

# LEADERSHIP ETHICS: MAPPING THE TERRITORY

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*Abstract:* In this paper I argue that a greater understanding of the part of ethics in leadership will improve leadership studies. Debates over the definition of leadership are really debates over what researchers think constitutes good leadership. The ultimate question is not "What is leadership?" but "What is good leadership?" The word *good* is refers to both ethics and competence. Research into leadership ethics would explore the ethical issues of current leadership research, serve as a critical study of the field, analyze and expand normative theories of leadership, and develop new theories, research questions and ways of thinking about leadership.

**W**e live in a world where leaders are often morally disappointing. Even the greats of the past, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and George Washington are diminished by probing biographers who document their ethical shortcomings. It's hard to have heroes in a world where every wart and wrinkle of a person's life is public. Ironically, the increase in information that we have about leaders has increased the confusion over the ethics of leadership. The more defective our leaders are, the greater our longing to have highly ethical leaders. The ethical issues of leadership are found not only in public debates, but they lie embedded below the surface of the existing leadership literature.

Most scholars and practitioners who write about leadership genuflect at the altar of ethics and speak with hushed reverence about the its importance to leadership. Somewhere in almost any book devoted to the subject, there are either a few sentences, paragraphs, pages, or even a chapter on how integrity and strong ethical values are crucial to leadership. Yet, given the central role of ethics in the practice of leadership, it's remarkable that there has been little in the way of sustained and systematic treatment of the subject by scholars. A literature search of 1800 article abstracts from psychology, business, religion, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and political science, yielded only a handful of articles that offered any in depth discussion of ethics and leadership.<sup>1</sup> Articles on ethics and leadership are either about a particular kind of leadership, (i.e. business leadership or political leadership), or a particular problem or aspect of leadership, or they are laudatory articles about the importance of honesty and integrity in leadership. There are also a number of studies that measure the moral development of managers.<sup>2</sup> The state of research on leadership ethics is similar to the state of business ethics 20 years ago. For the most part, the discussion of ethics in the leadership literature is fragmented, there is little reference to other works on the subject and one gets the sense that most authors write as if they are starting from scratch.

In this paper I map the place of ethics in the study of leadership. I argue that ethics is located in the heart of leadership studies and not in an appendage. This paper consists of three parts. The first part discusses the treatment of ethics within existing research in leadership studies. In the second part of the paper I look at some discussions concerning the definition of leadership and locate the place of ethics in those discussions. In the third part of the paper I examine two normative leadership theories and use them to illustrate how more rigorous work in the area of leadership ethics will give us a more complete understanding of leadership itself.

Throughout the paper I will use the term *leadership ethics* to refer to the study of the ethical issues related to leadership and the ethics of leadership. The study of ethics generally consists of the examination of right, wrong, good, evil, virtue, duty, obligation, rights, justice, fairness, etc. in human relationships with each other and other living things. Leadership studies, either directly or indirectly, tries to understand what leadership is and how and why the leader/follower relationship works (i.e. What is a leader and what does it mean to exercise leadership?, How do leaders lead?, What do leaders do? and Why do people follow?).<sup>3</sup> Since leadership entails very distinctive kinds of human relationships with distinctive sets of moral problems, I thought it appropriate to refer to the subject as *leadership ethics*; however, my main reason for using the term is that it is less awkward than using expressions like *leadership and ethics*.

### *Part I: Treatment of Ethics in Leadership Studies*

#### *Ethics Without Effort*

Ethics is one of those subjects that people rightfully feel they know about from experience. Most people think of ethics as practical knowledge, not theoretical knowledge. One problem that exists in applied ethics is that scholars sometimes feel their practical knowledge and common sense (and exemplary moral character) are adequate for discussion of ethics in their particular field. The results of research that uses this approach are sometimes good, sometimes awful, but most of the time just not very informative. Philosophic writings on ethics are frequently (and understandably) ignored or rejected because they appear obtuse and irrelevant to people writing about ethics in their own area of research or practice.<sup>4</sup>

What is striking about leadership studies is not the absence of philosophic writings on ethics, but the fact that authors expend so little energy on researching ethics from any discipline. To some extent this is even true of Joseph Rost's book, *Leadership in the Twenty-First Century*, which contains one of the best critiques of the field of leadership studies. I will frequently comment on Rost's book in this paper because it is an important new contribution to the field. It is extensively researched and contains a terrific 24-page bibliography. However, the chapter on ethics stands out because of its paucity of references. After a very quick run through utilitarian, deontic, relativistic and contractarian ethics, Rost concludes that "None of the ethical systems is particularly valuable in helping leaders and followers make decisions about the ethics of the changes they intend for an organization or society."<sup>5</sup> He condemns all ethical theories as useless,

using only two books, James Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* and Mark Pastin's book *The Hard Problems of Management*.<sup>6,7</sup>

Scholars who either reject or ignore writings on ethics, usually end up either reinventing fairly standard philosophic distinctions and ethical theories, or doing without them and proceeding higgledy-piggledy with their discussion. Rost concludes his chapter on ethics saying "Clearly, the systems of ethical thought people have used in the past and that are still in use are inadequate to the task of making moral judgments about the content of leadership."<sup>8</sup> Citing the work of Robert Bellah, et. al., William Sullivan and Alasdair MacIntyre, Rost proposes "a new language of civic virtue to discuss and make moral evaluations of the changes they [leaders] intend."<sup>9</sup> After dismissing ethical theory, he goes on to say that out of this new language there will "evolve a new ethical framework of leadership content, a system of ethical thought applied to the content of leadership, that actually works."<sup>10</sup> Rost does not really tell us what will take the place of all the theories that he has dismissed, but rather he assures us that a new system of ethics will emerge. At least Rost pays some attention to the literature in ethics; however, he spends most of his time throwing it out and then runs out of steam when it comes to offering anything concrete in regard to leadership, except for some form of communitarianism.

Another more significant example of the paucity of research energy expended on ethics is *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership*, hailed by reviewers as "the most complete work on leadership" and "encyclopedic."<sup>11</sup> This is considered *the* source book on the study of leadership. The text is 914 pages long and contains a 162 page bibliography. There are 37 chapters in this book, none of which treat the question of ethics in leadership. If you look ethics up in the index, five pages are listed. Page 569 contains a brief discussion of different work ethics, page 723 is a reference to the gender differences in values, and page 831 refers to a question raised about whether sensitivity training is unethical. The reader has to get to a sub-section in the last chapter of the book called, "Leadership in the Twenty-First Century" before there is a two page exposition on ethics. What we are treated to on the first page of the handbook is a meager grab-bag of empirical studies and one fleeting reference to the James MacGregor Burns' argument that transformational leaders foster moral virtue.<sup>12</sup>

The empirical studies include a 1988 Harris poll of 1031 office workers that revealed 89 percent of employees thought it was important for managers to be honest upright etc.; J. Weber's study of 37 managers that lead to the conclusion that managers reasoned to conform to majority opinion rather than universal rules;<sup>13</sup> and Kuhnert & Lewis' discussion of how transformational leaders develop and move up Kohlberg's scale from concern for personal goals to higher levels of values and obligations.<sup>14</sup> Final references are to a study of seven mainland Chinese factories, hospitals and agencies, which included among many other questions, survey questions on the character function of leadership and moral character.<sup>15</sup> The last part of this subsection on ethics contains a paragraph on how professional associations such as the American Psychological Association set standards of ethical behavior.

The second section on ethics, "A Model for Ethical Analysis," sounds more promising. Bass, the author, defines ethics as a "creative searching for human fulfillment and choosing it as good and beautiful." He goes on to argue that professional ethics focuses too much on negative vices and not on the good things. Bass' definition of ethics and sole reference on ethics in this section is taken from *The Paradox of Poverty: A Reprisal of Economic Development Policy* by P. Steidlmeier.<sup>16</sup> The model for ethical analysis that it suggests is one that "determines the connection between moral reasoning and moral behavior and how each depends on the issue involved."<sup>17</sup> After reading these two pages one gets little information about the area of ethics and leadership.<sup>18</sup> What is most remarkable about this section of the book is that it offers little insight into what the questions are in this area. It is not surprising that the standard reference work on leadership does not carry much information on ethics, in part because there isn't much research on it.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, for all of the research that went into this book, Bass seems to wing it when it comes to talking about ethics.

### *Leadership and the Rosetta Stone*

As Rost points out in his book, one of the problems with leadership studies is that most of the work has been done from one discipline and a large part of the research rests on what he calls the industrial paradigm, which views leadership is good management.<sup>20</sup> (Bass and Stogdill are both management scholars.) Rost also criticizes the field for over emphasis on things that are peripheral to leadership such as traits, group facilitation, effectiveness, or the content of leadership, which includes the things that leaders must know in order to be effective.<sup>21</sup> This is clearly the case if you look at the contents of Bass and Stogdill. The largest section in the book is on the personal attributes of leaders.

Marta Calas and Linda Smircich also offer a provocative critique of the field that indirectly helps to explain why there has been little work on ethics in leadership studies. Along with Rost, they point out the positivist slant in much of the leadership research (particularly research on leadership in psychology and business). According to Calas and Smircich, the "saga" of leadership researchers is to find the Rosetta stone of leadership and break its codes. They argue that since the research community believes that society puts a premium on science, researchers' attempts to break the Rosetta Stone have to be "scientific." Hence the "scientists" keep breaking leadership into smaller and smaller pieces until the main code has been lost and can't be put together.<sup>22</sup> This fragmentation accounts for one of the reasons why Rost urges us to focus the essence of leadership and it also explains why there is so little work on ethics and leadership. Ethical analysis generally requires a broad perspective on a practice. For example in business, ethical considerations of a problem often go hand in hand with taking a long-term view of a problem and the long term interests of an organization.

Calas and Smircich also observe that the leadership literature seems irrelevant to practitioners, whereas researchers don't feel like they are getting anywhere — nobody seems happy. They believe that leadership researchers are frustrated because they are trying to do science but they know they aren't doing good

science. The researchers are also trying to do narrative, but the narrative is more concerned with sustaining the community of researchers, instead of helping explicate leadership. Calas and Smircich, like Rost, point to the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach to leadership. All three scholars emphasize the importance of narratives, such as case studies, mythology and biography, in understanding leadership.

It is interesting to note that the two most respected and quoted figures in leadership studies, John W. Gardner and James MacGregor Burns, both do take a somewhat multidisciplinary approach to the subject. John W. Gardner's book, *On Leadership* is a simple and readable outline of the basic issues in leadership studies. Gardner writes as a practitioner. He has held many distinguished posts in the government and in business and currently teaches at Stanford. He offers a good common sense discussion of ethics and leadership in his chapter "The Moral Dimension." It is interesting to note that the phrase, "the moral dimension of leadership," is now frequently used in the leadership literature and a recent conference on ethics and leadership used this phrase as its title. The conceptualization of morality as a *dimension* of leadership rather than a part or element is significant in that it implies that it is another way of seeing the whole of leadership rather than simply investigating a part of it.<sup>23</sup>

Gardner's chapter on ethics is a thoughtful piece that uses examples from several disciplines. One reason why it is often quoted is because he is a talented wordsmith, he uses engaging examples and he offers wisdom that comes from experience. Gardner lines up the usual suspects of evil leadership, such as Hitler and the Ku Klux Klan, and peppers his discussion with a diverse set of examples from history and politics. For the most part, his discussion of ethics is hortatory. He says that we should hope that "our leaders will keep alive values that are not so easy to embed in laws — our caring for others, about honor and integrity, about tolerance and mutual respect, and about human fulfillment within a framework of values."<sup>24</sup> Gardner offers some good advice on ethics, but that's about all.

James MacGregor Burns' book *Leadership* is considered by many to be the best book to date on leadership. Burns, a political scientist, historian and biographer, is probably the most referenced author in leadership studies. Burn's theory of transforming leadership is one that is built around a set of moral commitments. I will discuss Burns' work later in this paper because his work is central to my contention that ethics is at the heart of leadership.

In this section I have discussed some representative examples of the ways in which ethics has been treated in the leadership literature. Most of what is considered leadership literature comes from the social sciences of psychology, business and political science. The scarcity of work done on leadership in the humanities is another reason why there is little done on ethics. Burns, the most quoted scholar in the field, takes a multi-disciplinary approach to leadership. However, it is not the number of disciplines that makes Burns' work compelling, it is that fact that he tries to understand leadership as a whole and not as a combination of small fragments.

### *Paradigm, Shifting Paradigm or Shifty Paradigm?*

For an investigation into leadership ethics to be meaningful and useful, it has to be embedded in the study of leadership. Again, it is worthwhile to make an analogy to business ethics. If courses and research on business ethics ignore existing business research and practice, then the subject of ethics would become a mere appendage, a nice but not a crucial addition to our knowledge about business and a business school curriculum. Research and teaching in areas like business ethics and leadership ethics should aim not only at making business people and leaders more ethical, but at reconceptualizing the way that we think about the theory and practice of business and leadership. This is why both areas of applied ethics have to embed themselves into their respective fields.<sup>25</sup>

There are two ways to understand the current state of leadership studies using Thomas Kuhn's analysis in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Given the criticisms of the field, one might argue that there exists a paradigm of leadership studies, based primarily on the work done in business and psychology.<sup>26</sup> Kuhn says that one way you can tell if a paradigm has been established is if scientists enhance their reputations by writing journal articles that are "addressed only to professional colleagues, the men whose knowledge of a shared paradigm can be assumed..." Prior to the establishment of a paradigm, writing a textbook would be prestigious, because you would be making a new contribution to the field.<sup>27,28</sup> Using Kuhn's criteria, there is evidence for the existence of a paradigm of leadership studies, the evidence is Bass and Stogdill's handbook (now in its 3rd edition), various symposia on leadership,<sup>29</sup> the kinds of leadership articles that are accepted to journals, and the literature that is cross-referenced in these journals.

According to Kuhn, when a paradigm is established and researchers engage in "normal science," there is little discussion of rules or definitions because they become internalized by researchers working in that paradigm. Kuhn says, "lack of a standard interpretation or of an agreed reduction to rules will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research."<sup>30</sup> He points out that over time the meaning of important terms can shift along with theories, which seems to be what has happened in leadership studies. Kuhn believes that scientific progress would be impeded if the meaning of terms were overly rigid.

Rost criticizes some research in leadership studies because researchers don't define leadership. But as Kuhn points out, this sort of definition is not really necessary if researchers are working in a paradigm, because definitions are internalized and unarticulated. Rost's second charge is that researchers all have different definitions of leadership and that the field cannot progress unless there is a shared definition of leadership.<sup>31</sup> If Rost is correct and researchers have radically different definitions of leadership, (meaning that leadership denotes radically different things), then either there never was a well-formed paradigm (so leadership studies is in a pre-paradigm phase), or there exists a paradigm, and that paradigm is shifting. In both cases, there would be considerable debate over definitions. However, if there is a paradigm of sorts and researchers are still arguing over definitions then there is a third alternative and that is that there is

a paradigm of leadership studies but it is a shifty one. By that I mean, scholars don't really trust this paradigm, but they nonetheless stick to it and keep doing research in the same old way.<sup>32</sup>

## *II. Locating Ethics*

### *What Do the Definitions Really Tell Us?*

Leadership scholars have spent a large amount of time and trouble worrying about the definition of leadership. Rost analyzes 221 definitions to make his point that there is not a common definition of leadership. What Rost does not make clear is what he means by a definition. Sometimes he sounds as if a definition supplies necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying leadership. He says, "neither scholars nor the practitioners have been able to define leadership with precision, accuracy, and conciseness so that people are able to label it correctly when they see it happening or when they engage in it."<sup>33</sup> He goes on to say that the various publications and the media all use leadership to mean different things that have little to do with what leadership really is.<sup>34</sup> In places Rost uses the word *definition* as if it were a theory or perhaps a paradigm. He says that a shared definition implies that there is a "school" of leadership. When the definition changes, there is a "paradigm shift."<sup>35</sup>

Rost's claim that what leadership studies needs is a common definition of leadership is off the mark for two reasons. One would be hard-pressed to find a group of sociologists or historians who shared the exact same definition of sociology or history. It is also not clear that the various definitions that Rost examines are that different in terms of what they denote. I selected the following definitions from Rost's book on the basis of what Rost says are definitions most representative of each particular era. We need to look at these definitions and ask the following questions: Are these definitions so different that there is no family resemblance between them, i.e. would researchers be talking about different things?<sup>36</sup> Lastly, I will look at what these definitions tell us about the place of ethics in leadership studies.

- 1920s [Leadership is] the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect loyalty and cooperation.<sup>37</sup>
- 1930s Leadership is a process in which the activities of many are organized to move in a specific direction by one.<sup>38</sup>
- 1940s Leadership is the result of an ability to persuade or direct men, apart from the prestige or power that comes from office or external circumstance.<sup>39</sup>
- 1950s [Leadership is what leaders do in groups.] The leader's authority is spontaneously accorded him by his fellow group members.<sup>40</sup>
- 1960s [Leadership is] acts by a person which influence other persons in a shared direction.<sup>41</sup>
- 1970s Leadership is defined in terms of discretionary influence. Discretionary influence refers to those leader behaviors under control of the leader which he may vary from individual to individual.<sup>42</sup>

- 1980s Regardless of the complexities involved in the study of leadership, its meaning is relatively simple. Leadership means to inspire others to undertake some form of purposeful action as determined by the leader.<sup>43</sup>
- 1990s Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.<sup>44</sup>

If we look at the sample of definitions from different periods, we see that the problem of definition is not that scholars have radically different meanings of leadership. Leadership does not denote radically different things for different scholars. One can detect a family resemblance between the different definitions. All of them talk about leadership as some kind of process, act, or influence that in some way gets people to do something. A roomful of people, each holding one of these definitions, would understand each other.

Where the definitions differ is in their connotation, particularly in terms of their implications for the leader/follower relationship. In other words, *how* leaders get people to do things (impress, organize, persuade, influence, and inspire) and *how* what is to be done is decided (obedience, voluntary consent, determined by the leader and reflection of mutual purposes) have normative implications. So perhaps what Rost is really talking about is not definitions, but theories about how people lead (or how people should lead) and the relationship of leaders and those who are led. His critique of particular definitions is really a critique of the way they do or don't describe the underlying moral commitments of the leader/follower relationship.<sup>45</sup>

If the above definitions imply that leadership is some sort of relationship between leaders and followers in which something happens or gets done, then the next question is, How do we describe this relationship? For people who believe in the values of a democratic society such as freedom and equality, the most morally unattractive definitions are those that appear to be coercive, manipulative and disregard the input of followers. Rost clearly dislikes the theories from the 20's, 70's and 80's, not because they are inaccurate, but because he rejects the authoritarian values inherent in them.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, theories such as the ones from the 20s, 70s and 80's, may be quite accurate if we were observe the way some corporate and world leaders behave.

The most morally attractive definitions hail from the 40s, 50s, 60s and Rost's own definition of the 90s. They imply a non-coercive participatory and democratic relationship between leaders and followers. There are two morally attractive elements of these theories. First, rather than *induce*, these leaders *influence*, which implies that leaders recognize the autonomy of followers. Rost's definition uses the word influence, which carries an implication that there is some degree of voluntary compliance on the part of followers. In Rost's chapter on ethics he says, "The leadership process is ethical if the people in the relationship (the leaders and followers) *freely* agree that the intended changes fairly reflect their mutual purposes."<sup>47</sup> For Rost consensus is an important part of what makes leadership leadership and it does so because free choice is morally pleasing. The second morally attractive part of these definitions is they imply recognition of the beliefs, values and needs of the followers. Followers are the leader's partner in shaping the goals and purposes of a group or organization.

The morally attractive definitions also speak to a distinction frequently made between leadership and headship (or positional leadership). Holding a formal leadership position or position of power does not necessarily mean that a person exercises leadership. Furthermore, you do not have to hold a formal position in order to exercise leadership. Leaders can wield force or authority using only their position and the resources and power that come with it.<sup>48</sup> This is an important distinction, but it does not get us out of “the Hitler problem.” The Hitler problem is, How do you answer the question, “Is Hitler a leader?” Under the morally unattractive definitions he is a leader, perhaps even a great leader, albeit an immoral one. Ron Heifitz argues that under the great man and trait theories of leadership you can put Hitler, Lincoln and Gandhi in the same category because the underlying value of the theory is that leadership is influence over history.<sup>49</sup> However, under the morally attractive theories, Hitler is not a leader at all. He’s a bully or tyrant or simply the head of Germany.

To muddy the waters even further, according to one of Warren Bennis’ and Burt Nanus’ characterizations of leadership, “The manager does things right and the leader does the right thing,” one could argue that Hitler is neither unethical and nor a leader, he is a manager.<sup>50</sup> Bennis and Nanus are among those management writers who talk as if all leaders are wonderful and all managers morally flabby drones. However, what appears to be behind this in Bennis and Nanus’ work is the idea that leaders are morally a head above everyone else.<sup>51</sup>

So what does this all mean? It looks like we are back to the problem of definition again. The first and obvious meaning is that definitions of leadership have normative implications, (the old, “there is no such thing as a value free social science”). Leadership scholars such as Bennis and Nanus are sloppy about the language they use to describe and prescribe. While it is true that researchers have to be clear about when they are describing and when they are prescribing, the crisp fact/value distinction will not in itself improve our understanding of leadership.

Leadership scholars who worry about constructing the ultimate definition of leadership are asking the wrong question, but inadvertently trying to answer the right question. As we have seen from the examination of definitions, the ultimate question in leadership studies is not “What *is* the definition of leadership?” The ultimate point of studying leadership is, What is *good* leadership?” The use of word *good* here has two senses, morally good and technically good or effective. These two senses form a logical conjunction. In other words, in order for the statement “She is a good leader” to be true, it must be true that she is effective and she is ethical.<sup>52</sup> The question of what constitutes a good leader lies at the heart of the public debate on leadership. We want our leaders to be good in both ways. It’s easy to judge if they are effective, but more difficult to judge if they are ethical because there is some confusion over what factors are relevant to making this kind of assessment.

### *Ethics and Effectiveness*

The problem with the existing leadership research is that few studies investigate both senses of good and when they do, they usually do not fully explore the

moral implications of their research questions or their results. The research on leadership effectiveness touches indirectly on the problem of explicitly articulating the normative implications of descriptive research. The Ohio studies and the Michigan studies both measured leadership effectiveness in terms of how leaders treated subordinates and how they got the job done. The Ohio Studies measured leadership effectiveness in terms of consideration, the degree to which leaders act in friendly and supportive manner, and initiating structure, or the way that leaders structure their own role and the role of subordinates in order to obtain group goals.<sup>53</sup> The Michigan Studies measured leaders on the basis of task orientation and relationship orientation.<sup>54</sup> These two studies spawned a number of other research programs and theories, including the situational leadership theory of Hersey and Blanchard, which looks at effectiveness in terms of how leaders adapt their leadership style to the requirements of a situation. Some situations require a task orientation, others a relationship orientation.<sup>55</sup>

Implicit in all of these theories and research programs is an ethical question. Are leaders more effective when they are nice to people, or are leaders more effective when they use certain techniques for structuring and ordering tasks?<sup>56</sup> One would hope that the answer is both, but that answer is not conclusive in the studies that have taken place over the least three decades.<sup>57</sup> The interesting question is, What if this sort of research shows that you don't have to be kind and considerate of other people to run a country or a profitable organization? Would scholars and practitioners draw an *ought* from the *is* of this research?<sup>58</sup> It's hard to tell when researchers are not explicit about their ethical commitments. The point is that no matter how much empirical information we get from the "scientific" study of leadership, it will always be inadequate if we neglect the moral implications. The reason why leadership scholarship has not progressed very far is that most of the research focuses on explaining leadership not understanding it.<sup>59</sup>

The discussion of definition is intended to locate where some of the ethical problems are in leadership studies. As we have seen, ethical commitments are central to how scholars define leadership and shape their research. Leadership scholars do not need to have one definition of leadership in order to understand each other, they just need to be clear about the values and normative assumptions that lie behind the way that they go about researching leadership.<sup>60</sup> By doing so, we have a better chance of understanding the relationship between what leadership is and what we think leadership ought to be.<sup>61</sup> This state of affairs would represent a marked shift in the existing Bass/ Stogdill type paradigm (and maybe finally put to rest the pretensions of value free social science).

### *III. The Normative Theories*

#### *Transforming Leadership*

So far we have located the place of leadership ethics in definitions and in some of the empirical research on leadership. Now we will look at two normative leadership theories.

James MacGregor Burns' theory of transforming leadership is compelling because it rests on a set of moral assumptions about the relationship between leaders and followers.<sup>62</sup> Burns' theory is clearly a prescriptive one about the nature of morally *good* leadership. Drawing from Abraham Maslow's work on needs, Milton Rokeach's research on values development and research on moral development from Lawrence Kohlberg, Jean Piaget, Erik Erickson and Alfred Adler, Burns argues that leaders have to operate at higher need and value levels than those of followers.<sup>63</sup> A leader's role is to exploit tension and conflict within people's value systems and play the role of raising people's consciousness.<sup>64</sup>

On Burns' account, transforming leaders have very strong values. They do not water down their values and moral ideals by consensus, but rather they elevate people by using conflict to engage followers and help them reassess their own values and needs. This is an area where Burns is very different from Rost. Burns writes that "despite his [Rost's] intense and impressive concern about the role of values, ethics and morality in transforming leadership, he underestimates the crucial importance of these variables." Burns goes on to say, "Rost leans towards, or at least is tempted by, consensus procedures and goals that I believe erode such leadership."<sup>65</sup>

The moral questions that drive Burns' theory of transforming leadership come from his work as a biographer and a historian.<sup>66</sup> When biographers or historians study a leader, they struggle with the question of how to judge or keep from judging their subject. Throughout his book, Burns uses examples of a number of incidents where questionable means, such as lying and deception are used to achieve honorable ends or where the private life of a politician is morally questionable.<sup>67</sup> If you analyze the numerous historical examples in Burns' book you find two pressing moral questions shape his leadership theory. The first is the morality of means and ends (and this also includes the moral use of power) and the second is the tension between the public and private morality of a leader. His theory of transforming leadership is an attempt to characterize good leadership by accounting for both of these questions.

Burns' distinction between transforming and transactional leadership and modal and end-values offers a way to think about the question "What is a good leader?" in terms of the relationship to followers and the means and ends of actions. Transactional leadership rests on the values found in the means of an act. These are called modal values which are things like, responsibility, fairness, honesty and promise-keeping. Transactional leadership helps leaders and followers reach their own goals by supplying lower level wants and needs so that they can move up to higher needs. Transforming leadership is concerned with end-values, such as liberty, justice and equality. Transforming leaders raise their followers up through various stages of morality and need.<sup>68</sup> They turn their followers into leaders and the leader becomes a moral agent.

As a historian, Burns is very concerned with the ends of actions and the change that they initiate. In terms of his ethical theory, at times he appears to be a consequentialist, despite, his acknowledgment that, "insufficient attention to means can corrupt the ends."<sup>69</sup> However, because Burns does not really offer a systematic theory of ethics in the way that a philosopher might, he is difficult to categorize. Consider for example, Burns' two answers to the Hitler question. In the first part of the book, he says quite simply that once Hitler gained power and

crushed all opposition, he was no longer a leader. He was a tyrant.<sup>70</sup> Later in the book, he offers three criteria for judging how Hitler would fare before “the bar of history.” Burns says that Hitler would probably argue that he was a transforming leader who spoke for the true values of the German people and elevated them to a higher destiny. First, he would be tested by modal values of honor and integrity or the extent to which he advanced or thwarted the standards of good conduct in mankind. Second, he would be judged by the end values of equality and justice. Lastly, he would be judged on the impact that he had on the well-being of the people that he touched.<sup>71</sup> According to Burns, Hitler would fail all three tests. Burns’ doesn’t consider Hitler a leader or a transforming leader, because of the means that he used, the ends that he achieved, and the impact of Hitler as a moral agent on his followers during the process of his leadership.<sup>72</sup>

By looking at leadership as a process and not a set of individual acts, Burns’ theory of good leadership is difficult to pigeon hole into one ethical theory and warrants closer analysis. The most attractive part of Burns’ theory is the idea that a leader elevates his or her followers and makes them leaders. Near the end of his book, he reintroduces this idea with an anecdote about why President Johnson did not run in 1968. Burns tells us, “Perhaps he did not comprehend that the people he had led — as a part of the impact of his leadership — have created their own fresh leadership, which was now outrunning his.” All of the people that Johnson helped the sick, the blacks and the poor now had their own leadership. Burns says, “Leadership beget leadership and hardly recognized its offspring.” “Followers had become leaders.”<sup>73</sup>

Burns’ theory has spawned a number of descriptive studies on transformational and leadership. For example, Bernard Bass studies transformational leadership in terms of the impact of leaders on their followers. In sharp contrast to Burns, Bass removes Burns’ condition that leaders have to appeal to higher order needs and values. So, Bass is willing to call Hitler a transformational leader.<sup>74</sup> There are a number of other researchers writing about transformational leadership including, Judith Rosner who uses transformational leadership as a means for understanding how women lead.<sup>75</sup>

The other area of research related to transformational leadership is charismatic leadership. Charismatic leaders, according to Jay Conger, “hold certain keys to transformational processes within organizations.”<sup>76</sup> Bass believes that charismatic leadership is a necessary ingredient of transformational leadership.<sup>77</sup> The research on charismatic leadership opens up a wide range of ethical questions because of the powerful emotional and moral impact that charismatic leaders have on followers.<sup>78</sup> Charismatic leadership can be the best and the worst kind of leadership depending on whether you are looking at a Gandhi or a Charles Manson.<sup>79</sup> Leadership ethics clearly finds a place in this literature where the moral problems are near the surface, but not explicitly explored.

### *Servant Leadership*

The second example of a normative theory of leadership is servant leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf’s book *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* presents a view of how leaders ought to be, however, the best way to understand servant leadership, one needs to read *Jour-*

*ney to the East*, by Hermann Hesse.<sup>80</sup> Hesse's story is about a spiritual journey to the East. On the journey a servant named Leo carries the bags and does the travelers' chores. There is something special about Leo. He keeps the group together with his presence and songs. When Leo mysteriously disappears the group loses their way. Later in the book the main character HH discovers that the servant Leo was actually the leader. The simple, but radical shift in emphasis is from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers.

Servant leadership has not gotten as much attention as transformational leadership in the literature, but students and business people often find this a compelling characterization of leadership.<sup>81</sup> According to Greenleaf, the servant leader leads because he or she wants to serve others. People follow servant leaders freely because they trust them. Like the transforming leader, the servant leader elevates people. Greenleaf says a servant leader must pass this test: "Do those served grow as persons? Do they *while being served* become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" He goes on and adds a Rawlsian proviso, "And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society?"<sup>82</sup> As normative theories of leadership both servant leadership and transforming leadership are areas of leadership ethics that are open to ethical analysis and provide a rich foundation of ideas for developing future normative theories of leadership.

### *Conclusion: Ethics at the Heart of Leadership*

In this paper I have mapped the territory of ethics in leadership studies. I argued that the definition question in leadership studies is not really about the question "What is leadership?" It is about the question "What is *good* leadership?" By good, I mean morally good and effective. This is why I think it's fair to say that ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies. Researchers in the field need to get clear on the ethical elements of leadership in order to be clear on what the term *leadership* connotes.

Existing theories and empirical literature have strong normative implications that have not been fully developed by their authors. A second place for ethics in leadership studies is, expanding the ethical implications of these theories and research findings. Normative theories of leadership, such as transforming leadership and servant leadership, are not well-developed in terms of their philosophical implications. They need more analysis as ethical theories and more empirical testing. One reason why the body of research on transformational leadership looks promising is because it contains empirical research on a theory that was constructed to address some of the basic moral problems of leadership. It offers a richer understanding of leadership than theories that are just about ethics or just about leader behavior.

Leadership ethics can also serve as a critical theory that opens up new kinds of dialogues among researchers and practitioners. Business ethics has certainly played this role in business studies and practice. Lastly, work in leadership ethics should generate different ways of conceptualizing leadership and new ways of asking research questions. To some extent, the idea of servant leadership and transforming leadership have done this.

In conclusion, the territory of ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies and has veins in leadership research. Ethics also extends to territories waiting to be explored. As an area of applied ethics, leadership ethics needs to take into account research on leadership, and it should be responsive to the pressing ethical concerns of society. Today the most important and most confusing public debate is over what ethical issues are relevant in judging whether a person *should* lead and whether a person is capable of leadership. Research into leadership ethics would not only help us with questions like, "What sort of person should lead?" and "What are the moral responsibilities of leadership?", it should give us a better understanding of the nature of leadership.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The best of these articles will be discussed in a separate annotated bibliography. I owe a debt of gratitude to Litt Maxwell, a University of Richmond librarian, for helping execute this literature search.

<sup>2</sup>These Kohlberg-type studies can be interesting for leadership ethics if you put all these studies together. However, taken one by one, they give a very small snapshot of a group. Kohlberg's work on moral development also has the problems that Carol Gilligan has articulated. A number of philosophers also have problems with Kohlberg's description of the highest stage of development. Nonetheless, some of the most fascinating research that uses this approach is cross-cultural. For example, see: Sara Harkness, Carolyn Pope Edwards & Charles M. Super, "Social Roles and Moral Reasoning," A Case Study in a Rural African Community," in *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 1981, pp. 595-603. Also see: Anne Marie Tietjen & Lawrence J. Walker, "Moral Reasoning and Leadership Among Men in a Papu New Guinea Society," *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 6, 1985, pp. 982-992.

<sup>3</sup>Many areas of leadership literature from psychology focus on different types of relationships. For example contingency theories focus on the relationship of the leader and the group in a given situation. See: Fred Feidler, *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) and Victor H. Vroom and Paul W. Yetton, *Leadership and Decision-Making* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973). The vertical dyad linkage model focuses on dyads such as the relationship between leaders and managers. See: Fred Dansereau, Jr., George Graen, and William J. Haga, "Vertical Dyad Linkage Approach to Leadership within Formal Organizations: A Longitudinal Investigation of the Role Making Process," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 13 (1975), pp. 46-78

<sup>4</sup>Some of the most frequently cited ethics texts in leadership articles and books are from business ethics. The reasons for this might be that researchers are often in business schools, business ethics texts are written for a broad audience and the content of business ethics research into managerial ethics and organizational ethics is relevant to leadership.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 172.

<sup>6</sup>James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1986).

Mark Pastin, *The Hard Problems of Management: Gaining the Ethics Edge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986). I am not arguing about the quality of these books, but rather the quantity of research done by Rost.

<sup>7</sup>The chapter also contains pronouncements and generalizations are not well supported. For example, he says "The first thing that I want to emphasize is that the ethics of what is intended by leaders and followers in proposing changes may not be the same as the ethics of those changes once they have been implemented. This troubling distinction is not often

developed in books on professional ethics, but it does turn up time and time again in real life.” (Rost, p. 168) A number of Kantians who write about professional ethics would take issue with this claim.

<sup>8</sup>Rost, p. 177.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77. The works cited in his argument are Robert Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); William M. Sullivan, *Reconstructing Public Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Rost seems to miss the point that all three of these books are reapplications of older traditions of ethics. Bellah et. al. and Sullivan make this point clear in their books. Rost does not discuss virtue ethics in this chapter, so it is not clear whether he means to discard this too when he rejects “ethical theory.”

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177

<sup>11</sup>Bass, Bernard M., *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership* 3rd edition (New York: The Free Press, 1990). The quotes are taken from the back jacket of the book.

<sup>12</sup>From James MacGregor Burns' book, *Leadership* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978).

<sup>13</sup>J. Weber, “Managers and Moral Meaning: An Exploratory look at Manager's Responses to Moral Dilemmas,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Management*, Washington, DC, 1989, pp. 333-337.

<sup>14</sup>K.W. Kuhnert & C.J. Lewis, “Transactional and Transformational Leadership: A Constructive/Developmental Analysis.” *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 12, 1987 pp. 648-657.

<sup>15</sup>M.F. Peterson, R.L. Phillips, & C.A. Duran, “A Comparison of Japanese Performance maintenance measures with US. Leadership Scales,” *Psychologia — An International Journal of Psychology in the Orient*, Vol. 32, 1989, pp. 58-70.

<sup>16</sup>P. Steidlmeier, *The Paradox of Poverty: A Reprisal of Economic Development Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1987).

<sup>17</sup>Bass & Stogdill, p. 906.

<sup>18</sup>This is not to say that articles that are cited in Bass & Stogdill are not good, but rather, they are focused studies that taken together would not give the reader much of a perspective on ethics as it pertains to leadership

<sup>19</sup>For example, John Gardner is well known in the leadership area. His leadership paper, “The Moral Aspect of Leadership” was published in 1987. Burns' book was published in 1978 and contained a wealth of references that might have been useful.

<sup>20</sup>Rost, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Marta Calas & Linda Smircich, “Reading Leadership as a Form of Cultural Analysis,” in *Emerging Leadership Vistas*, ed. James G. Hunt, B. Rajaram Baliga, H. Peter Dachler & Chester A. Schriesheim (Lexington, MA.: Lexington Books, 1988) pp. 222-226.

<sup>23</sup>For example see, Thomas Sergiovanni, *Moral Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), p. xiii. Sergiovanni argues that “rich leadership practice cannot be developed if one set of values or one basis of authority is simply substituted for another. What we need is an expanded theoretical and operational foundation for leadership practice that will give balance to a full range of values and bases of authority.” He refers to this expanded foundation as the *moral dimension in leadership*.

<sup>24</sup>John Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 77.

<sup>25</sup>Since most of my work has been in business ethics, I use that field as an example. Few philosophers would attempt to write about a topic in business ethics without doing research into that area of business, yet a number of business scholars over the years have felt no discomfort over writing about business ethics without doing research into ethics. If you look at what is considered the best work in business ethics you will not find research that is only business or only philosophic ethics. A good example of the ideal mix is Ed Freeman's and Dan Gilbert's *Ethics and Strategy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988).

<sup>26</sup>Extensive work has been done on leadership in political science, but this research is not well integrated into this the business/psychology literature. One might argue that because the discussion of leadership is so much a part of political science that it is not noticeable as a separate field, except perhaps for Presidential Studies. It is, however, interesting to note that Barbara Kellerman's anthology on political leadership is interdisciplinary. See, Barbara Kellerman, ed., *Political Leadership: A Source book* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986) It draws from political science, philosophy, economics, history, sociology. Yet if one looks at the references in Bass and Stogdill, the lion's share of them are from management and psychology and very few from political science or other fields. Extensive work has also been done on leadership in military academies. For example see, Howard Prince and Associates, eds., *Leadership in Organizations*, 3rd ed. (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1985).

<sup>27</sup>Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) p. 20.

<sup>28</sup>A recent example of a leadership textbook is Hughes, Richard, Ginnett, Robert, Curphy, Gordon J., *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience* (New York: Irwin, 1993).

<sup>29</sup>James J. Hunt has published 8 collections of symposia papers on leadership. Note the language in the titles of these books, "Current Developments," "Leadership Frontiers," "The Cutting Edge," "Beyond establishment Views," and "Emerging Vistas." One senses that Hunt is trying to capture something that keeps falling through scholars' fingers like sand.

E.A. Fleishman & J.G. Hunt *Current Developments in the Study of Leadership*,  
Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1973).

J. G. Hunt & L.L. Larson, *Contingency Approaches to Leadership*, (Lexington, MA:  
Lexington Books, 1974).

J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson, *Leadership Frontiers* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1975).

J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson, *Leadership: The Cutting Edge* (Lexington, MA: Lexington  
Books, 1977).

J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson, *Crosscurrents in Leadership* (Lexington, MA: Lexington  
Books, 1979).

J.G. Hunt, U. Sekaran & C.A. Schriesheim, *Leadership: Beyond Establishment Views*  
(Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982).

J. G. Hunt, D.M. Hosking, C.A. Schriesheim & R. Stewart, *Leaders and Managers:  
International Perspectives on Managerial Behavior and Leadership* (Lexington,  
MA: Lexington Books, 1984).

J. G. Hunt, B. Rajaram Baliga, H. Peter Dachler & Chester A. Schriesheim,  
"Reading Leadership as a Form of Cultural Analysis," *Emerging Leadership  
Vistas* (Lexington, MA.: Lexington Books, 1988) pp. 222-226.

<sup>30</sup>Kuhn, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>Rost, pp. 6-7.

<sup>32</sup>In J.G. Hunt's symposia (opus cited) and in other articles on leadership, scholars constantly lament that they have done so much studying and know so little about leadership. Yet the same scholars who lament this fact, do little to change the way that they do research.

<sup>33</sup>Rost p. 6.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>36</sup>The theory of meaning that I have in mind is from, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscomb 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan 1968) pp. 18-20 and p. 241.

<sup>37</sup>Rost, p.47 from: B.V. Moore, "The May Conference on Leadership," *Personnel Journal*, Vol. 6, 1927, p. 124.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p.47 from: E.S. Bogardus, *Leaders and Leadership* (New York: Appelton-Century, 1934) p. 5.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48 from: Reuter 1941 p. 133

<sup>40</sup>P. 50. The bracket part is Rost's summary of the definition from: C.A. Gibb, "Leadership," in G. Lindzey (ed.) *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol 2, 1954, pp. 877-920.

<sup>41</sup>P. 53. From: M. Seeman, *Social Status and Leadership* (Columbus: Ohio State University Bureau of Educational Research, 1960), p. 127

<sup>42</sup>P. 59, R.N. Osborn & J.G. Hunt, "An Adaptive Reactive Theory of Leadership," in J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson (eds.), *Leadership Frontiers* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1975), p. 28.

<sup>43</sup>P. 72. From S.C. Sarkesian, "A Personal Perspective," in R.S. Ruch & L.J. Korb (eds.) *Military Leadership* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979), p. 243

<sup>44</sup>p. 102.

<sup>45</sup>Burns criticizes leadership studies for bifurcating literature on leadership and followership. He says that the leadership literature is elitist, projecting heroic leaders against the drab mass of powerless followers. The followership literature, according to Burns, tends to be populist in its approach, linking the masses with small overlapping circles of politicians, military officers and business people. (See Burns p, 1979, p. 3).

<sup>46</sup>One's choice of a definition can be aesthetic and/or moral and/or political (if you control the definitions, you control the research agenda).

<sup>47</sup>Rost, p. 161.

<sup>48</sup>Leaders carry their own normative baggage in their definitions. For example:

"A leader is a man who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do, and like it." (Harry Truman)

"Clean examples have a curious method of multiplying themselves." (Gandhi)

"Whatever goal man has reached is due to his originality plus his brutality." (Adolf Hitler)

"If we do not win, we will blame neither heaven nor earth, only ourselves." (Mao)

These examples are from G.D. Paige's book, *The Scientific Study of Political Leadership* (p.66). They are taken from Barbara Kellerman's, *Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), pp. 71-72.

<sup>49</sup>This is from Ron Heifitz's book manuscript *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 17-18.

<sup>50</sup>See, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper Collins, 1985) p. 45.

<sup>51</sup>The leader/manager distinction is a troublesome one in the leadership literature. One problem is that *leadership* is a hot word these days and the current trend is to put leadership in the title of books on traditional management subjects. If we look at the formal positions

of leaders and managers in organizations, the leader's job requires a broader perspective on the operation and on the moral significance of policies and actions of the organization (this is part of the "vision thing"). The manager's domain of perspective is usually more narrowly defined as people whose job is to ensure that a set of tasks are completed. In ethical terms this element of leadership boils down to thinking about actions in terms of how they impact on the organization as a whole and in the long run. In the ethics seminars that I have run for corporate managers, I have noticed that the managers who tend to take a big picture view of particular ethical problems are most often the ones who have been identified as having the greatest leadership potential. So Bennis and Nanus do seem to be right. However, it is not that managers are unethical, but rather that they have a narrower moral perspective that is in part dictated by the way in which they respond to the constraints and pressures of their position. Managers are also subject to Kant's old adage that 'ought implies can.'

<sup>52</sup>Here Aristotle's discussion of excellence (areté) would be useful. Aristotle says that excellent actions must be good in themselves and good and noble. See the argument in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, BK. I sections 6-8 (1096a12-1098b8). Later in book II sections 13-16 (31104b), Aristotle argues that a virtuous person has appropriate emotions along with dispositions to act the right way. Virtue then is being made happy by the right sort of thing.

<sup>53</sup>See E. A. Fleishman, "The Description of Supervisory Behavior," *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 37, pp. 1-6.

<sup>54</sup>Results from the earlier and later Michigan Studies are discussed in, R. Leikert's books, *New Patterns of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) and *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

<sup>55</sup>See P. Hershey and K.H. Blanchard, *The Management of Organizational Behavior*, 5th edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993).

<sup>56</sup>It would be worthwhile to look at some of the studies and ask how the subjects with high/high orientations solve ethical problems. Do they tend to find themselves trapped in between deontic and consequentialist approaches to the problem? Are people who score high on the task scale consequentialists when it comes to approaching ethical problems? etc.

<sup>57</sup>According to Gary Yukl, the only consistent findings that have come from this research is that considerate leaders usually have more satisfied followers. See, Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 2nd edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. 96.

<sup>58</sup>Old metaethical problems such as David Hume's problem of drawing an ought from, G.E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy, and more recent discussions of ethical realism take on a certain urgency in applied ethics. I find that the more work that I do in applied ethics the more I lean towards the position that moral discourse is cognitive in that it expresses propositions that have truth value. However, I am still uncomfortable with drawing moral prescriptions from "scientific" studies of leadership. I have not really worked out a coherent position on these points of moral epistemology. For a good discussion of these issues see, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, editor, *Essays on Moral Realism* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1988). I find David Wiggins' and Geoffrey Sayre-McCord's articles on ethical realism to be particularly compelling.

<sup>59</sup>This is the argument that the sciences provide explanation and the humanities understanding. See chapter 1 of G. H. von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1971).

<sup>60</sup>In most journal articles, authors, including this one, offer stipulative definitions. These definitions make clear how concepts are being used in the paper. They are not meant to be universal definitions.

<sup>61</sup>We need a better picture of what a leader ought to be in order to educate and develop leaders in schools and organizations.

<sup>62</sup>Burns uses the terms *transforming* and *transformational* in his book. However, he prefers to refer to his theory as *transforming leadership*.

<sup>63</sup>I think that Burns is sometimes overly sanguine about the universal truth of these theories of human development.

<sup>64</sup>James MacGregor Burns, 1978, pp. 42-43.

<sup>65</sup>Rost, 1991, p. xii.

<sup>66</sup>I am very grateful to Professor Burns for the discussions that we have had on the ethics of leadership. Burn's reflections on his work as a biographer, have lead me to this conclusion.

<sup>67</sup>For example, see Burns' discussion of Roosevelt's treatment of Joe Kennedy, pp. 32-33.

<sup>68</sup>One of the problems with using the values approach to ethics is that it requires a very complicated taxonomy of values. The word *value* is also problematic because it is encompasses so many different kinds of things. The values approach requires arguments for some sort of hierarchy of values that would serve to resolve conflicts of values. In order to make values something that people do rather than just have, Milton Rokeach offers a very awkward discussion of the ought character of values. "A person phenomenological experiences "oughtness" to be objectively required by society in somewhat the same way that he perceives an incomplete circle as objectively requiring closure." See Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: The Free Press, 1973) p. 9.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 426.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>71</sup>p. 426

<sup>72</sup>The third test has an Aristotelian twist to it. The relationship of leaders and followers and the ends of that relationship must rest on *eudaimonia* or happiness that is understood as human flourishing or as Aristotle says "living well and faring well with being happy." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (1095a19) from *The Complete Works of Aristotle* Vol. II, edited by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) p. 1730.

<sup>73</sup>Burns, 1979, p. 424.

<sup>74</sup>Bernard Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

<sup>75</sup>Judith Rosner, "Ways Women Lead," in *Harvard Business Review*, Nov./Dec 1990. pp. 99-125.

<sup>76</sup>Jay Conger, *The Charismatic Leader: Behind the Mystique of the Exceptional Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989) p. xiv.

<sup>77</sup>Bass, 1985, p.31.

<sup>78</sup>For example, see Robert J. House, William D. Spangler and James Woycke's study "Personality and Charisma in the U.S Presidency," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 36, no. 3, Sept. 1991, pp. 334-396. Their study looks at charisma in terms of the bond between leaders and followers and in terms of actual behavior of the presidents (p. 366). The question that lurks in the background is, Is this relationship, in Burns' terms, morally uplifting? Is the behavior ethical? and Does the process that takes place in the relationship between these charismatic presidents and their followers humanly enriching?

<sup>79</sup>For a very provocative account of charismatic leadership from an anthropological point of view see, Charles Lindholm, *Charisma* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990). Lindholm includes several case studies. including ones on Charles Manson and Jim Jones.

<sup>80</sup>Greenleaf takes his theory from Hesse. See, Greenleaf, Robert K., *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). Hesse, Hermann, *The Journey to the East* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991).

<sup>81</sup>The Robert K. Greenleaf Center in Indianapolis works with companies to implement this idea of leadership in organizations. The Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 1100 W. 42nd St., suite 321, Indianapolis, IN 46208.

<sup>82</sup>Greenleaf, 1977, pp. 13-14.

### **Leadership Ethics: A Starter Kit and Annotated Bibliography**

This bibliography is a starter-kit for those interested in teaching or doing research on leadership and ethics. After conducting a literature search of 1800 articles on ethics and leadership, I found few systematic treatments of leadership ethics. The largest number of articles on leadership and ethics were about charismatic or transformational leadership. My search uncovered more usable books on ethics and leadership than journal articles. This is not surprising since ethics is a subject that lends itself to extended discussion. The following books and articles were selected to represent a range of disciplines and approaches to the subject. I will comment on the ones that I have found particularly useful for teaching.

The bibliography begins with a few general books on leadership that introduce the novice with some of the theories and issues in leadership studies. It then describes books that are either on leadership ethics or have something important to say about the subject. The last section contains articles on leadership and ethics and a short list of fiction that can be used to teach leadership ethics.

#### *General Books on Leadership Studies*

Bass, Bernard M., *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership* 3rd edition, (New York: The Free Press, 1990). This handbook is a standard reference on leadership studies and is useful for looking up descriptions of leadership theories and research. There are only a few pages on leadership ethics in Bass & Stogdill.

Gardner, John W., *On Leadership*, (New York: The Free Press, 1990). Gardner's book is helpful if you don't have much time to spend reading leadership theory, but just need a general overview of some of the important issues in leadership. It is not a scholarly book, but there are some provocative ideas in it. Gardner could be used as a text in an executive seminar or a beginning undergraduate course on leadership. The book has a chapter on the moral dimension of leadership.

Kellerman, Barbara, editor, *Leadership: Multidisciplinary perspectives* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986). This is the best collection of primary source writings on leadership. The volume contains selections on leadership from writers such as Thomas Carlyle, Sigmund Freud, Alexander Hamilton, Hannah Arendt, Plutarch, Max Weber, Joseph Shumpeter, and Joseph Campbell. There are also readings from contemporary writers such as Irving Janis, Kurt Lewin and James MacGregor Burns. Kellerman's volume is an excellent text for an undergraduate or graduate course on leadership.

Rosenbach, William E. & Taylor, Robert L., eds. *Contemporary Issues in Leadership*, 2nd edition, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989). This collection consists of some topical articles on leadership by authors such as Tom Cronin, James March, Warren Bennis and Charles Handy. It is good supplementary material for a leadership course and some of the articles could be used in an executive seminar.

Rost, Joseph, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*. (New York: Praeger, 1991). Rost discusses the issues and debates in the leadership literature. It is a well researched-book that can serve to give the reader a feel for the field of leadership studies. Rost offers his vision of where leadership studies should go in the 20th century. The book contains a chapter on leadership ethics Rost's book would best be used in a graduate seminar.

Yukl, Gary, *Leadership in Organizations*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1981) Yukl's text gives the lay of the land of leadership theory. His terse discussion treats major theories and research on leadership primarily from business and psychology. He covers everything from trait theories, to charismatic leadership. It is useful to read Rost and Yukl together because Rost's book criticizes many of the research methods and theories that Yukl discusses.

### *Books on or About Leadership Ethics*

Bailey, F.G., *Humbuggery and Manipulation: The Art of Leadership*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Bailey is to leadership studies rather like what Milton Friedman is to business ethics. In his book, Bailey, an anthropologist, argues that no leader can survive and be successful without deceiving others. In contrast to most leadership literature that paints a happy picture of ethical leaders, Bailey uses examples from field work in Italy and India and history to get the reader to consider the proposition that one of the essentials of leadership in all cultures is malefaction. This delightful book provokes important questions on leadership ethics for students and researchers alike.

Burns, James MacGregor, *Leadership*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). The issues of leadership ethics are found throughout this 530 page book. Burn's theory of transformational leadership rests on a moral foundation of leader/follower relationships. The book also offers a superb discussion of the moral power of ideas and the role of these ideas in leadership. Burn's use of historical figures serves to illustrate his theory of transforming leadership and highlight various problems in leadership ethics, such as the conflict between private and public morality and the moral justification of means and ends, in his discussion of leaders such as Roosevelt and Kennedy

Follett, Mary Parker, *Freedom and Co-ordination*, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1987). This extraordinary collection of lectures delivered between 1925 and 1932 in New York and London is not a standard reference in leadership literature, but it should be. Follett's lectures on *The Basis of Authority* and *The Essentials of Leadership* are relevant today and profound, given their historical context. Her critique of power, authority, and manipulation get to the heart of some complex problems in leadership ethics. While Follett was not a feminist, her work has strong implications for those who research differences in that way that women and men conceptualize leadership.

Fairholm, Gilbert W., *Values Leadership: Towards a New Philosophy of Leadership*, (New York: Praeger, 1991). Fairholm develops a theory of values leadership. He argues that the central task of leaders is to join individual leader-like actions together through a common set of values. This book would be of particular interest to students and practitioners of public administration.

Greenleaf, Robert K., *Servant Leadership*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). Greenleaf, a former AT&T executive, bases his leadership theory on the simple proposition that the leader's role is to serve his or her followers. Greenleaf applies his notion of servant leadership to institutions, trustees, and leaders in business, education, foundations and churches. This is not a scholarly book, but it does explore the moral obligations of leadership in a compelling fashion and Greenleaf uses a number of case studies of people who exemplify servant leadership. Undergraduates really like this book and are inspired by this theory of leadership

Heifitz, Ronald A., *A Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1994). Heifitz, a psychiatrist, uses biological and medical metaphors to develop a theory of leadership in which values are central. Heifitz says leadership is adaptive work and "adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values that people hold or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face." (p. 22) He believes the crisis of leadership is as much the result of the expectations and demands of followers as it is the ineptness of leaders. According to Heifitz, the leader's role is to clarify and articulate values, learn from value conflicts and create situations in which individuals and communities learn. This is the best and most innovative book on leadership in years. It is very readable and could be used in any type of course.

Kouzes, James M. and Pozner, Barry Z., *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It and Why People Demand It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993). Kouzes and Pozner survey more than 15,000 people, compile 400 case studies and do 40 in-depth interviews. From all this information, the authors conclude that leadership is a relationship and that the key element of this relationship is credibility. This book is a best-seller and it has captured the imagination of business people. It offers discussions of the role of values, hope, trust and moral purpose in leadership. The research behind this book is very interesting, but the *how to* style of the book prevents the authors from really delving into their research data.

McCullough, Thomas E., *The Moral Imagination and Public Life*, (New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, 1991). This 149-page book makes an excellent addition to a leadership course. The book is not written as a leadership text, but it explores the core values both in modernity and the American tradition. McCullough's discussion of life in the public realm raises a number of questions about the ethical obligations of leaders in today's world and the future. This book also helps one think about how leaders embody social values and shape the moral environment of a society or organization.

Sergiovanni, Thomas J., *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992). Sergiovanni believes that we need to change the focus of leadership from behavior to meaning. He discusses the role of moral authority in the motivation of followers and the obligations of leaders as stewards. While this book is about educational leadership, it offers other readers an interesting discussion of the place of ethics in leadership.

Terry, Robert W., *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993). Terry's major premise is that leadership depends on the ability to frame issues correctly. He argues that leadership is a subset of *authentic* action, which he defines as an "honorific mode of engagement in life." (p. 107) Terry's book provokes the reader to think about the integral part of ethics in leadership. His account is personal and based largely on his consulting work. The discussion of ethics, spirituality and leadership in this book is very worthwhile, albeit a bit wild and mystifying in places.

### Articles

Dukerich, Janet M.; Nichols, Mary Lippitt; Elm, Dawn R.; and Vollrath, David A. "Moral Reasoning in Groups: Leaders Make a Difference," *Human Relations*, Vol. 43, no. 5, (May, 1990), 473-493. The authors did present data from two studies on how groups think about moral dilemmas. Their results indicate that the group's moral reasoning improved when the more principled members took leadership roles. The author's found that individual group members' moral reasoning benefited from the experience of the group as a whole.

Enderle, Georges, "Some Perspectives of Managerial Ethical Leadership," *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 6, no. 8, (November, 1987), 657-663. For Enderle, managerial leadership is deciding responsibly in a complex situation. In this article he clarifies this ethical

dimension of leadership by discussing the major assumptions we have about leadership and responsibility. They are the normative-ethical tasks of perceiving, interpreting and creating reality, responsibility for the impact of the leader's action on others, and the claims on the leader as a subject responsible for his or her actions.

Gahl, Leslie L. "Moral Courage: The Essence of Leadership," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, no. 1, (Winter, 1984), 43-52. This article investigates the role of morality in the presidency. Gahl looks at such questions as: Should presidents operate on a higher standard? or Should the president mirror the morals of the average citizen? The author argues that leaders have to not only be moral, but they need to possess the quality of moral courage.

Harkness, Sara, Edwards, Carolyn Pope, and Super, Charles M. "Social Roles and Moral Reasoning: A Case Study in a Rural African Community," *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 17, no. 5, (September, 1981), 595-603. This study uses the Kohlberg scale of moral development to look at the relationship between moral reasoning, social roles, and cultural context among the elders in a small traditional Kipsigis community of western Kenya. The study tested six men who were considered morally outstanding leaders by their neighbors and six men who were similar in age, education, religion and wealth, who were not considered morally outstanding leaders. The leaders scored slightly higher than the non-leaders on the Kohlberg scale. The authors conclude that they believe that status as a moral leader affects a person's responses to moral dilemmas.

Howell, Jane M. and Avolio, Bruce J., "The Ethics of Charismatic Leadership: Submission of Liberation?," *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 6, (May 1992), 43-54. The authors differentiate the qualities and values that distinguish ethical from unethical transformational leaders. They argue that ethical charismatic leaders transform followers into leaders who take responsibility for their own ethical behavior, development and performance.

Jeannot, Thomas M. "Moral Leadership and Practical Wisdom," *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 16, no. 6, (1989), 14-38. This article examines the role of practical wisdom in moral leadership. Jeannot uses the work of Edmund Pincoffs and W.D. Falk to characterize moral leadership as traits of character and qualities of mind. He argues that the Aristotelian emphasis on the development of virtuous character and the nature of practical wisdom coalesces with the Kantian emphasis on autonomy in the person of the moral leader. This is one of the few philosophic papers that systematically applies moral theory to work in leadership studies.

Ludwig, Dean C., Longenecker, Clinton O., "The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders," *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 12, (1993), 265-273. The authors use the biblical story of David and Bathsheba to discuss how leaders get into moral trouble when they lose perspective and strategic focus. Dean and Longenecker describe the spiraling downfall of David as he engages in the cover-up of his wrong-doing with Bathsheba. This article works very well in class and is particularly good to use in executive seminars.

Meindl, James R. "Managing to be Fair: An Exploration of Values, Motives, and Leadership," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 34, no. 2, (June, 1989), 252-276. This paper consists of three studies on the way that leaders think about distributive justice. He contrasts equity an parity distribution logic's and looks at how they are affected by different value contexts and philosophies of management. His study indicated that leaders were flexible in their use of equity and parity-based logics and that their concerns about fairness were closely connected to other value considerations.

Smirchich, Linda, Morgan Gareth, "Leadership and the Management of Meaning," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 18, no 3, 1984. In this article the authors look at the phenomenon of leadership as a means of understanding organizations. They analyze leader-

ship as a distinctive social practice. Smirchich and Morgan use a case study to illustrate how managers can constructively influence the meaning of situations inside organizations. Their discussion of interpretive schemes and the way in which leaders embody the meanings and values of an organization is useful for understanding the moral impact of leaders on organizations.

Terry, Larry D. "Leadership in the Administrative State: The Concept of Administrative Conservatorship," *Administration and Society*, Vol. 21, no. 4, (February, 1990), 395-412. In this article Terry argues that the model of entrepreneurship is a useful characterization of leadership in the private sector, but it is not in the public sector. The civic responsibility of public leaders is to be morally committed to the cohesion, coherence and stability of the political system. The ethical public sector leader has to balance his or her obligation to serve people and preserve the system.

### *Fiction*

Hartwick Classic Leadership Cases (The Hartwick Management Institute, Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY 13820). The Hartwick cases are 20-30 page selections from a wide variety of literature. The cases pair an excerpt from a classic piece of literature with a contemporary article on a similar issue. The editors provide guide questions and summaries of issues in leadership studies. The summaries are uneven in quality, but they provide useful footnotes for further reading. Here are a few selections that can be used in a college or executive course on leadership:

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: This case combines the part of Conrad's novel where Marlow meets up with Kurtz. It allows the readers to discuss Kurtz as a charismatic leader who has gone astray. Also included in the case are a series of articles about Eli Black, the chairman of United Brands. Black spent his career as a socially responsible leader who did some unethical things to save his company. One day he came to work and jumped out of his office window. The Conrad and Black articles work well to stimulate discussion on the pressures and personal morality of leadership.

*Spider Old Woman Tales* from the Hopi: Hopi culture is matrilineal and communal. The stories give students an opportunity to discuss how gender affects leadership and the morality of groups. These stories are paired with Judy Rosener's article "Way's Women Lead," from *The Harvard Business Review*, November/December 1990. Also included is an article on the Japanese-run company NUMMI called, "Management by Stress," by Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter, *Technology Review*, 1988.

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*: Fragments of Malcolm X's book are pieced together so that the reader gets a good sense of Malcolm's moral development as a leader. It is rather odd that the editor pairs this reading with an article on Sam Walton called "Wal-Mart: Will it Take Over the World?," by John Huey, from *Fortune*, January 30, 1992. The editor makes a connection between Malcolm X and Sam Walton at the end of the case through a discussion of charismatic leadership.

Hesse, Hermann, *The Journey to the East*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991). The main character of this book sets out on a journey. During that journey Leo, the servant disappears. After Leo disappears, the group falls apart and the main character, HH, abandons his quest. HH later discovers that the servant Leo was really the leader of the group. Students like this book and it provides for good class discussion. Hesse's short novel was the inspiration for Greenleaf's book on servant leadership.

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