. The hidden sun, the father of all [who]

allows himself to be represented by Thoth. Thoth speaks in the name of Ammon-Ra. Thoth is the language through which Ammon-Ra enters the human world. [...] He is different than the sun and the same as the sun [...] He is at once the father, the father's other, and the subversive movement of replacement.

This complex god, this "...messenger-god, this god of non-identity, this supplement, is a god of the absolute and continuous passage between opposites." (Cobussen, "Plato's Supplements") The concept of *pharmakon* can be a powerful metaphor of the complex processes of flux which take place at the particular/universal levels of meaning. It is opposites true at once, when Theuth "... offers writing as a *pharmakon* to King Thamus of Egypt. It is a recipe for both memory and wisdom..." (Cobussen, "Plato's Supplements"), at once both poison and cure.

Edward Said's idea of splitting or differentiating from the dominant narrative as an act of necessary autonomy and self preservation parallels student's contribution to the inquiry of 'What is leadership'. It is "... not merely a fractious collection of sovereign cultural identities, but disperses sovereignty, nationalism and individualism alike into new forms of social and political co-existence." (Butler, "I Merely Belong to Them") Ryerson University students involved in the leadership program come from a wide range of backgrounds. The fact that all contributors chose to be involved and are interested in leadership constitutes commonality, yet the very nature of the Node Modality Project creates opportunity for dissonant ideas to intersect. Judith Butler discusses Edward Said's book *Freud and the Non-European*, in which he suggests "Jews and Palestinians might find commonality in their shared history of exile and dispossession, and that diaspora could become the basis of a common polity in the Middle East. Said sees the basis of solidarity, in part, as the 'irremediably diasporic, unhoused character of Jewish life', which aligns it 'in our age of vast population transfers' with 'refugees, exiles, expatriates and immigrants.'" (Butler, "I Merely Belong to Them") It goes without saying that Butler's example picks two cultures more often associated with difference than commonality. However the point made is linked to the concept of hybridity; a metaphor can be drawn that there is opportunity in migration, meaning can move. It is this dialogic with the particular and the universal that informs the written responses. In network theory, this is necessary in order to keep the system healthy and to avoid stagnation. A community that is too closed or too defined entropies; a "... community that becomes a single thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader...) ...necessarily loses the *in* of being-in-common... The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in the retreat of such a being." (Lacoue-Labarthe, 53)

Language is in fluctuation; it both shapes and is shaped by worldviews. Take for instance the word 'revolution' which used to connote the past but has evolved to have connotations about the future. As Göran Therborn puts it "... as a pre-modern concept it pointed backwards, 'rolling back,'

or to recurrent cyclical motions, as in Copernicus's *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, or in the French Enlightenment *Encyclopédie*, in which the main entry refers to clocks and clockmaking. Only after 1789 did 'revolution' become a door to the future." (Obrist, "Manifestos for the Future") The word 'revolution' indicates a change in worldviews, from a conception of time as cyclical to teleological. Linearity and following a line to a defined point is counterintuitive to the rhizomatic approach of the Node Modality Project. It is inevitable that the splitting of meaning will occur as language is adapted and shared. Language has the capacity to embody endless opposites and multiplicities; in this respect it has great potential to subvert the dominant narrative. "The goal of a human community should be neither silent submission nor chaotic cacophony, but the striving for that infinitely more difficult state: 'agreement': the Russian word is *soglasie*, which means etymologically 'co-voicing'. Intersubjectivity is not reducible to subjectivity any more than to pseudo-objectivity." (Dop, 17) The efficacy of individual voice in this collective conversation is successful due to the flexibility of intention created by a network of meaning, rather than a fixed definition.

Leadership is a pregnant term; the possibilities of applications are endless. In participating with the conversation of 'How is leadership like a role and a relationship?' Ryerson students co-inform each other in a dialogic conversation. Conversations are constantly innovative, opening up peripheral dialogues and associations between ideas that can lead to creative applications/embodiments of said idea. "For, if we study our use of our words with the task in mind of describing the different possibilities they create for how one might 'go on' with the others around us in the circumstances of their use - then we can begin to see how, in practice, we might create with them new ways of 'going on'. For instance, by talking about understanding as not being a process inside the head of an individual, but as a practical social phenomenon, between people, to do with them knowing how 'to go on' with each other, we can create a new form of understanding between us, in practice." (Shotter, "*Now I Can Go On*")

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