The Ethics of Leadership

Examining the Ethical Implications of Leader-Follower Relationships and the Power We Give Our Leaders

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Work in Progress Presentation

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Overview

- Introduction
- Key Issues
- The “Hitler Problem”
- Ethical Failures in Leadership
- Leader-Follower Relationship
- Servant Leadership as Paradigm Model of Leadership
- Feedback/Q&A
Introduction

- Leadership as a Discipline
  - Interdisciplinary approach
- The Problem of Definition
  - What do we mean by "Good Leader?"
- Leadership Ethics
  - What is the domain of inquiry?
Key Issues

➢ The Moral/Effectiveness Question a.k.a. The Hitler Problem
  Is Moral Excellence Embedded in the Definition of Leadership?

➢ Understanding Ethical Failures in Leaders
  Are Ethical Failures Volitional or are they Cognitive?

➢ The Leader-Follower Relationship and the Problems of Inequality
  Are Leaders a Special Class of Moral Agents?

➢ Enabling the Powerful and Successful to Fail Ethically?
  Is there an Inappropriate Transfer of Power that Enables Leaders to Fail?

➢ Servant Leadership
  Is Servant Leadership a Paradigm Model of Leadership for the (Business) World?
The Hitler Problem

- Who is a Good Leader?
- The Two Senses of “Good”
  - Good as in “Moral”
  - Good as in “Effective”
When Good Leaders Do Bad Things

- Why Do Leaders Fail?
- Two analyses of Leadership Failures
  - The Volitional Account
  - The Cognitive Account
- The Bathsheba Syndrome
  - Traditional Explanation
  - A Cognitive Account of David’s Sin
Is there a Separate Leader Ethic?

- Are Leaders Special Moral Agents?
- The Responsibility of Leadership
- Privileges of Leadership
  - Access
  - Knowledge
  - Power
- The Relationship of Followers to Leaders
The Allure of Toxic Leaders

- Toxic Leaders
  - They leave their followers in a worse shape than when they found them
- The Super Hero Syndrome
  - The Appeal of Super Heroes
- The Qualities we like in our Leaders:
  - Innovation
  - Creativity
  - “Out-of-the-Box” Thinking
  - Non-Rule Followers
- Do We Empower Our Leaders to Fail Ethically?
Servant Leadership

- Introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf
  - The Journey to the East
- Servant Leadership in Practice
  - Southwest Airlines
  - Herman Miller
- Who Exactly is A Servant Leader?
  - A Servant Who Leads?
  - A Leader Who Serves?
  - Any Other Option?
...Post-Script...
(not quite an unscientific one...)

- A Kierkegaardian Excursion ... Fear and Trembling
- Comparison:
  - Knight of Faith/Tragic Hero with Servant Leader/Toxic Leader?
  - Can Servant Leaders be Toxic Leaders?
Questions?

Or just interested in chatting over coffee or chai tea?

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