

## The leader's two bodies: The construction of post-mortem charismatic authority in organizations

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What happens when a leader dies? For followers the physical, embodied presence of a leader can provide a form of protection from their own existential fears (Becker 1973; Gemmill and Oakley 1992; Kelly 2008; Grint 2010; Harding et al. 2011). Leaders who are seen as charismatic are especially valued for their ability to assuage such anxieties through the construction of a belief system that constitutes a metaphysical basis to their physical presence and embodied authority (Beyer 1999; Weber 1978). Yet leaders are physically mortal; they can therefore only ever be a temporary material presence.

Some leaders may be subject to a process of post-mortem charismatization (Bryman 1992). We argue here that corporations can actively pursue this form of leadership presence if there are structures in place on death to suggest that the leader has two bodies. It is in the corporate interest to retain embodied charismatic authority through routinization, transforming the authority into a traditional hierarchy or a bureaucratic hierarchy (Weber 1978). The routinization of charismatic belief may also involve its incorporation into organizational culture, as followers maintain authority through depersonalization and rationalization (Beyer 1999; Goss and Klass 2005). Such routinization, we argue, involves the second of the leader's bodies, the 'immaterial and immortal body politic', which is constructed as absorbing the leader's 'material and mortal body natural' (Kantorowicz, 1997: 20-21).

Our argument draws on a classic study of medieval political theology, *The King's Two Bodies* (1957). Ernst Kantorowicz explored the medieval understanding of monarchy as simultaneously embodied and mystical, to understand the notion of the 'two-bodied monarch' and its meaning. The material, manifest in embodied experiences of leadership and followership, is complemented by the symbolic, manifest in the body of discourse that shapes meaning and action. The physical body of the leader is natural, thus corruptible and impermanent, whereas the corporate body is in principle immortal and everlasting. These two bodies, in Kanotorowicz's account, have a perfect union but very distinct capacities, most visible when they are separated by death. Importantly, both bodies are implicated in the social construction of power relations. As Kantorowicz emphasises, there is significant tension between the 'real' physical and the 'invented' social, often shown in the contestation of meaning across the two upon the natural physical death of a leader. In particular, the physical presence or legacy of an individual can diminish or disappear, while the abstract presence in the body politic or corporate is much more difficult to dismantle.

Empirically, we focus on the revelatory case of former Apple Inc. CEO, Steve Jobs, who died in 2011 aged 56. During his life, Jobs was widely regarded as charismatic as a consequence of his attempts to shape meaning and influence followers through rhetoric (Conger 1991; Harvey 2001; Heracleos and Klaering 2014), narrative or myth-making (Ganzin et al. 2014) and ritualised, embodied performativity (Sharma and Grant 2011). Being seen as charismatic was a designation that Jobs himself was active in constructing (Ganzin et al. 2014). Jobs' physical death was followed by widespread mourning. Some of this was public and vernacular, seen in the construction of temporary shrines outside Apple retail stores across the world. Other mourning was semi-private and corporate-sponsored, seen in ceremonies

and on corporate controlled online spaces. These parallel processes, we argue, illustrate the corporate social construction of a second leaderly body with a view to smoothly maintaining the operation and ownership of the organization Jobs co-founded, minimising the possibility that the organization might also expire. Our analysis concludes by noting that corporate control of post-mortem charismatization is central to the maintenance of a leader's authority, and that vernacular expressions of grief will be only briefly tolerated.

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