

From:

**Joanne B. Ciulla (editor), *Ethics: The Heart of Leadership*, 2nd edition.
Pages ix-xii.**

Foreword

If you're teaching a class in leadership and wish to start up a lively discussion, try posing that old chestnut of a question: "Was Adolf Hitler a leader?" The last time I tried this, in an honors course at the University of Maryland, a woman student vehemently answered "YES"—bad as he was, she said, he mirrored the hopes and hates of the German people, he won elections, and he fulfilled his promises by changing Germany along the lines his followers wanted—how could he not be called a leader? She had the class all but convinced and almost me. Almost.

It was not, of course, that she was in any way pro-Hitler, who stands as the most universally detested man in history. The problem was not confusion about Hitler but about the true nature of leadership. One of the many virtues of this excellent collection is Joanne Ciulla's confrontation at the outset of the question, what constitutes a good leader? This central question raises further questions about ethical and moral leadership. The problem is that in this book, and in many others on leadership, the richness and heterogeneity of the field of leadership have led to great confusion about the difference between ethical and moral leadership; some use the terms interchangeably, in this volume and elsewhere.

I discern three types of leadership values: *ethical* virtues—"old-fashioned character tests" such as sobriety, chastity, abstention, kindness,

altruism, and other “Ten Commandments” rules of personal conduct; *ethical* values such as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, reliability, reciprocity, accountability; and *moral* values such as order (or security), liberty, equality, justice, community (meaning brotherhood and sisterhood, replacing the traditional term *fraternity*).

Each of these types of leadership values has implications for styles and strategies of leadership itself. *Status-quo* leaders, presiding over relatively stable communities, are dependent on ethical virtues, rules of personal behavior, such as kindness and altruism, that make for harmonious communal relationships. *Ethical values* are crucially important to transactional leaders, whether in politics or education or other fields, who must depend on partners, competitors, clients, and others to live up to promises and understandings, as they themselves must. Responsibility and accountability are the tests here. *Moral values* lie at the heart of transforming leadership, which seeks fundamental changes in society, such as the enhancement of individual liberty and the expansion of justice and of equality of opportunity.

Wouldn't it be lovely, in this fragmented world, if all these three sets of values, and hence all these forms of leadership, could exist in happy harmony? Alas, it cannot be. The more that a community embraces *ethical* virtues of mutual helpfulness, the more it is likely to come into conflict with the ethical virtues of other communities—for example, in business practices, or in religious dogma and behavior. *Ethical* values, too, tend to be culture-based and hence diverse. One society's honesty is another society's incivility; one society's reciprocity is another society's corruption.

Consider the question of manipulation—“managing” other persons' motives—which is so crucial to transactional leadership. Over three decades ago, in the April 1965 issue of *Journal of Social Issues*, Herbert Kelman, recognizing increasing concern over ethical problems in the study of behavioral change, saw a basic dilemma: “On the one hand, for those of us who hold the enhancement of man's freedom of choice to be a fundamental value, any manipulations of the behavior of others constitutes a violation of their essential humanity. . . . On the other hand, effective behavior change inevitably involves some degree of manipulation and control, and at least an implicit imposition of the change agent's values on the client or the person he is influencing.” In short, a dilemma.

Of my three sets of values I would guess that ethical values are most diverse among cultures. While ethical virtues have had far more relevance to modern market societies than to Third or Fourth World “traditional” cultures, transactional leadership values may become more universal as markets and privatization become more global. What about *moral* values? One might assume, in this ideologically torn world,

with its fierce religious and secular conflicts, that moral values might be the most multifarious of all.

I believe, however, that the people of the world, even under diverse leaders, have been—slowly, gropingly, tortuously—shaping and rank-ordering sets of supreme principles. I believe the Enlightenment values of liberty, equality, and fraternity (community) are still evocative and controlling for vast numbers of people in the Western world at least. I believe that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness not only dominate the American “mass mind” but that of most other societies in the West. Despite numerous violations of its terms, the UN’s “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” continues as a moral standard for most nations of the world.

Moral values are not only standards by which we measure our character, our transactions, our policies and programs. They may also contain enormously evocative and revitalizing ideas, for which men and women fight and die. Hence they can serve as transforming forces. But much depends on a crucial step—to translate ideals into action, promises into outcomes, “to walk the talk.” Joanne Ciulla wrote me: “You have to make a lot of assumptions to make a value *do* something. You have to assume that because people value something they act accordingly, but we know this isn’t the case. Value articulations of ethics often leave the door open for hypocrisy. Many people sincerely value truth, but often lie. People can also tell the truth, but not value it” (Correspondence, March 1997). The test lies in *outcomes*—real, intended, and durable change.

And what is the relationship of all these values to *vision*? We think of vision as an overarching, evocative, energizing, moralizing force, ranging from broad, almost architectural plans for a new industry, say, to an inspirational, spiritual, perhaps morally righteous evocation of future hopes and expectations for a new political movement. Visions are often projected by charismatic leaders, calling for mass mobilization and action over the long run on many fronts, perhaps even for a revolution. To the extent that vision is transformational—that is, calls for real change—must it not embody supreme values in some kind of hierarchy? Otherwise would not vision be a kind of loose cannon, lurching back and forth as the visionary leaders follow their own guiding stars?

Another question posed by visionary leadership is the balance of cognitive and affective forces in change decisions. That visionary leadership embraces much that is spiritual and even emotional its proponents do not deny—they assert it. They like to point to Thomas Jefferson’s famed dialogue between “the Head and the Heart” as proof that even a great Enlightenment rationalist understood the place of sentiment in the affairs of state, as well as the affairs of people.

So was Adolf Hitler a leader, measured by those three levels of values? He was a terrible mis-leader: personally cruel and vindictive, politically duplicitous and treacherous, ideologically vicious and annihilative in his aims. A leader of change? Yes, he left Germany a smoking devastated land. My student may have Hitler—I'll take Gandhi, Mandela, and King.

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