Chapter 14 Boje Story of Fox and Transactional Leadership Behavior

This will be a theory of leadership that is not about traits or lists of behaviors, it is about being who we need to be in the situation. The elements of theatre can come together in many ways. There can be an unfolding of plot that draws in characters, scripting their lines and spectacle-scenes. Or, the spectators and actors can migrate and wander from stage to stage, change their character masks as they go (See Tamara, Boje, 1995).

Narrative: I am walking about 5AM from Southwark (London) into a nature preserve, called ‘One Tree Hill.’ Queen Elizabeth I, on May 1st, 1602 she picnicked by this ‘Oak of Honor.’

David: “This is amazing” as I follow a deer trail through dense trees, bushes, and briar. I come across a homeless person’s abandoned shelter (bedding is tossed into the brush). It uses architecture of a long hut or teepee I had seen on exhibit in Yakima Indian Reservation (Washington State). Amazing that homeless people would put their sticks together and weave in vines as a covering. There is a welcome mat in front of the entrance. I keep walking, find a clearing beneath a maple tree.

SCENE 2: THE CLIMAX – Boje Meets Fox in Forest
David: (I set up a medicine wheel with 7 directions around the Maple Tree. I do my Eagle’s Breath meditation and for 1st time in my life do a audible chant, with some of the Jain mantras):
Om namo arihantanam (I bow to souls who conquer their inner enemies) FYI: My Jain name is Arihanta (means conqueror of inner enemies and that I have no enemies, everyone is my friend).

Om namo siddahanam (I bow to souls who reach perfection)
Om namo ayariyanam (I bow to souls who practice before preaching/teaching)

[I hear a sound crashing through the brush and trees just to the north of the clearing. I keep chanting, but with eyes vigilant, sweeping the perimeter]

Fox: [I expect a homeless man to appear, but instead it’s a fox] It’s a red fox with several shades of browns, and a long tail (as long as his body) is circling.

David: I keep up the breathing rhythm and the meditative chant:

Om namo uvajjahyanam (I bow to souls who experienced the Truth, the teachers of mankind)

Fox: (Fox moves closer, in a spiraling circle around the tree, coming in closer to where David is sitting)

David: [Fox reacted when I startled and my breath and sound rhythm shifted from calm to fear]

Fox: (Fox moves away, spiraling circle, still counter-clock wise, closer to the forest tree line)

David: [I regain my calm and continue a gentle, steady breathing, and chant]

Namo loe savva sahunam (I bow to all the saints everywhere who walk the spiritual path of awareness)
NOTE: I rather like this part, as it intersects my Catholic, Jain, and native spiritual training and beliefs)

Fox: (Fox feels David’s calmer energy of gentleness, and reverses the exit, now spiraling back in closer and closer to where David is seated beneath the Maple Tree)

David and the Red Fox continue their interaction for about 10 more minutes. David keeps up his chanting and breathing, noticing that, as he is calm the fox comes in closer. Whenever he starts to fear or breaks his rhythm, the fox spirals away.

SCENE 3: Workshop in Lincoln, England (University of Lincoln)

Narrative: David decided to incorporate the lesson of the Red Fox into his medicine wheel ceremony. David has prepared a medicine wheel and invited faculty and students to sit in it, be observers on the outside, or just skip it and not attend (their choice).

David: (telling them story of the Red Fox). “I learned from this spiritual animal, that if I am calm and centered, my audience will sense that energy, and approach me in a trusting manner.

Professor from Lincoln: “What do you mean:

David: “If I am settled and calm, the fox approaches. If I make a sudden shift in my breathing, the fox retreats. It is an insight in how I can be with people, in a state of gentleness.”

THREE APPLICATIONS OF STORY TO BEHAVIOR SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

1. In chapter 4 (p. 1), the behavior school is about transactions. Boje and the Fox are having a series of behavior transactions. As Boje manages his breath and chant
behaviors, expressing calm and gentleness, then the fox approaches. When he breaks that rhythm, the story illustrates the transaction shifts, and the parties move further (physically & emotionally) apart.

2. Chapter 4 (p. 4) also stresses that leaders use behaviors to transform. Boje is transforming his teaching (& workshop) behavior, going for a different kind of interaction pattern. He is changing the game played between teacher and audience.

3. Energeia & Directions. Boje’s version of the Medicine Wheel is a ritual, an ancient meditation on the 7 energeias and the 7 directions. He has set out the seven directions using sticks and stones to mark the directions. He has meditated on the 7 energeias, paying particular attention to the northwest, which combines north (air) with west (fire) energies. This combination is, for Boje (not for everyone or every tribe), the heart charka. A charka is a whirl of energy in the body, in relationship to the world we are in (be it physical, and/or spiritual world). According to this philosophy, which is as old as humanity, a leader who manages their heart charka energy can affect changes in their own behavior.