THE MORAL
CHALLENGES OF POWER
AND SELF-INTEREST

INTRODUCTION

It might seem odd to begin an ethics text with an article on sources of power and influence. Power is one factor that makes the study of ethics and leadership different from other areas of applied ethics. One might even say that the ethics of a leader largely depends on how he or she gets, distributes, and exercises power and influence. We sometimes have a moral obligation to do something because we can do it or we have the resources to do it. Because leaders have power, they often have more and greater obligations and responsibilities. As you will see in Gary Yukl’s article, leaders and followers may have many different kinds of power. We start with his article because these categories of power will come up again and again in some of the other readings in this text.

The reading from Plato’s Republic helps us to think about justice, power, and self-interest. Thrasymachus, the protagonist in the dialogue, believes that for rulers, justice is whatever is in their own self-interest. Socrates argues that justice is in the interests of the followers, not the ruler, and because of this few people want to lead. The idea that just people are reluctant to lead explains why we are sometimes uncomfortable with those who seem too eager to take on leadership positions. We often feel better about giving leadership to individuals who are more circumspect and conscious of the responsibilities of power—in other words, the ones who know leadership is not necessarily in their best interest. Plato’s “The Ring of Gyges” offers us a kind of moral experiment that helps us explore the temptations of power and self-interests when there is no accountability.

Our ideas about ethics and leadership come from the assumptions that we make about human nature. We all carry a theory of human nature around with us in our heads. This overview of “what people are like” determines how we treat people and how we think of our moral obligations to them. For example, the management theorist Douglas McGregor has described theory X and
theory Y perspectives on management. He said that theory X rests on the idea that the average human being dislikes work and will avoid it if he or she can. If people are really like this, leaders would have to coerce, control, direct, and threaten people to get things done. This theory also implies that most people are like sheep, that they don’t want responsibility, and that they desire security above all things.\(^1\) In contrast to theory X, theory Y assumes that the average human being does not dislike work and, under the right conditions, finds work a source of satisfaction. It implies that people have the capacity to be creative and to take and seek responsibility. If you believe theory Y, you will give people responsibility and try to help them find reward and meaning in their work. If you believe theory X, you will have to use carrots and big sticks to get people to do what you want.

Thomas Hobbes paints a picture of human nature that many still subscribe to today. He believed that people are chiefly motivated by self-interest and the desire for safety and self-preservation. As a result of this, in the absence of a state, or in a state of nature, everyone is at war, because they are all out to get what they want for themselves. This state of war is a state of fear, which moves people to relinquish some of their liberty to a sovereign so they can have security. This is not exactly theory X, but it’s close.

We get a slightly different slant on leadership and morality from Niccolò Machiavelli. He tells us that men are generally “simple and governed by their present needs.” Although Machiavelli says people want ethical leaders, he also thinks it is very easy to fool them into believing a leader has good moral qualities when in fact he does not. (Today we call this “impression management.”) For Machiavelli, leaders should focus their attention on acquiring and maintaining their power. Like the character Thrasyimachus in Plato’s Republic, Machiavelli argues that justice and morality must be used to serve the leader’s self-interest. The selections from the Prince clearly illustrate how the need to get and hold on to power may conflict with moral leadership.

Machiavelli and Hobbes start with the assumption that human nature is such that all human action is based on self-interest. This position is called psychological egoism. The next reading in this chapter is from Atlas Shrugged, a novel by Ayn Rand. In it, Rand argues that the problem with people is that they should act according to their self-interest, but they don’t because they are misguided by conventional morality to make sacrifices for others who are not worthy. She asserts that morality based on duty, the greatest good, and self-sacrifice require people to relinquish their happiness for the happiness of others. Rand argues that ethics should be based on self-interest and that the other moral theories in this text (especially Kant’s) only make people weak and miserable. Rand’s position, that one ought to act in one’s self-interest is called ethical egoism.

From Thrasyvachus and Machiavelli to present-day writers, there have always been those who not only believe that leaders always act in their self-interest, but that they should do so. On the other extreme are those who argue that leadership is about serving the interests of others. This chapter raises a number of questions: Is self-interest the only thing that motivates us? Should self-interest come before the interests of others or the greatest good? What are the legitimate ways for leaders to exercise power? Perhaps the most provocative questions raised in this chapter are: Can a moral leader be a successful leader? Does a leader have to be moral to be successful?

Sources of Power and Influence

Gary Yukl

Gary Yukl is professor of organizational behavior at the State University of New York at Albany. The following essay is from his textbook, Leadership in Organizations, which is one of the standard texts for teaching the social science theories on leadership. In this essay Yukl provides an overview of the research on sources of power. Because leadership studies is by necessity an interdisciplinary field, it is useful to look at the descriptions of power that come from this area of leadership research and use them as a starting point for thinking about the moral implications of power that come up in the other readings in the chapter. For example, how leaders use their power to reward, punish, and distribute resources raise questions about justice and fairness. Referent power and the power that comes from a leader’s personality and reputation, help us think about the moral character of leaders and their ability to model virtues and shape the moral environment of an organization. Last, it is particularly useful to reflect on a leader’s ability to control information.

The essence of leadership is influence over followers. However, the influence process between a leader and followers is not unidirectional. Leaders influence followers, but followers also have some influence over leaders. Moreover, in large organizations, the effectiveness of middle-level and lower-level managers depends on their influence over superiors and peers as well as their influence over subordinates. Influence in one direction tends to enhance influence in other directions.

Power

Power generally refers to an agent’s capacity to influence a target person, but the term has been used in different ways by different theorists (Dahl, 1957;
Grimes, 1978; House, 1988b; Jacobs, 1970; Kotter, 1985; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). Sometimes power means the agent’s capacity to influence a target person’s behavior, whereas at other times it means influence over the target person’s attitudes as well as behavior. Sometimes power is defined in relative rather than absolute terms as the extent to which the agent has more influence over the target than the target has over the agent (“net power”). A variation of this definition is the target’s capacity to influence the agent without fear of retaliation (“usable power”). Sometimes power refers to the agent’s influence over a single target person, and sometimes power is measured in relation to multiple target persons. Sometimes power is used to mean potential influence over things as well as people. Finally, recognizing the difficulty of measuring potential influence, some people define power as the amount of influence actually exercised by the agent (“enacted power”). None of these definitions is inherently superior for all purposes, but for clarity of communication it is helpful to settle on one definition.

Power Types and Sources

Efforts to understand power usually involve distinctions among different types of power in organizations. French and Raven (1959) developed a taxonomy to classify different types of power according to their source (see Table 1-1). Some types of power correspond closely to some of Kelman’s influence processes. Instrumental compliance is associated primarily with the use of reward and coercive power. Identification is associated primarily with use of referent power. Internalization is associated primarily with use of expert power.

Legitimate power cuts across all three types of influence processes and may involve elements of each of them (Kelman, 1974). The French and Raven taxonomy has influenced much of the research on power for the past three decades, but it does not include all of the power sources relevant to managers. For example, control over information is also a relevant power source for managers (Pettigrew, 1972; Yulé & Falbe, 1991).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1-1</th>
<th>French and Raven Power Taxonomy</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reward</strong></td>
<td>The target person complies in order to obtain rewards he or she believes are controlled by the agent.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coercive power</strong></td>
<td>The target person complies in order to avoid punishments he or she believes are controlled by the agent.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimate power</strong></td>
<td>The target person complies because he or she believes the agent has the right to make the request and the target person has the obligation to comply.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expert power</strong></td>
<td>The target person complies because he or she believes that the agent has special knowledge about the best way to do something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referent power</strong></td>
<td>The target person complies because he or she admires or identifies with the agent and wants to gain the agent’s approval.</td>
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Another conceptualization of power sources that is widely accepted is the dichotomy between "position power" and "personal power" (Bass, 1960; Etzioni, 1961). According to this two-factor conceptualization, power is derived in part from the opportunities inherent in a person's position in the organization, and in part from attributes of the agent and agent-target relationship. Research by Yukl and Falbe (1991) showed that these two types of power are relatively independent, and each includes several distinct but partially overlapping components. Position and personal determinants of power interact in complex ways, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between them.

**Position Power**

Position power includes potential influence derived from legitimate authority, control over resources and rewards, control over punishments, control over information, and control over the organization of the work and the physical work environment.

**Formal Authority**

Power stemming from formal authority is sometimes called legitimate power (French & Raven, 1959). Authority is based on perceptions about the prerogatives, obligations, and responsibilities associated with particular positions in an organization or social system. Authority includes the perceived right of one position occupant to influence specified aspects of the behavior of other position occupants. The agent has the right to make particular types of requests, and the target person has the duty to obey. For example, a manager usually has the legitimate right to establish work rules, give work assignments, and direct the task behavior of subordinates. The subordinates, in turn, usually have the legitimate right to request necessary information and assistance from the manager. Authority also involves the right of a person to exercise control over things, such as money, resources, equipment, and materials, and this control is another source of power.

As noted earlier, the influence processes associated with legitimate power are very complex, because compliance with authority may involve elements of internalization, identification, and instrumental compliance. People are more likely to obey legitimate rules and carry out legitimate requests if they have an internalized value that it is proper to obey authority figures, show respect for the law, and follow tradition. Moreover, people are more likely to comply with legitimate rules and requests if they identify with the organization (or social system) and are loyal to it, as compared to marginal or involuntary members who do not identify with it. Influence derived from legitimate power also has an instrumental aspect. Members agree to comply with rules and directions from leaders in return for the benefits of membership (March & Simon, 1958). The
conditions for continued membership in an organization may be set forth in a formal, legal contract, but the agreement to comply with legitimate authority is usually an implicit mutual understanding. This implicit social contract is the ultimate basis for authority.

One prerequisite for acceptance of a person’s authority is the perceived legitimacy of the person as an occupant of a leadership position in the organization. This aspect of legitimacy depends to a large extent on how the leader was selected. In earlier times, leaders were usually selected on the basis of bloodlines and rules of succession; for example, the eldest male child was first in line to succeed a ruler or inherit the family business. Now in most large organizations, leaders are usually appointed by superiors or elected by the membership. For example, the chief executive officer (CEO) of a corporation is appointed by the board of directors, and the president of a labor union is elected by the membership. The specific procedures for selecting a leader are usually based on tradition and the provisions of a legal charter or constitution. If a leader is selected in a way that deviates from the process considered legitimate by members, the authority of the leader is likely to be weakened. The importance of legitimate selection is evident in the concerted effort of most leaders to establish a recognized basis for their authority. Elected leaders are concerned about being able to claim a “mandate” by voters, and elaborate inauguration ceremonies are held by many kinds of leaders to formalize the transfer of power and enhance the legitimacy of their selection.

The perceived legitimacy of a request also depends on whether it falls within the agent’s scope of authority. A person’s scope of authority is the range of requests that can properly be made and the range of actions which can properly be taken. Scope of authority depends in large part on the influence needed to accomplish recognized role requirements and organizational objectives (Barnard, 1952). However, even when a leader’s scope of authority is delineated by documents such as an organization charter, a written job description, or an employment contract, there usually remains considerable ambiguity (Davis, 1968). Reitz (1977, p. 468) provides some examples of the kinds of questions that may be raised about a leader’s scope of authority:

An executive can rightfully expect a supervisor to work hard and diligently; may he also influence the supervisor to spy on rivals, spend weekends away from home, join an encounter group? A coach can rightfully expect his players to execute specific plays; may he also direct their life styles outside the sport? A combat officer can rightfully expect his men to attack on order; may he also direct them to execute civilians whom he claims are spies? A doctor can rightfully order a nurse to attend a patient or observe an autopsy; may he order her to assist in an abortion against her will?

Questions about scope of authority are especially difficult in lateral relations. Even though a person has no direct authority over someone in a position outside of the chain of command, the person often has the legitimate right to
make requests necessary to carry out job responsibilities, such as requests for information, supplies, support services, technical advice, and assistance in carrying out joint tasks.

A major reason for ambiguity about the legitimacy of a request is that people evaluate not only the agent's scope of formal authority, but also the extent to which the request is consistent with the basic values, principles, and traditions of the organization or social system. The legitimacy of a request may be questioned if it contradicts a basic value of the organization or the larger society to which members of the organization belong. For example, soldiers may disobey the order of an army general to shoot everyone in a village that has provided support to insurgents, because the soldiers perceive this to be use of excessive force and contrary to basic human rights.

**Control over Resources and Rewards**

Another source of power in organizations is control over resources and rewards. This control stems in part from formal authority. The higher a person's position in the authority hierarchy of the organization, the more control over scarce resources the person is likely to have. Executives have more control than middle managers, who in turn have more control than first-line managers. Executives have authority to make decisions about the allocation of resources to various subunits and activities, and in addition they have the right to review and modify resource allocation decisions made at lower levels.

Potential influence based on control over rewards is sometimes called reward power (French & Raven, 1959). Reward power depends not only on control over resources, but also on the perceptions of the target person that a request or assignment is feasible and, if carried out, will actually result in the promised reward. An attempt to use reward power will be unsuccessful if the agent lacks credibility or the requirements for obtaining the reward appear impossible.

One form of reward power is influence over compensation and career progress. Most managers are authorized to give pay increases, bonuses, or other economic incentives to deserving subordinates. Reward power is derived also from control over tangible benefits such as a promotion, a better job, a better work schedule, a larger operating budget, a larger expense account, more authority and responsibility, formal recognition of accomplishments (e.g., awards, commendations), and status symbols such as a larger office or a reserved parking space. The extent of a manager's authority and discretion to allocate rewards to subordinates varies greatly across organizations and from one type of management position to another within the same organization. Some managers have the opportunity to use all these rewards, whereas other managers are severely limited in their authority over rewards.

Reward power is also a source of influence over peers. Some organizations, especially those with a matrix structure (e.g., product managers, project
managers), utilize the formal evaluations by a manager's peers in making decisions about pay increases or promotions. Another source of reward power in lateral relations is dependence on a peer for resources, information, assistance, or support that is not prescribed by the formal authority system. Trading of favors needed to accomplish task objectives is a common form of influence among peers in organizations, and research indicates that it is important for the success of middle managers (Cohen & Bradford, 1989; Kaplan, 1984; Kotter, 1982; Strauss, 1962).

Control over Punishments
Another source of power is control over punishments and the capacity to prevent someone from obtaining desired rewards. This form of power is sometimes called coercive power (French & Raven, 1959). The formal authority system of an organization and its traditions deal with the use of punishment as well as use of rewards. A leader's authority over punishments varies greatly across different types of organizations. The coercive power of military and political leaders is usually greater than that of corporate managers. Over the last two centuries, there has been a general decline in use of legitimate coercion by all types of leaders (Katz & Kahn, 1978). For example, managers once had the right to dismiss employees for any reason they thought was justified. The captain of a ship could flog sailors who were disobedient or who failed to perform their duties diligently. Military officers could execute a soldier for desertion or failure to obey an order during combat. Nowadays, these forms of coercive power are prohibited or sharply restricted in most nations.

Even though coercion has been one of the most common forms of leader influence throughout history, its frequent use may be due more to ignorance or to the psychological needs of some leaders than to demonstrated effectiveness. Even under extreme conditions where leaders have the power to torture and murder workers, coercion is often ineffective. Webber (1975) relates an example of the disastrous consequences resulting from reliance on coercion in a Nazi bomb factory using slave labor during World War II. The workers hindered production by persistently requesting detailed instructions and doing nothing constructive on their own initiative. They sabotaged production by improperly fitting the bomb fuses, and it was impossible for the guards to detect the sabotage and ensure minimal performance unless they watched each worker closely, which required nearly as many guards as slaves.

There are some situations in which coercion is appropriate, and historical accounts provide evidence of its effective use by political and military leaders in maintaining discipline and dealing with rebels and criminals. Nevertheless, coercion is effective only when applied to a small percentage of followers under conditions considered legitimate by a majority of them. When leaders are tempted to use coercion on a large scale against followers, it undermines
their authority and creates a hostile opposition seeking to restrict their power or remove them from office (Blau, 1956).

**Control over Information**
Another important source of power is control over information. This type of power involves both the access to vital information and control over its distribution to others (Pettigrew, 1972). Some access to information results from a person's position in the organization's communication network. Managerial positions often provide opportunities to obtain information that is not directly available to subordinates or peers (Mintzberg, 1973, 1983). Boundary role positions (e.g., marketing, purchasing, public relations) provide access to important information about events in the external environment of an organization. However, it is not merely a matter of occupying a particular position and having information appear as if by magic; a person must be actively involved in cultivating a network of information sources and gathering information from them (Kotter, 1982).

A middle manager who is the only channel for downward communication of decisions made by superiors is in a position to interpret them selectively for subordinates and peers. In a similar manner, a leader who controls the flow of vital information about outside events has an opportunity to interpret these events for subordinates and influence their perception and attitudes (Kuhn, 1963). A manager may use deliberate distortion of information to persuade people that a particular course of action is desirable. Examples of information distortion include selective editing of reports and documents, biased interpretation of data, and presentation of false information. Some managers attempt to increase subordinate dependence on them by hoarding information necessary to solve task problems, plan operations, and make strategic decisions. In effect, control over information is used to enhance the manager's expertise and give the person more expert power than subordinates. If the leader is the only one who "knows what is going on," subordinates will lack evidence to dispute the leader's claim that an unpopular decision is justified by circumstances. Moreover, control of information makes it easier for a leader to cover up failures and mistakes that would otherwise undermine a carefully cultivated image of expertise (Pfeffer, 1977a).

Control over information is a source of upward influence as well as downward and lateral influence. When subordinates have exclusive access to information needed by superiors to make decisions, this advantage can be used as a source of influence over the superior's decisions. Some subordinates actively seek this type of influence by gradually assuming more and more responsibility for collecting, storing, analyzing, and reporting operating information. If a leader is completely dependent on a subordinate to interpret complex analyses of operating information, the subordinate may be invited to participate directly in making decisions based on these analyses (Korda, 1975). However,
even without direct participation, a subordinate with information control will be able to influence a superior's decisions.

**Personal Power**

Personal power includes potential influence derived from task expertise, friendship and loyalty, and a leader's persuasive and charismatic qualities.

**Expertise**

A major source of personal power is expertise in solving problems and performing important tasks. This form of power is sometimes called expert power (French & Raven, 1959). Expertise is a source of power for a person only if others are dependent on the person for advice. The more important a problem is to the target person, the greater the power derived by the agent from possessing the necessary expertise to solve it. Dependency is increased when the target person cannot easily find another source of advice besides the agent (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971; Patchen, 1974).

It is not enough for the agent to possess expertise, the target person must recognize this expertise and perceive the leader to be a reliable source of information and advice. Sometimes a target person trusts the agent's expertise enough to carry out a request without receiving any explanation for it. A good example is the patient who takes medicine prescribed by a doctor without knowing what the medicine is or what effects it will have. However, it is rare to possess this much expert power. In most cases, the agent must support a proposal or request by making logical arguments and presenting evidence that appears credible.

In the short run, perceived expertise is more important than real expertise, and an agent may be able to fake it for a time by acting confident and pretending to be an expert. However, over time, as the agent's knowledge is put to the test, target perceptions of the agent's expertise are likely to become more accurate. Thus, it is essential for leaders to develop and maintain a reputation for technical expertise and strong credibility.

Reputation depends in part on actual expertise and in part on impression management. Actual expertise is maintained through a continual process of education and practical experience. For example, in many professions it is important to keep informed about new developments by reading technical publications and attending workshops and seminars. Evidence of expertise can be displayed in the forms of diplomas, licenses, and awards. At an opportune time, a person can refer casually to earlier accomplishments or positions of importance. However, the most convincing approach is to demonstrate expertise by solving important problems, making good decisions, providing sound advice, and successfully completing challenging but highly visible projects. An extreme tactic is to intentionally but covertly precipitate crises just to demonstrate the ability to deal with them (Goldner, 1970; Pfeffer, 1977a).
Specialized knowledge and technical skill will remain a source of power only as long as there is continued dependence on the person who possesses them. If a problem is permanently solved or others learn how to solve it by themselves, the agent's expertise is no longer valuable. Thus, people sometimes try to protect their expert power by keeping procedures and techniques shrouded in secrecy, by using technical jargon to make the task seem more complex and mysterious, and by destroying alternate sources of information about task procedures such as written manuals, diagrams, blueprints, and computer programs (Hickson et al., 1971).

Special expertise in dealing with critical problems is just as much a source of upward and lateral power as it is of downward power. A person's ability to perform a vital function that superiors or peers cannot do increases their dependence on him or her (Mechanic, 1962). Expert power is greatest for someone with rare skills who has high job mobility and cannot be replaced easily.

**Friendship and Loyalty**

Another important source of power is the desire of others to please a person toward whom they feel strong affection. This form of power is sometimes called referent power (French & Raven, 1959). People are usually willing to do special favors for a friend, and they are more likely to carry out requests made by someone they greatly admire. The strongest form of referent power for a leader involves the influence process called personal identification. People who identify with a leader want to be like the leader and to be accepted by him or her. As noted earlier, people tend to imitate the behavior of someone with whom they identify. Thus, a manager who is well liked and admired can have considerable influence over subordinates and peers by setting an example of proper and desirable behavior.

The referent power of a leader over subordinates depends on feelings of friendship and loyalty developed slowly over a long period of time. The referent power of a leader is increased by acting friendly and considerate, showing concern for the needs and feelings of others, demonstrating trust and respect, and treating people fairly. Referent power is diminished by acting in a hostile, rejecting, or arrogant manner. Over time, actions speak louder than words, and a leader who tries to appear friendly but manipulates and exploits people will lose referent power.

Subordinates are aware that a powerful boss has the potential to cause them great inconvenience or harm, and even the subordinates of a benevolent leader tend to be sensitive to subtle indications of approval and disapproval. Dependence on the whims of a powerful authority figure is especially disturbing for subordinates who have a strong need for independence. The potentially disturbing aspects of the status differential between leader and subordinate increase the importance of symbolic acts that downplay the differential. Whyte (1969) describes an effective production foreman who spent
his time on the shop floor, wore the same kind of work clothes as subordinates, and was willing to pitch in and help subordinates when there was an equipment breakdown, even though it occasionally meant getting dirty. Whyte concludes that symbolic actions of this type demonstrate acceptance and respect for subordinates and build loyalty for a small expenditure in time and effort.

Another approach for increasing a leader's referent power is to select as subordinates people who are likely to identify with the leader. For example, the marketing vice president of a manufacturing company recruited other immigrants from his homeland for several years before he became vice president, and their loyalty and identification was so strong that he could get them to implement new marketing programs faster than any of the company's competitors. This strategy can be extended beyond a leader's immediate work unit by using political influence to select friends for sensitive positions in other parts of an organization.

Referent power is a major source of lateral influence over peers, and it is especially important for middle managers who depend on peers to provide necessary information, assistance, and resources (Kanter, 1982; Kaplan, 1984; Kotter, 1982). Lateral referent power is established by acting friendly and considerate, and by providing assistance, favors, and political support (Kaplan, 1984). Success in developing and maintaining referent power depends on interpersonal skills such as charm, tact, diplomacy, empathy, and humor.

**Charisma**

Charisma is a term used to describe a person who appears to have extraordinary ability and strong personal magnetism. Followers identify with a charismatic leader and experience an intense emotional attraction to him or her. The process of identification is usually faster and more intense for a charismatic leader than for a friendly but noncharismatic leader. The personal attributes of charismatic leaders are not well understood, but they appear to include qualities such as strong convictions, enthusiasm, and a dramatic, persuasive manner of speaking (Berlew, 1974; House, 1977). Charismatic leaders have insight into the needs, hopes, and values of followers and are able to motivate commitment to proposals and strategies for change. However, it is not clear yet whether charisma is best viewed as a distinct form of personal power, as a variation of referent power, or as merely an attribution by followers that sometimes occurs during the reciprocal influence process between a leader and followers.
REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How has a leader's ability to control information changed in recent years?
2. What is the impact of increased access to information on the power and authority of leaders?
3. How do leaders' ethical values affect the kind of power they use to gain the support and cooperation of followers?
4. How might followers use these same sources of power to influence leaders?
5. What are the potential ethical strengths and weaknesses of each of these sources of power?

Justice and the Leader

Plato, 428 B.C.-348 B.C.

Plato's Republic was written around 380 B.C. An Athenian by birth, Plato witnessed the aftermath of Athens' defeat to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War, the demise of Athenian democracy, and the politically motivated imprisonment and death of Socrates. Plato puzzled over the question of how to best run the state in his writings. He was ambivalent about democracy, but he was also aware of how other forms of government such as oligarchy could be corrupt. The Republic is best known for Plato's depiction of the ideal state led by a philosopher king. The philosopher king was someone who was well-educated in what we today would call the liberal arts, and he or she (women were eligible) had to be virtuous. Plato believed that only the wisest should rule. By wisdom Plato meant more than just intelligence. He believed that wisdom was both intelligence and moral virtue. A smart evil person was not wise and a wise person could not be evil. One does wonder, would organizations and the world be better run if only the smartest and most ethical people were leaders?

For leadership scholars, the model of the philosopher king is not the most important part of the Republic. The first two books of the Republic are about the nature of justice, but they also discuss some of the most important moral aspects of leadership. The following selections consider not only justice, but the way power and self-interest might distort a ruler's notion of justice. As the dialogue begins, we find Socrates engaged in a conversation with his friends at the home of the elderly businessman Cephalus. Cephalus says justice is "speaking the truth and paying whatever debts one has incurred." Cephalus leaves the conversation and his son Polemarchus takes his father's place. Polemarchus asserts that the poet Simonides was correct when he said that it is just to give to each what is owed to him. As the dialogue develops we meet Thrasymachus who asserts that justice is what is in the interest of the strongest. The following selection begins with Socrates questioning this assertion.

"Justice and the Leader" by Plato from Republic, Book I, edited by G. M. A. Grube. Copyright © 1992. Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved.
But what about this? Should one also give one's enemies whatever is owed to them?

By all means, one should give them what is owed to them. And in my view what enemies owe to each other is appropriately and precisely—something bad. It seems then that Simonides was speaking in riddles—just like a poet!—when he said what justice is, for he thought it just to give to each what is appropriate to him, and this is what he called giving him what is owed to him. What else did you think he meant?

Then what do you think he'd answer if someone asked him: "Simonides, which of the things that are owed or that are appropriate for someone or something to have does the craft we call medicine give, and to whom or what does it give them?"

It's clear that it gives medicines, food, and drink to bodies.
And what owed or appropriate things does the craft we call cooking give, and to whom or what does it give them?

It gives seasonings to food.

Good. Now, what does the craft we call justice give, and to whom or what does it give it?
If we are to follow the previous answers, Socrates, it gives benefits to friends and does harm to enemies.
Simonides means, then, that to treat friends well and enemies badly is justice?
I believe so.
And who is most capable of treating friends well and enemies badly in matters of disease and health?
A doctor.

And who can do so best in a storm at sea?
A ship's captain.

What about the just person? In what actions and what work is he most capable of benefiting friends and harming enemies?
In wars and alliances, I suppose.
All right. Now, when people aren't sick, Polemarchus, a doctor is useless to them?
True.
And so is a ship's captain to those who aren't sailing?
Yes.
And then good people are their enemies and bad ones their friends?

The Greek word translated as "craft" here is *techne*. It has the sort of connotation for Socrates and Plato that "science" has for us. Thus fifth-century doctors tried to show that medicine is a craft, much as contemporary psychoanalysts try to convince us that psychoanalysis is a science. For further discussion see Reeve, *Socrates in the Apology*, 37-45.
That's right.  
And so it's just to benefit bad people and harm good ones?

Apparently.

But good people are just and able to do no wrong?

True.

Then, according to your account, it's just to do bad things to those who do no injustice.

No, that's not just at all, Socrates; my account must be a bad one.

It's just, then, is it, to harm unjust people and benefit just ones?

That's obviously a more attractive view than the other one, anyway.

Then, it follows, Polemarchus, that it is just for the many, who are mistaken in their judgment, to harm their friends, who are bad, and benefit their enemies, who are good. And so we arrive at a conclusion opposite to what we said Simonides meant.

That certainly follows. But let's change our definition, for it seems that we didn't define friends and enemies correctly.

How did we define them, Polemarchus?

We said that a friend is someone who is believed to be useful.

And how are we to change that now?

Someone who is both believed to be useful and is useful is a friend; someone who is believed to be useful but isn't, is believed to be a friend but isn't. 335 And the same for the enemy.

According to this account, then, a good person will be a friend and a bad one an enemy.

Yes.

So you want us to add something to what we said before about justice, when we said that it is just to treat friends well and enemies badly. You want us to add to this that it is just to treat well a friend who is good and to harm an enemy who is bad?

Right. That seems fine to me.

Is it, then, the role of a just man to harm anyone?

Certainly, he must harm those who are both bad and enemies.

Do horses become better or worse when they are harmed?

Worse.

With respect to the virtue that makes dogs good or the one that makes horses good?

13If something is a knife (say) or a man, its areti is virtue as a knife or a man is that state or property of it that makes it a good knife or a good man. See Chariades 161a-8:  Enquiry 650c-4: Crito 50c1-2-4: Protagoras 332a-4: Republic 350a1-351a2. The areti of a knife might include having a sharp blade; the areti of a man might include being intelligent, well-born, just, or courageous. Areti is thus broader than our notion of moral virtue. It applies to things (such as knives) which are not moral agents. And it applies to aspects of moral agents (such as intelligence or family status) which are not normally considered to be moral aspects of them. For these reasons it is sometimes more appropriate to render areti as "excellence." But "virtue" remains the best overall translation, and once these few facts are borne in mind, it should seldom mislead.
The one that makes horses good.
And when dogs are harmed, they become worse in the virtue that makes
dogs good, not horses?
Necessarily.
Then won’t we say the same about human beings, too, that when they are
c harmed they become worse in human virtue?
Indeed.
But isn’t justice human virtue?
Yes, certainly.
Then people who are harmed must become more unjust?
So it seems.
Can musicians make people unmusical through music?
They cannot.
Or horsemen make people unhorsemanlike through horsemanship?
No.
Well, then, can those who are just make people unjust through justice?
In a word, can those who are good make people bad through virtue?
They cannot.
It isn’t the function of heat to cool things but of its opposite?
Yes.
Nor the function of dryness to make things wet but of its opposite?
Indeed.
Nor the function of goodness to harm but of its opposite?
Apparently.
And a just person is good?
Indeed.
Then, Polemarchus, it isn’t the function of a just person to harm a friend
or anyone else, rather it is the function of his opposite, an unjust person?
In my view that’s completely true, Socrates.
If anyone tells us, then, that it is just to give to each what he’s owed and
understands by this that a just man should harm his enemies and benefit his
friends, he isn’t wise to say it, since what he says isn’t true, for it has become
clear to us that it is never just to harm anyone?
I agree.
You and I shall fight as partners, then, against anyone who tells us that
Simonides, Bias, Pittacus, or any of our other wise and blessedly happy men
said this.13
I, at any rate, am willing to be your partner in the battle.

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13Bias of Priene in Ionia (now the reign of Turkey bordering on the eastern shore of the Aegean) and
Pittacus of Mytilene (on the island of Lesbos in the eastern Aegean), both sixth century B.C., were
two of the legendary seven sages of Greece.
Do you know to whom I think the saying belongs that it is just to benefit friends and harm enemies?

Who?

I think it belongs to Periander, or Perdiccas, or Xerxes, or Ismenias of Corinth, or some other wealthy man who believed himself to have great power.\(^{14}\)

That’s absolutely true.

All right, since it has become apparent that justice and the just aren’t what such people say they are, what else could they be?

While we were speaking, Thrasy-machus had tried many times to take over the discussion but was restrained by those sitting near him, who wanted to hear our argument to the end. When we paused after what I’d just said, however, he couldn’t keep quiet any longer. He coiled himself up like a wild beast about to spring, and he hurled himself at us as if to tear us to pieces.

Listen, then. I say that justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger. Well, why don’t you praise me? But then you’d do anything to avoid having to do that.

I must first understand you, for I don’t yet know what you mean. The advantage of the stronger, you say, is just.

What do you mean, Thrasy-machus? Surely you don’t mean something like this: Polycrates, the pancratist,\(^{16}\) is stronger than we are; it is to his advantage to eat beef to build up his physical strength; therefore, this food is also advantageous and just for us who are weaker than he is?

You disgust me, Socrates. Your trick is to take hold of the argument at the point where you can do it the most harm.

Not at all, but tell us more clearly what you mean.

Don’t you know that some cities are ruled by a tyranny, some by a democracy, and some by an aristocracy?

Of course.

And in each city this element is stronger, namely, the ruler?

Certainly.

And each makes laws to its own advantage. Democracy makes democratic laws, tyranny makes tyrannical laws, and so on with the others. And they declare what they have made—what is to their own advantage—to be just for their subjects, and they punish anyone who goes against this as lawless and

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\(^{14}\)Periander was tyrant of the city of Corinth (650–570 B.C.). Perdiccas is probably Perdiccas II, King of Macedon (c. 450–413 B.C.), who is also mentioned in the *Gorgias* 471a–c. Xerxes was the king of Persia who invaded Greece in the second Persian war (begun in 480 B.C.). Ismenias is mentioned in the *Men* 90a. All four are either notorious tyrants or men famous for their wealth.

\(^{16}\)Pancratium was a mixture of boxing and wrestling combined with kicking and strangling. Biting and gouging were forbidden, but pretty well everything else, including breaking and dislocating limbs, was permitted.
unjust. This, then, is what I say justice is, the same in all cities, the advantage of the established rule. Since the established rule is surely stronger, anyone who reasons correctly will conclude that the just is the same everywhere, namely, the advantage of the stronger.

Now I see what you mean. Whether it's true or not, I'll try to find out. But you yourself have answered that the just is the advantageous, Thrasymachus, whereas you forbade that answer to me. True, you've added "of the stronger" to it.

b And I suppose you think that's an insignificant addition.

It isn't clear yet whether it's significant. But it is clear that we must investigate to see whether or not it's true. I agree that the just is some kind of advantage. But you add that it's of the stronger. I don't know about that. We'll have to look into it.

Go ahead and look.

We will. Tell me, don't you also say that it is just to obey the rulers?

I do.

c And are the rulers in all cities infallible, or are they liable to error?

No doubt they are liable to error.

When they undertake to make laws, therefore, they make some correctly, others incorrectly?

I suppose so.

And a law is correct if it prescribes what is to the rulers' own advantage and incorrect if it prescribes what is to their disadvantage? Is that what you mean?

It is.

And whatever laws they make must be obeyed by their subjects, and this is justice?

Of course.

d Then, according to your account, it is just to do not only what is to the advantage of the stronger, but also the opposite, what is not to their advantage.

What are you saying?

The same as you. But let's examine it more fully. Haven't we agreed that, in giving orders to their subjects, the rulers are sometimes in error as to what is best for themselves, and yet that it is just for their subjects to do whatever their rulers order? Haven't we agreed to that much?

Tell me: Is a doctor in the precise sense, whom you mentioned before, a money-maker or someone who treats the sick? Tell me about the one who is really a doctor.

He's the one who treats the sick.

What about a ship's captain? Is a captain in the precise sense a ruler of sailors or a sailor?

A ruler of sailors.
We shouldn't, I think, take into account the fact that he sails in a ship, and he shouldn't be called a sailor for that reason, for it isn't because of his sailing that he is called a ship's captain, but because of his craft and his rule over sailors?

That's true.

And is there something advantageous to each of these, that is, to bodies and to sailors?

Certainly.

And aren't the respective crafts by nature set over them to seek and provide what is to their advantage?

They are.

And is there any advantage for each of the crafts themselves except to be as complete or perfect as possible?

What are you asking?

This: If you asked me whether our bodies are sufficient in themselves, or whether they need something else, I'd answer: "They certainly have needs. And because of this, because our bodies are deficient rather than self-sufficient, the craft of medicine has now been discovered. The craft of medicine was developed to provide what is advantageous for a body." Do you think that I'm right in saying this or not?

You are right.

Now, is medicine deficient? Does a craft need some further virtue, as the eyes are in need of sight, and the ears of hearing, so that another craft is needed to seek and provide what is advantageous to them? If a craft itself have some similar deficiency, so that each craft needs another, to seek out what is to its advantage? And does the craft that does the seeking need still another, and so on without end? Or does each seek out what is to its own advantage by itself? Or does it need neither itself nor another craft to seek out what is advantageous to it, because of its own deficiencies? Or is it that there is no deficiency or error in any craft? That it isn't appropriate for any craft to seek what is to the advantage of anything except that of which it is the craft? And that, since it is itself correct, it is without either fault or impurity, as long as it is wholly and precisely the craft that it is? Consider this with the preciseness of language you mentioned. Is it so or not?

It appears to be so.

Medicine doesn't seek its own advantage, then, but that of the body?

Yes.

\(^{11}\)Sight is the virtue of excellence of the eyes (see 335b n. 12). Without it, the eyes cannot achieve what is advantageous to them, namely, sight. So eyes need some further virtue to seek and provide what is advantageous to them. But Socrates assumes throughout Book I that virtues are crafts. Hence he can conclude that the eyes need a further craft to achieve what is advantageous to them.
And horse-breeding doesn’t seek its own advantage, but that of horses? Indeed, no other craft seeks its own advantage—for it has no further needs—but the advantage of that of which it is the craft?

Apparently so.

Now, surely, Thrasymachus, the crafts rule over and are stronger than the things of which they are the crafts?

Very reluctantly, he conceded this as well.

No kind of knowledge seeks or orders what is advantageous to itself, then, but what is advantageous to the weaker, which is subject to it.

He tried to fight this conclusion, but he conceded it in the end. And after he had, I said: Surely, then, no doctor, insofar as he is a doctor, seeks or orders what is advantageous to himself, but what is advantageous to his patient? We agreed that a doctor in the precise sense is a ruler of bodies, not a money-maker. Wasn’t that agreed?

Yes.

So a ship’s captain in the precise sense is a ruler of sailors, not a sailor?

That’s what we agreed.

Doesn’t it follow that a ship’s captain or ruler won’t seek and order what is advantageous to himself, but what is advantageous to a sailor?

He reluctantly agreed.

So, then, Thrasymachus, no one in any position of rule, insofar as he is a ruler, seeks or orders what is advantageous to himself, but what is advantageous to his subjects; the ones of whom he is himself the craftsman. It is to his subjects and what is advantageous and proper to them that he looks, and everything he says and does he says and does for them.

When we reached this point in the argument, and it was clear to all that his account of justice had turned into its opposite, instead of answering, Thrasymachus said: Tell me, Socrates, do you still have a wet nurse?

What’s this? Hadn’t you better answer my questions rather than asking me such things?

Because she’s letting you run around with a snotty nose, and doesn’t wipe it when she needs to! Why, for all she cares, you don’t even know about sheep and shepherds. Just what is it I don’t know?

You think that shepherds and cowherds seek the good of their sheep and cattle, and fatten them and take care of them, looking to something other than their master’s good and their own. Moreover, you believe that rulers in cities—true rulers, that is—think about their subjects differently than one does about sheep, and that night and day they think of something besides their own advantage. You are so far from understanding about justice and what’s just, about injustice and what’s unjust, that you don’t realize that justice is really the good of another, the advantage of the stronger and the ruler, and harmful to the one who obeys and serves. Injustice is the opposite, it rules the truly simple and just, and those it rules do what is to the advantage
of the other and stronger, and they make the one they serve happy, but themselves not at all. You must look at it as follows, my most simple Socrates: A just man always gets less than an unjust one. First, in their contracts with one another, you'll never find, when the partnership ends, that a just partner has got more than an unjust one, but less. Second, in matters relating to the city, when taxes are to be paid, a just man pays more on the same property, an unjust one less, but when the city is giving out refunds, a just man gets nothing, while an unjust one makes a large profit. Finally, when each of them holds a ruling position in some public office, a just person, even if he isn't penalized in other ways, finds that his private affairs deteriorate because he has to neglect them, that he gains no advantage from the public purse because of his justice, and that he's hated by his relatives and acquaintances when he's unwilling to do them an unjust favor. The opposite is true of an unjust man in every respect. Therefore, I repeat what I said before: A person of great power outdoes everyone else. Consider him if you want to figure out how much more advantageous it is for the individual to be just rather than unjust. You'll understand this most easily if you turn your thoughts to the most complete injustice, the one that makes the doer of injustice happiest and the sufferers of it, who are unwilling to do injustice, most wretched. This is tyranny, which through stealth or force appropriates the property of others, whether sacred or profane, public or private, not little by little, but all at once. If someone commits only one part of injustice and is caught, he's punished and greatly reproached—such partly unjust people are called temple-robbers, kidnappers, housebreakers, robbers, and thieves when they commit these crimes. But when someone, in addition to appropriating their possessions, kidnaps and enslaves the citizens as well, instead of these shameful names he is called happy and blessed, not only by the citizens themselves, but by all who learn that he has done the whole of injustice. Those who reproach injustice do so because they are afraid not of doing it but of suffering it. So, Socrates, injustice, if it is on a large enough scale, is stronger, freer, and more masterly than justice. And, as I said from the first, justice is what is advantageous to the stronger, while injustice is to one's own profit and advantage.

Having emptied this great flood of words into our ears all at once like a bath attendant, Thrasymachus intended to leave. But those present didn’t let him and made him stay to give an account of what he had said. I too begged

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18Outdoing (pleonektēein) is an important notion in the remainder of the Republic. It is connected to pleonexia, which is what one succumbs to when one always wants to outdo everyone else by getting and having more and more. Pleonexia is, or is the cause of, injustice, since always wanting to outdo others leads one to try to get what belongs to them, what isn’t one’s own. It is contrasted with doing or having one’s own, which is, or is the cause of, justice.

19The temples acted as public treasuries, so that a temple robber is the equivalent of a present-day bank robber.
him to stay, and I said to him: After hurling such a speech at us, Thrasymachus, do you intend to leave before adequately instructing us or finding out whether you are right or not? Or do you think it a small matter to determine which whole way of life would make living most worthwhile for each of us?

Is that what I seem to you to think? Thrasymachus said.

Either that, or else you care nothing for us and aren’t worried about whether we’ll live better or worse lives because of our ignorance of what you say you know. So show some willingness to teach it to us. It wouldn’t be a bad investment for you to be the benefactor of a group as large as ours. For my own part, I’ll tell you that I am not persuaded. I don’t believe that injustice is more profitable than justice, not even if you give it full scope and put no obstacles in its way. Suppose that there is an unjust person, and suppose he does have the power to do injustice, whether by trickery or open warfare; nonetheless, he doesn’t persuade me that injustice is more profitable than justice. Perhaps someone here, besides myself, feels the same as I do. So come now, and persuade us that we are wrong to esteem justice more highly than injustice in planning our lives.

And how am I to persuade you, if you aren’t persuaded by what I said just now? What more can I do? Am I to take my argument and pour it into your very soul?

God forbid! Don’t do that! But, first, stick to what you’ve said, and then, if you change your position, do it openly and don’t deceive us. You see, Thrasymachus, that having defined the true doctor—to continue examining the things you said before—you didn’t consider it necessary later to keep a precise guard on the true shepherd. You think that, insofar as he’s a shepherd, he fattens sheep, not looking to what is best for the sheep but to a banquet, like a guest about to be entertained at a feast, or to a future sale, like a moneymaker rather than a shepherd. Shepherd ing is concerned only to provide what is best for the things it is set over, and it is itself adequately provided with all it needs to be at its best when it doesn’t fall short in any way of being the craft of shepherding. That’s why I thought it necessary for us to agree before that every kind of rule, insofar as it rules, doesn’t seek anything other than what is best for the things it rules and cares for, and this is true both of public and private kinds of rule. But do you think that those who rule cities, the true rulers, rule willingly?

I don’t think it, by god, I know it.

But, Thrasymachus, don’t you realize that in other kinds of rule no one wants to rule for its own sake, but they ask for pay, thinking that their ruling will benefit not themselves but their subjects? Tell me, doesn’t every craft differ from every other in having a different function? Please don’t answer contrary to what you believe, so that we can come to some definite conclusion.

Yes, that’s what differentiates them.
And each craft benefits us in its own peculiar way, different from the others. For example, medicine gives us health, navigation gives us safety while sailing, and so on with the others?

Certainly.

And wage-earning gives us wages, for this is its function? Or would you call medicine the same as navigation? Indeed, if you want to define matters precisely, as you proposed, even if someone who is a ship’s captain becomes healthy because sailing is advantageous to his health, you wouldn’t for that reason call his craft medicine?

Certainly not.

Nor would you call wage-earning medicine, even if someone becomes healthy while earning wages?

Certainly not.

Nor would you call medicine wage-earning, even if someone earns pay while healing?

No.

We are agreed, then, that each craft brings its own peculiar benefit?

It does.

Then whatever benefit all craftsmen receive in common must clearly result from their joint practice of some additional craft that benefits each of them?

So it seems.

And we say that the additional craft in question, which benefits the craftsmen by earning them wages, is the craft of wage-earning?

He reluctantly agreed.

Then this benefit, receiving wages, doesn’t result from their own craft, but rather, if we’re to examine this precisely, medicine provides health, and wage-earning provides wages; house-building provides a house, and wage-earning, which accompanies it, provides a wage; and so on with the other crafts. Each of them does its own work and benefits the things it is set over. So, if wages aren’t added, is there any benefit that the craftsman gets from his craft?

Apparently none.

But he still provides a benefit when he works for nothing?

Yes, I think he does.

Then, it is clear now, Thrasymachus, that no craft or rule provides for its own advantage, but, as we’ve been saying for some time, it provides and orders for its subject and aims at its advantage, that of the weaker, not of the stronger. That’s why I said just now, Thrasymachus, that no one willingly chooses to rule and to take other people’s troubles in hand and straighten them out, but each asks for wages; for anyone who intends to practice his craft well never does or orders what is best for himself—at least not when he orders as his craft prescribes—but what is best for his subject. It is because of this, it seems, that
wages must be provided to a person if he's to be willing to rule, whether in the form of money or honor or a penalty if he refuses.

What do you mean, Socrates? said Glaucon. I know the first two kinds of wages, but I don't understand what penalty you mean or how you can call it a wage.

Then you don't understand the best people's kind of wages, the kind that moves the most decent to rule, when they are willing to rule at all.

Don't you know that the love of honor and the love of money are despised, and rightly so?

I do.

Therefore good people won't be willing to rule for the sake of either money or honor. They don't want to be paid wages openly for ruling and get called hired hands, nor to take them in secret from their rule and be called thieves. And they won't rule for the sake of honor, because they aren't ambitious honor-lovers. So, if they're to be willing to rule, some compulsion or punishment must be brought to bear on them—perhaps that's why it is thought shameful to seek to rule before one is compelled to. Now, the greatest punishment, if one isn't willing to rule, is to be ruled by someone worse than oneself. And I think that it's fear of this that makes decent people rule when they do. They approach ruling not as something good or something to be enjoyed, but as something necessary, since it can't be entrusted to anyone better than—

or even as good as—themselves. In a city of good men, if it came into being, the citizens would fight in order not to rule, just as they do now in order to rule. There it would be quite clear that anyone who is really a true ruler doesn't by nature seek his own advantage but that of his subjects. And everyone, knowing this, would rather be benefited by others than take the trouble to benefit them. So I can't at all agree with Thrasymachus that justice is the advantage of the stronger—but we'll look further into that another time. What Thrasymachus is now saying—that the life of an unjust person is better than that of a just one—seems to be of far greater importance. Which life would you choose, Glaucon? And which of our views do you consider truer?

I certainly think that the life of a just person is more profitable.

Did you hear all of the good things Thrasymachus listed a moment ago for the unjust life?

I heard, but I wasn't persuaded.

I'll ask what I asked before, so that we may proceed with our argument about justice and injustice in an orderly fashion, for surely it was claimed that injustice is stronger and more powerful than justice. But, now, if justice is indeed wisdom and virtue, it will easily be shown to be stronger than injustice, since injustice is ignorance (no one could now be ignorant of that). However, I don't want to state the matter so unconditionally, Thrasymachus, but to look into it in some such way as this. Would you say that it is unjust for a city to try
to enslave other cities unjustly and to hold them in subjection when it has enslaved many of them?

Of course, that's what the best city will especially do, the one that is most completely unjust.

I understand that's your position, but the point I want to examine is this: Will the city that becomes stronger than another achieve this power without justice, or will it need the help of justice?

If what you said a moment ago stands, and justice is cleverness or wisdom, it will need the help of justice, but if things are as I stated, it will need the help of injustice.

I'm impressed, Thrasymachus, that you don't merely nod yes or no but give very fine answers.

That's because I'm trying to please you.

You're doing well at it, too. So please me some more by answering this question: Do you think that a city, an army, a band of robbers or thieves, or any other tribe with a common unjust purpose would be able to achieve it if they were unjust to each other?

No, indeed.

What if they weren't unjust to one another? Would they achieve more?

Certainly.

Injustice, Thrasymachus, causes civil war, hatred, and fighting among themselves, while justice brings friendship and a sense of common purpose. Isn't that so?

Let it be so, in order not to disagree with you.

You're still doing well on that front. So tell me this: If the effect of injustice is to produce hatred wherever it occurs, then, whenever it arises, whether among free men or slaves, won't it cause them to hate one another, engage in civil war, and prevent them from achieving any common purpose?

Certainly.

What if it arises between two people? Won't they be at odds, hate each other, and be enemies to one another and to just people?

They will.

Does injustice lose its power to cause dissension when it arises within a single individual, or will it preserve it intact?

Let it preserve it intact.

Apparently, then, injustice has the power first, to make whatever it arises in—whether it is a city, a family, an army, or anything else—in incapable of achieving anything as a unit, because of the civil wars and differences it creates, and, second, it makes that unit an enemy to itself and to what is in every way its opposite, namely, justice. Isn't that so?

Certainly.
And even in a single individual, it has by its nature the very same effect. First, it makes him incapable of achieving anything, because he is in a state of civil war and not of one mind; second, it makes him his own enemy, as well as the enemy of just people. Hasn't it that effect?

Yes.
And the gods too are just?

Let it be so.

*b* So an unjust person is also an enemy of the gods, Thrasy machus, while a just person is their friend?
Enjoy your banquet of words! Have no fear, I won't oppose you. That would make these people hate me.

Come, then, complete the banquet for me by continuing to answer as you've been doing. We have shown that just people are cleverer and more capable of doing things, while unjust ones aren't even able to act together, for when we speak of a powerful achievement by unjust men acting together, what we say isn't altogether true. They would never have been able to keep their hands off each other if they were completely unjust. But clearly there must have been some sort of justice in them that at least prevented them from doing injustice among themselves at the same time as they were doing it to others. And it was this that enabled them to achieve what they did. When they started doing unjust things, they were only halfway corrupted by their injustice (for those who are all bad and completely unjust are completely incapable of accomplishing anything). These are the things I understand to hold, not the ones you first maintained. We must now examine, as we proposed before, the whether just people also live better and are happier than unjust ones. I think it's clear already that this is so, but we must look into it further, since the argument concerns no ordinary topic but the way we ought to live. 

Go ahead and look.

I will. Tell me, do you think there is such a thing as the function of a horse?

I do.

And would you define the function of a horse or of anything else as that which one can do only with it or best with it?

I don't understand.

Let me put it this way: Is it possible to see with anything other than eyes? Certainly not.
Or to hear with anything other than ears?
No.
Then, we are right to say that seeing and hearing are the functions of eyes and ears?

Of course.

\(^{23}\) See 347e.
What about this? Could you use a dagger or a carving knife or lots of other things in pruning a vine? Of course.
But wouldn't you do a finer job with a pruning knife designed for the purpose than with anything else?
You would.
Then shall we take pruning to be its function?
Yes.
Now, I think you'll understand what I was asking earlier when I asked whether the function of each thing is what it alone can do or what it does better than anything else.
I understand, and I think that this is the function of each. b
All right. Does each thing to which a particular function is assigned also have a virtue? Let's go over the same ground again. We say that eyes have some function?
They do.
So there is also a virtue of eyes?
There is.
And ears have a function?
Yes.
So there is also a virtue of ears?
There is.
And all other things are the same, aren't they?
They are.
And could eyes perform their function well if they lacked their peculiar virtue and had the vice instead?
How could they, for don't you mean if they had blindness instead of sight?
Whatever their virtue is, for I'm not now asking about that but about whether anything that has a function performs it well by means of its own peculiar virtue and badly by means of its vice?
That's true, it does.
So ears, too, deprived of their own virtue, perform their function badly?
That's right.
And the same could be said about everything else? c
So it seems.
Come, then, and let's consider this: Is there some function of a soul that you couldn't perform with anything else, for example, taking care of things, ruling, deliberating, and the like? Is there anything other than a soul to which you could rightly assign these, and say that they are its peculiar function?
No, none of them.
What of living? Isn't that a function of a soul?
It certainly is.
And don't we also say that there is a virtue of a soul?
We do.

Then, will a soul ever perform its function well, Thrasymachus, if it is deprived of its own peculiar virtue, or is that impossible?

It's impossible.

Doesn't it follow, then, that a bad soul rules and takes care of things badly and that a good soul does all these things well?

It does.

Now, we agreed that justice is a soul's virtue, and injustice its vice?

We did.

Then, it follows that a just soul and a just man will live well, and an unjust one badly.

Apparently so, according to your argument.

And surely anyone who lives well is blessed and happy, and anyone who doesn't is the opposite.

Of course.

Therefore, a just person is happy, and an unjust one wretched.

So be it.

It profits no one to be wretched but to be happy.

Of course.

And so, Thrasymachus, injustice is never more profitable than justice.

**Review Questions**

1. What does a leader have to do to be just, according to Plato?
2. Why is justice more than simply giving people what we owe them?
3. Do you think justice is what is in the interests of the stronger?
4. Why are some people today reluctant to run for office or take on other leadership roles?

**Case: “The Ring of Gyges”**

*Plato*

“The Ring of Gyges” is also from Plato's Republic. Glaucon takes over where Thrasymachus left off. The story plunges us into the problem of power and accountability. It begins with the argument by Glaucon that people are not willingly just, but only behave justly because they are afraid of getting caught or because they don't have the power to act unjustly. As you read this case, think...
about how many people have the moral character and self-discipline to behave ethically when they have great power and there are no checks on their power. As we see in the next chapter, this is one of the great moral challenges of leadership.

They say that to do injustice is naturally good and to suffer injustice bad, but that the badness of suffering it so far exceeds the goodness of doing it that those who have done and suffered injustice and tasted both, but who lack the power to do it and avoid suffering it, decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to do injustice nor to suffer it. As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants, and what the law commands they call lawful and just. This, they say, is the origin and essence of justice. It is intermediate between the best and the worst. The best is to do injustice without paying the penalty; the worst is to suffer it without being able to take revenge. Justice is a mean between these two extremes. People value it not as a good but because they are too weak to do injustice with impunity. Someone who has the power to do this, however, and is a true man wouldn't make an agreement with anyone not to do injustice in order not to suffer it. For him that would be madness. This is the nature of justice, according to the argument, Socrates, and these are its natural origins.

We can see most clearly that those who practice justice do it unwillingly and because they lack the power to do injustice, if in our thoughts we grant to a just and an unjust person the freedom to do whatever they like. We can then follow both of them and see where their desires would lead. And we'll catch the just person red-handed travelling the same road as the unjust. The reason for this is the desire to outdo others and get more and more. This is what anyone's nature naturally pursues as good, but nature is forced by law into the perversion of treating fairness with respect.

The freedom I mentioned would be most easily realized if both people had the power they say the ancestor of Gyges of Lydia possessed. The story goes that he was a shepherd in the service of the ruler of Lydia. There was a violent thunderstorm, and an earthquake broke open the ground and created a chasm at the place where he was tending his sheep. Seeing this, he was filled with amazement and went down into it. And there, in addition to many other wonders of which we're told, he saw a hollow bronze horse. There were window-like openings in it, and, peeping in, he saw a corpse, which seemed to be of more than human size, wearing nothing but a gold ring on its finger. He took the ring and came out of the chasm. He wore the ring at the usual monthly meeting that reported to the king on the state of the flocks. And as he was sitting among the others, he happened to turn the setting of the ring towards himself to the inside of his hand. When he did this, he became

Case continued
invisible to those sitting near him, and they went on talking as if he had
gone. He wondered at this, and, fingering the ring, he turned the setting
outwards again and became visible. So he experimented with the ring to test
whether it indeed had this power—and it did. If he turned the setting
inward, he became invisible; if he turned it outward, he became visible again.
When he realized this, he at once arranged to become one of the messengers
sent to report to the king. And when he arrived there, he seduced the king’s
wife, attacked the king with her help, killed him, and took over the kingdom.

Let’s suppose, then, that there were two such rings, one worn by a just
and the other by an unjust person. Now, no one, it seems, would be so
incorruptible that he would stay on the path of justice or stay away from
other people’s property, when he could take whatever he wanted from the
marketplace with impunity, go into people’s houses and have sex with anyone
he wished, kill or release from prison anyone he wished, and do all the other
things that would make him like a god among humans. Rather his actions
would be in no way different from those of an unjust person, and both would
follow the same path. This, some would say, is a great proof that one is never
just willingly but only when compelled to be. No one believes justice to be a
good when it is kept private, since, wherever either person thinks he can do
injustice with impunity, he does it. Indeed, every man believes that injustice
is far more profitable to himself than justice. And any exponent of this
argument will say he’s right, for someone who didn’t want to do injustice,
given this sort of opportunity, and who didn’t touch other people’s property
would be thought wretched and stupid by everyone aware of the situation,
though, of course, they’d praise him in public, deceiving each other for fear
of suffering injustice. So much for my second topic.

Questions

1. What would you do if you found the ring?
2. What do you think most people would do if they had the ring?
3. What criteria would you use to determine ethical and unethical uses for
   the ring?
4. Do leaders today possess the power of the ring to hide information
   about what they do while in office?
Self-Interest and Human Nature

Thomas Hobbes, 1588–1679

Thomas Hobbes was an English philosopher born in Malmesbury. During his 91 years of life, he witnessed the civil war in England and the reign of Charles I and Charles II. Hobbes used to tell friends that his twin was fear because he was born prematurely when his mother heard about the approach of the Spanish Armada. In this article, Hobbes argues that the driving motivation behind human behavior and society is fear of death and the need for security.

His book *The Leviathan* is a justification of the monarchy and the formation of the commonwealth. Hobbes thought democratic leadership would lead to anarchy because he believed that humans are self-interested and have a natural tendency to assert themselves and seek power. A state of nature, says Hobbes, is a state of war. It is only out of fear that people give up some of their liberty and submit to the state. All society, according to Hobbes, was formed for either gain or glory, not love for each other, but for love of ourselves. Hobbes shows us how self-interest is compatible with and the basic premise of the golden rule. He observes that because people are alike and self-interested, they should know how to “do unto others,” because they know how they would like to be treated. Notice that when self-interest turns into empathy, people are able to care about the interests of others.

*Men by nature equal.*

Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself.

And as to the faculties of the mind, setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general, and infallible rules, called science; which very few have, and but in few things; as being not a native faculty, born with us; nor attained, as prudence, while we look after somewhat else, I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of strength. For prudence, is but experience; which equal time, equally bestows on all men, in those things they equally apply themselves unto. That which may perhaps make such equality incredible, is but a vain conceit of one’s own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree, than the vulgar; that is, than all men but themselves, and a few others, whom by fame, or for concurring with themselves, they approve. For such is the nature of

men, that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent, or more learned; yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves; for they see their own wit at hand, and other men's at a distance. But this proveth rather that men are in that point equal, than unequal. For there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of any thing, than that every man is contented with his share.

*From equality proceeds diffidence.*
From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to fear, than another man's single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

*From diffidence war.*
And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed. Also because there be some, that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires; if others, that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds, should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defense, to subsist. And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men being necessary to a man's conservation, it ought to be allowed him.

Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all. For every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares, (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example.

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; Secondly, diffidence; Thirdly, glory.

The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of
other men’s persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Out of civil states, there is always war of every one against every one.
Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For war, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time, is to be considered in the nature of war; as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.

The incommodities of such a war.
Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

It may seem strange to some man, that has not well weighed these things; that nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade, and destroy one another: and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself, when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws, and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse man’s nature in it. The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions, that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them: which till
laws be made they cannot know: nor can any law be made, till they have agreed
upon the person that shall make it.

It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition
of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world:
but there are many places, where they live so now. For the savage people in
many places of America, except the government of small families, the concord
whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all; and live at this
day in that brutish manner, as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived
what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to
fear, by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peace-
ful government, use to degenerate into, in a civil war.

But though there had never been any time, wherein particular men were
in a condition of war one against another; yet in all times, kings, and persons
of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jeal-
ousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons point-
ning, and their eyes fixed on one another: that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns
upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neigh-
ours; which is a posture of war. But because they uphold thereby, the indus-
try of their subjects: there does not follow from it, that misery, which accom-
npanies the liberty of particular men.

*In such a war nothing is unjust.*

To this war of every man, against every man, this also is consequent; that
nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice
have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law:
where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal
virtues. Justice, and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body,
nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world,
as well as his senses, and passions. They are qualities, that relate to men in
society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition, that
there be no propriety, no dominion, no *mine* and *thine* distinct; but only that
to be every man's, that he can get: and for so long, as he can keep it. And thus
much for the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in;
though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions,
partly in his reason.

*The passions that incline men to peace.*

The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things
as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain
them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men
may be drawn to agreement. These articles, are they, which otherwise are
called the Laws of Nature: whereof I shall speak more particularly, in the two
following chapters.
Chapter XIV
Of The First And Second Natural Laws, And Of Contracts

Right of nature what.
The right of nature, which writers commonly call jus naturale, is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.

Liberty what.
By liberty, is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external impediments: which impediments, may oft take away part of a man's power to do what he would; but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according as his judgment, and reason shall dictate to him.

A law of nature what.
Difference of right and law.
A law of nature, lex naturalis, is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved. For though they that speak of this subject, use to confound jus, and lex, right and law: yet they ought to be distinguished; because right, consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear; whereas law, determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that law, and right, differ as much, as obligation, and liberty; which in one and the same matter are inconsistent.

Naturally every man has right to every thing.
The fundamental law of nature.
And because the condition of man, as hath been declared in the precedent chapter, is a condition of war of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies; it followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a right to every thing; even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man, how strong or wise soever he be, of living out the time, which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or general rule of reason, that every man, ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule, containeth the first, and fundamental law of nature; which is, to seek peace, and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves.
The second law of nature.
From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived this second law; that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth, as for peace, and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself. For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing any thing he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of war. But if other men will not lay down their right, as well as he; then there is no reason for any one, to divest himself of his; for that were to expose himself to prey, which no man is bound to, rather than to dispose himself to peace. This is that law of the Gospel; whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them. And that law of all men, quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris.

What it is to lay down a right.
To lay down a man's right to any thing, is to divest himself of the liberty, of hindering another of the benefit of his own right to the same. For he that renounceth, or passeth away his right, giveth not to any other man a right which he had not before; became there is nothing to which every man had not right by nature: but only standeth out of his way, that he may enjoy his own original right, without hindrance from him; not without hindrance from another. So that the effect which redoundeth to one man, by another man's defect of right, is but so much diminution of impediments to the use of his own right original.

Renouncing a right, what it is.
Transferring right what. Obligation.
Right is laid aside, either by simply renouncing it; or by transferring it to another. By simply renouncing, when he cares not to whom the benefit thereof redoundeth. By transferring; when he intendeth the benefit thereof to some certain person, or persons.

Duty.
Injustice.
And when a man hath in either manner abandoned, or granted away his right; then he is said to be obligated, or bound, not to hinder those, to whom such right is granted, or abandoned, from the benefit of it: and that he ought, and it is his duty, not to make void that voluntary act of his own: and that such hindrance is injustice, and injury, as being sine jure; the right being before renounced, or transferred. So that injury, or injustice, in the controversies of the world, is somewhat like to that, which in the disputations of scholars is called absurdity. For as it is there called an absurdity, to contradict what one maintained in the beginning: so in the world, it is called injustice, and injury,
voluntarily to undo that, which from the beginning he had voluntarily done. The way by which a man either simply renounceth, or transferreth his right, is a declaration, or signification, by some voluntary and sufficient sign, or signs, that he doth so renounce, or transfer; or hath so renounced, or transferred the same, to him that accepteth it. And these signs are either words only, or actions only; or as it happeneth most often, both words, and actions. And the same are the bonds, by which men are bound, and obliged: bonds, that have their strength, not from their own nature, for nothing is more easily broken than a man's word, but from fear of some evil consequence upon the rupture.

Not all rights are alienable.
Whensoever a man transferreth his right, or renounceth it; it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself; or for some other good he hopeth for thereby. For it is a voluntary act: and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself. And therefore there be some rights, which no man can be understood by any words, or other signs, to have abandoned, or transferred. As first a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them, that assault him by force, to take away his life; because he cannot be understood to aim thereby, at any good to himself. The same may be said of wounds, and chains, and imprisonment; both because there is no benefit consequent to such patience; as there is to the patience of suffering another to be wounded, or imprisoned: as also because a man cannot tell, when he seeth men proceed against him by violence, whether they intend his death or not. And lastly the motive, and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a man's person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words, or other signs, seem to despoil himself of the end, for which those signs were intended; he is not to be understood as if he meant it, or that it was his will: but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted.

**Review Questions**

1. Is Hobbes right about the origins of society?
2. Is all human action self-interested?
3. If so, what kinds of power and influence would be most effective for a leader in society?
4. What would be the strengths and limitations of leadership based on the assumption that self interest is the soul driving force of human action?
The Qualities of Princes

Niccolò Machiavelli 1469–1527

Niccolò Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy. Throughout his life he worked for the government of the Florentine Republic. At the age of twenty-nine he was made head of the second chancery, which dealt with the internal affairs of Florentine government. He later became secretary of the executive council that supervised diplomatic and military affairs. Machiavelli undertook a number of diplomatic missions to France, Germany, and other regions of Italy. He was sent twice to meet with Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI. Borgia was a strong and completely ruthless prince who had carved out a portion of central Italy for his domination. In Borgia Machiavelli confronted the problem of ethics and effectiveness. He admired the way Borgia operated, but did not care much for the man himself. But Machiavelli was a pragmatist who believed that the desperate ills of Italy could only be cured by a new kind of prince who possessed the leadership qualities and methods of a Borgia. Hence, Borgia became the model for Machiavelli’s book, *The Prince*.

When the Medici family dissolved the Florentine Republic, Machiavelli lost his government position and was briefly imprisoned. When Machiavelli was released, he retired to a small farm outside of Florence. In 1532 he wrote *The Prince*. Machiavelli, ever the politician, dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo de’ Medici in hopes of getting a job from the new ruler of Florence.

*The Prince* is about how to get and maintain political power. Some regard *The Prince* as a defense of tyrannical rulers like Borgia, while others read the book as a defense of the merits of a nation state. Like Hobbes, Machiavelli lived in tumultuous times. He saw need for authority to bring order and justice to Italy; he also understood the sources of authority in power.

The following selections from *The Prince* pit ethics against effectiveness or the ethics of the means against the ethics of the ends. Like Hobbes, Machiavelli does not have a high opinion of human nature. He tells us “man is a sorry breed” who tends to believe what he sees on the surface. Machiavelli believed that effective leaders are not governed by traditional moral norms, but only by the principles that lead to success. So, leaders only need to appear moral and religious. It is not necessary that they actually be moral and religious. As you read these selections, look closely at Machiavelli’s advice, while not all of it is ethical, some of it is quite useful.

XV

Of The Qualities of Princes

It now remains for us to consider what ought to be the conduct and bearing of a Prince in relation to his subjects and friends. And since I know that many have written on this subject, I fear it may be thought presumptuous...
in me to write of it also; the more so, because in my treatment of it I depart from the views that others have taken.

But since it is my object to write what shall be useful to whosoever understands it, it seems to me better to follow the real truth of things than an imaginary view of them. For many Republics and Principalities have been imagined that were never seen or known to exist in reality. And the manner in which we live, and that in which we ought to live, are things so wide asunder, that he who quits the one to betake himself to the other is more likely to destroy than to save himself; since any one who would act up to a perfect standard of goodness in everything, must be ruined among so many who are not good. It is essential, therefore, for a Prince who desires to maintain his position, to have learned how to be other than good, and to use or not to use his goodness as necessity requires.

Laying aside, therefore, all fanciful notions concerning a Prince, and considering those only that are true, I say that all men when they are spoken of, and Princes more than others from their being set so high, are characterized by some one of those qualities which attach either praise or blame. Thus one is accounted liberal, another miserly (which word I use, rather than avaricious, to denote the man who is too sparing of what is his own, avarice being the disposition to take wrongfully what is another's); one is generous, another greedy; one cruel, another tender-hearted; one is faithless, another true to his word; one effeminate and cowardly, another high-spirited and courageous; one is courteous, another haughty; one impure, another chaste; one simple, another crafty; one firm, another facile; one grave, another frivolous; one devout, another unbelieving; and the like. Every one, I know, will admit that it would be most laudable for a Prince to be endowed with all of the above qualities that are reckoned good; but since it is impossible for him to possess or constantly practise them all, the conditions of human nature not allowing it, he must be discreet enough to know how to avoid the infamy of those vices that would deprive him of his government, and, if possible, be on his guard also against those which might not deprive him of it; though if he cannot wholly restrain himself, he may with less scruple indulge in the latter. He need never hesitate, however, to incur the reproach of those vices without which his authority can hardly be preserved; for if he well consider the whole matter, he will find that there may be a line of conduct having the appearance of virtue, to follow which would be his ruin, and that there may be another course having the appearance of vice, by following which his safety and well-being are secured.

XVII
Of Cruelty and Clemency

Passing to the other qualities above referred to, I say that every Prince should desire to be accounted merciful and not cruel. Nevertheless, he should be on his guard against the abuse of this quality of mercy. Cesare Borgia was reputed
cruel, yet his cruelty restored Romagna, united it, and brought it to order and obedience; so that if we look at things in their true light, it will be seen that he was in reality far more merciful than the people of Florence, who, to avoid the imputation of cruelty, suffered Pistoja to be torn to pieces by factions.

A Prince should therefore disregard the reproach of being thought cruel where it enables him to keep his subjects united and obedient. For he who quells disorder by a very few signal examples will in the end be more merciful than he who from too great leniency permits things to take their course and so to result in rapine and bloodshed; for these hurt the whole State, whereas the severities of the Prince injure individuals.

And for a new Prince, of all others, it is impossible to escape a name for cruelty, since new States are full of dangers. Wherefore Virgil, by the mouth of Dido, excuses the harshness of her reign on the plea that it was new, saying—

"A fate unkind, and newness in my reign
Compel me thus to guard a wide domain."

Nevertheless, the new Prince should not be too ready of belief, nor too easily set in motion; nor should he himself be the first to raise alarms; but should so temper prudence with kindliness that too great confidence in others shall not throw him off his guard, nor groundless distrust render him insupportable.

And here comes in the question whether it is better to be loved rather than feared, or feared rather than loved. It might perhaps be answered that we should wish to be both; but since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved. For of men it may generally be affirmed that they are thankless, fickle, false, studious to avoid danger, greedy of gain, devoted to you while you are able to confer benefits upon them, and ready, as I said before, while danger is distant, to shed their blood, and sacrifice their property, their lives, and their children for you; but in the hour of need they turn against you. The Prince, therefore, who without otherwise securing himself builds wholly on their professions is undone. For the friendships which we buy with a price, and do not gain by greatness and nobility of character, though they be fairly earned are not made good, but fail us when we have occasion to use them.

Moreover, men are less careful how they offend him who makes himself loved than him who makes himself feared. For love is held by the tie of obligation, which, because men are a sorry breed, is broken on every whisper of private interest; but fear is bound by the apprehension of punishment which never relaxes.

Nevertheless a Prince should inspire fear in such a fashion that if he do not win love he may escape hate. For a man may very well be feared and yet not hated, and this will be the case so long as he does not meddle with the property or with the women of his citizens and subjects. And if constrained to put any to death, he should do so only when there is manifest cause or reasonable justification. But, above all, he must abstain from the property of oth-
ers. For men will sooner forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Moreover, pretexts for confiscation are never to seek, and he who has once begun to live by rapine always finds reasons for taking what is not his; whereas reasons for shedding blood are fewer.

But when a Prince is with his army, and has many soldiers under his command, he must needs disregard the reproach of cruelty, for without such a reputation in its Captain, no army can be held together or kept under any kind of control. Among other things remarkable in Hannibal this has been noted, that having a very great army, made up of men of many different nations and brought to fight in a foreign country, no dissension ever arose among the soldiers themselves, nor any mutiny against their leader, either in his good or in his evil fortunes. This we can only ascribe to the transcendent cruelty, which, joined with numberless great qualities, rendered him at once venerable and terrible in the eyes of his soldiers; for without this reputation for cruelty these other virtues would not have produced the like results.

Unreflecting writers, indeed, while they praise his achievements, have condemned the chief cause of them; but that his other merits would not by themselves have been so efficacious we may see from the case of Scipio, one of the greatest Captains, not of his own time only but of all times of which we have record, whose armies rose against him in Spain from no other cause than his too great leniency in allowing them a freedom inconsistent with military strictness. With which weakness Fabius Maximus taxed him in the Senate House, calling him the corruptor of the Roman soldiery. Again, when the Locrions were shamefully outraged by one of his lieutenants, he neither avenged them, nor punished the insolence of his officer; and this from the natural easiness of his disposition. So that it was said in the Senate by one who sought to excuse him, that there were many who knew better how to refrain from doing wrong themselves than how to correct the wrong-doing of others. This temper, however, must in time have marred the name and fame even of Scipio, had he continued in it, and retained his command. But living as he did under the control of the Senate, this hurtful quality was not merely disguised, but came to be regarded as a glory.

Returning to the question of being loved or feared, I sum up by saying, that since his being loved depends upon his subjects, while his being feared depends upon himself, a wise Prince should build on what is his own, and not on what rests with others. Only, as I have said, he must do his utmost to escape hatred.

**How Princes Should Keep Faith**

Every one understands how praiseworthy it is in a Prince to keep faith, and to live uprightly and not craftily. Nevertheless, we see from what has taken place in our own days that Princes who have set little store by their word, but have
known how to overreach men by their cunning, have accomplished great things, and in the end got the better of those who trusted to honest dealing.

Be it known, then, that there are two ways of contending, one in accordance with the laws, the other by force; the first of which is proper to men, the second to beasts. But since the first method is often ineffectual, it becomes necessary to resort to the second. A Prince should, therefore, understand how to use well both the man and the beast. And this lesson has been covertly taught by the ancient writers, who relate how Achilles and many others of these old Princes were given over to be brought up and trained by Chiron the Centaur; since the only meaning of their having for instructor one who was half man and half beast is, that it is necessary for a Prince to know how to use both natures, and that the one without the other has no stability.

But since a Prince should know how to use the beast's nature wisely, he ought of beasts to choose both the lion and the fox; for the lion cannot guard himself from the toils, nor the fox from wolves. He must therefore be a fox to discern toils, and a lion to drive off wolves.

To rely wholly on the lion is unwise; and for this reason a prudent Prince neither can nor ought to keep his word when to keep it is hurtful to him and the causes which led him to pledge it are removed. If all men were good, this would not be good advice, but since they are dishonest and do not keep faith with you, you, in return, need not keep faith with them; and no prince was ever at a loss for plausible reasons to cloak a breach of faith. Of this numberless recent instances could be given, and it might be shown how many solemn treaties and engagements have been rendered inoperative and idle through want of faith in Princes, and that he who was best known to play the fox has had the best success. It is necessary, indeed, to put a good colour on this nature, and to be skilful in simulating and dissembling.

But men remain so simple, and governed so absolutely by their present needs, that he who wishes to deceive will never fail in finding willing dupes. One recent example I will not omit. Pope Alexander VI had no care or thought but how to deceive, and always found material to work on. No man ever had a more effective manner of asseverating, or ever made promises with more solemn protestations, or observed them less. And yet, because he understood this side of human nature, his frauds always succeeded.

It is not essential then, that a Prince should have all the good qualities which I have enumerated above, but it is most essential that he should seem to have them; I will even venture to affirm that if he has and invariably practices them all, they are hurtful, whereas the appearance of having them is useful. Thus, it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, religious, and upright, and also to be so; but the mind should remain so balanced that were it needful not to be so, you should be able and know how to change to the contrary.

And you are to understand that a Prince, and most of all a new Prince, cannot observe all those rules of conduct in respect whereof men are
accounted good, being often forced, in order to preserve his Princeedom, to act in opposition to good faith, charity, humanity, and religion. He must therefore keep his mind ready to shift as the winds and tides of Fortune turn, and, as I have already said, he ought not to quit good courses if he can help it, but should know how to follow evil courses if he must.

A Prince should therefore be very careful that nothing ever escapes his lips which is not replete with the five qualities above named, so that to see and hear him, one would think him the embodiment of mercy, good faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. And there is no virtue which it is more necessary for him to seem to possess than this last; because men in general judge rather by the eye than by the hand, for every one can see but few can touch. Every one sees what you seem, but few know what you are, and these few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many who have the majesty of the State to back them up.

Moreover, in the actions of all men, and most of all of Princes, where there is no tribunal to which we can appeal, we look to results. Wherefore if a Prince succeeds in establishing and maintaining his authority, the means will always be judged honourable and be approved by every one. For the vulgar are always taken by appearances and by results, and the world is made up of the vulgar, the few only finding room when the many have no longer ground to stand on.

A certain Prince of our own days, whose name it is as well not to mention, is always preaching peace and good faith, although the mortal enemy of both; and both, had he practised them as he preaches them, would, oftener than once, have lost him his kingdom and authority.

**Review Questions**

1. How does Machiavelli's view of human nature color his description of an effective leader?
2. Are there useful strategies for leaders in this essay that are not immoral?
3. Does Machiavelli think leaders should have some moral qualities?
4. If so, what are the moral qualities?
5. In today's world can leaders be effective by simply appearing to be ethical?
Why Self-Interest Is Best

Ayn Rand, 1905–1982

Ayn Rand was born Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum in St. Petersburg, Russia. In 1925 she immigrated to the United States where she renamed herself Ayn, after a Finnish writer she had never read, and Rand after the brand name on her typewriter. She worked as a movie extra, screenwriter, and script reader in Hollywood, California. Eventually Rand began writing books and soon became a controversial figure in twentieth-century literary and philosophical debate. She believed that society would be better off if people pursued their own self-interests. Even after her death Rand’s books and ideas still garner an enthusiastic following.

Rand argues that people should live for their own happiness and never sacrifice their own goals for someone else’s. It’s easy to see why her objectivist philosophy of self-interest continues to attract an enthusiastic following. Whereas conventional morality requires us to place restrictions on ourselves and our desires, Rand’s philosophy releases us from moral constraints such as the golden rule. She has a particular distaste for Christian ethics and Immanuel Kant’s ethics, which she calls the morality of sacrifice.

The following reading is from her best-selling novel Atlas Shrugged. In the novel, all artists, inventors, scientists, and creative people go on strike. The economy crumbles and society falls into shambles. In the end John Galt, the hero of the novel, emerges to rebuild society according to his principles of creativity, self-interest, and self-reliance. The following excerpt is a speech by Galt that articulates Rand’s ideas about ethics.

As you read this essay, note what is seductive about Rand’s argument. One might argue that some leaders become very successful in business, politics, and their professions using Rand’s approach to morality.

Yes, this is an age of moral crisis. Yes, you are bearing punishment for your evil. But it is not man who is now on trial and it is not human nature that will take the blame. It is your moral code that’s through, this time. Your moral code has reached its climax, the blind alley at the end of its course. And if you wish to go on living, what you now need is not to return to morality—you who have never known any—but to discover it.

“You have heard no concepts of morality but the mystical or the social. You have been taught that morality is a code of behavior imposed on you by whim, the whim of a supernatural power or the whim of society to serve God’s purpose or your neighbor’s welfare, to please an authority beyond the grave or else next door—but not to serve your life or pleasure. Your pleasure, you have been taught, is to be found in immorality, your interests would best be served by evil, and any moral code must be designed not for you, but against you, not to further your life, but to drain it.

“For centuries, the battle of morality was fought between those who claimed that your life belongs to God and those who claimed that it belongs to

your neighbors—between those who preached that the good is self-sacrifice for the sake of ghosts in heaven and those who preached that the good is self-sacrifice for the sake of incompetents on earth. And no one came to say that your life belongs to you and that the good is to live it.

"Both sides agreed that morality demands the surrender of your self-interest and of your mind, that the moral and the practical are opposites, that morality is not the province of reason, but the province of faith and force. Both sides agreed that no rational morality is possible, that there is no right or wrong in reason—that in reason there’s no reason to be moral.

"Whatever else they fought about, it was against man’s mind that all your moralists have stood united. It was man’s mind that all their schemes and systems were intended to despoil and destroy. Now choose to perish or to learn that the anti-mind is the anti-life.

"Man’s mind is his basic tool of survival. Life is given to him, survival is not. His body is given to him, its sustenance is not. His mind is given to him, its content is not. To remain alive, he must act, and before he can act he must know the nature and purpose of his action. He cannot obtain his food without a knowledge of food and of the way to obtain it. He cannot dig a ditch—or build a cyclotron—without a knowledge of his aim and of the means to achieve it. To remain alive, he must think.

"But to think is an act of choice. The key to what you so recklessly call ‘human nature,’ the open secret you live with, yet dread to name, is the fact that man is a being of volitional consciousness. Reason does not work automatically; thinking is not a mechanical process; the connections of logic are not made by instinct. The function of your stomach, lungs or heart is automatic; the function of your mind is not. In any hour and issue of your life, you are free to think or to evade that effort. But you are not free to escape from your nature, from the fact that reason is your means of survival—so that for you, who are a human being, the question ‘to be or not to be’ is the question ‘to think or not to think.’

"A being of volitional consciousness has no automatic course of behavior. He needs a code of values to guide his actions. ‘Value’ is that which one acts to gain and keep, ‘virtue’ is the action by which one gains and keeps it. ‘Value’ presupposes an answer to the question: of value to whom and for what? ‘Value’ presupposes a standard, a purpose and the necessity of action in the face of an alternative. Where there are no alternatives, no values are possible.

"There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or non-existence—and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not: it depends on a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist. It is only a living organism that faces a constant alternative: the issue of life or death. Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generating action. If an organism fails in that action, it dies; its chemical elements remain, but its life goes out of existence. It is only the
concept of 'Life' that makes the concept of 'Value' possible. It is only to a living entity that things can be good or evil.

"A plant must feed itself in order to live; the sunlight, the water, the chemicals it needs are the values its nature has set it to pursue; its life is the standard of value directing its actions. But a plant has no choice of action; there are alternatives in the conditions it encounters, but there is no alternative in its function: it acts automatically to further its life, it cannot act for its own destruction.

"An animal is equipped for sustaining its life; its senses provide it with an automatic code of action, an automatic knowledge of what is good for it or evil. It has no power to extend its knowledge or to evade it. In conditions where its knowledge proves inadequate, it dies. But so long as it lives, it acts on its knowledge, with automatic safety and no power of choice, it is unable to ignore its own good, unable to decide to choose the evil and act as its own destroyer.

"Man has no automatic code of survival. His particular distinction from other living species is the necessity to act in the face of alternatives by means of volitional choice. He has no automatic knowledge of what good for him or evil, what values his life depends on, what course of action it requires. Are you prattling about an instinct of self-preservation? An instinct of self-preservation is precisely what man does not possess. An ‘instinct’ is an unerring and automatic form of knowledge. A desire is not an instinct. A desire to live does not give you the knowledge required for living. And even man’s desire to live is not automatic: your secret evil today is that that is the desire you do not hold. Your fear of death is not a love for life and will not give you the knowledge needed to keep it. Man must obtain his knowledge and choose his actions by a process of thinking, which nature will not force him to perform. Man has the power to act as his own destroyer—and that is the way he has acted through most of his history.

"A living entity that regarded its means of survival as evil, would not survive. A plant that struggled to mangle its roots, a bird that fought to break its wings would not remain for long in the existence they afforded. But the history of man has been a struggle to deny and to destroy his mind.

"Man has been called a rational being, but rationality is a matter of choice—and the alternative his nature offers him is: rational being or suicidal animal. Man has to be man—by choice; he has to hold his life as a value—by choice; he has to learn to sustain it—by choice; he has to discover the values it requires and practice his virtues—by choice.

"A code of values accepted by choice, is a code of morality.

"Whoever you are, you who are hearing me now, I am speaking to whatever living remnant is left uncorrupted within you, to the remnant of the human, to your mind, and I say: There is a morality of reason, a morality proper to man, and Man’s Life is its standard of value.

"All that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good; all that which destroys it is the evil.
"Man's life, as required by his nature, is not the life of a mindless brute, of a looting thug or a mooching mystic, but the life of a thinking being—not life by means of force or fraud, but life by means of achievement—not survival at any price, since there's only one price that pays for man's survival: reason.

"Man's life is the standard of morality, but your own life is its purpose. If existence on earth is your goal, you must choose actions and values by the standard of that which is proper to man—for the purpose of preserving, fulfilling and enjoying the irreplaceable value which is your life.

"Since life requires a specific course of action, any other course will destroy it. A being who does not hold his own life as the motive and goal of his actions is acting on the motive and standard of death. Such a being is a metaphysical monstrosity, struggling to oppose, negate, and contradict the fact of his own existence, running blindly amuck on a trail of destruction, capable of nothing but pain.

"Happiness is the successful state of life; pain is an agent of death. Happiness is that state of unconsciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values. A morality that dares to tell you to find happiness in the renunciation of your happiness—to value the failure of your values—is an insolent negation of morality. A doctrine that gives you, as an ideal, the role of a sacrificial animal seeking slaughter on the altars of others, is giving you death as your standard. By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man—every man—is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose.

"But neither life nor happiness can be achieved by the pursuit of irrational whims. Just as man is free to attempt to survive in any random manner, but will perish unless he lives as his nature requires, so he is free to seek his happiness in any mindless fraud, but the torture of frustration is all he will find, unless he seeks the happiness proper to man. The purpose of morality is to teach you, not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself and love.

"Sweep aside those parasites of subsidized classrooms, who live on the profits of the mind of others and proclaim that man needs no morality, no values, no code of behavior. They, who pose as scientists and claim that man is only an animal, do not grant him inclusion in the law of existence they have granted to the lowest of insects. They recognize that every living species has a way of survival demanded by its nature, they do not claim that a fish can live out of water or that a dog can live without its sense of smell—but man, they claim, the most complex of beings, man can survive in any way whatever, man has no identity; no nature, and there's no practical reason why he cannot live with his means of survival destroyed, with his mind throttled and placed at the disposal of any orders they might care to issue.

"Sweep aside those hatred-eaten mystics who pose as friends of humanity and preach that the highest virtue man can practice is to hold his own life as of no value. Do they tell you that the purpose of morality is to curb man's
instinct of self-preservation? It is for the purpose of self-preservation that man needs a code of morality. The only man who desires to be moral is the man who desires to live.

"No, you do not have to live; it is your basic act of choice; but if you choose to live, you must live as a man—by the work and the judgment of your mind.

"No, you do not have to live as a man: it is an act of moral choice. But you cannot live as anything else—and the alternative is that state of living death which you now see within you and around you, the state of a thing unfit for existence, no longer human and less than animal, a thing that knows nothing but pain and drags itself through its span of years in the agony of unthinking self-destruction.

"No, you do not have to think; it is an act of moral choice. But someone had to think to keep you alive; if you choose to default, you default on existence and you pass the deficit to some moral man, expecting him to sacrifice his good for the sake of letting you survive by your evil.

"This much is true: the most selfish of all things is the independent mind that recognizes no authority higher than its own and no value higher than its judgment of truth. You are asked to sacrifice your intellectual integrity, your logic, your reason, your standard of truth—in favor of becoming a prostitute whose standard is the greatest good for the greatest number.

"If you search your code for guidance, for an answer to the question: 'What is the good?'—the only answer you will find is 'The good of others.' The good is whatever others wish, whatever you feel they feel they wish, or whatever you feel they ought to feel. 'The good of others' is a magic formula that transforms anything into gold, a formula to be recited as a guarantee of moral glory and as a fumigator for any action, even the slaughter of a continent. Your standard of virtue is not an object, not an act, nor a principle, but an intention. You need no proof, no reasons, no success, you need not achieve in fact the good of others—all you need to know is that your motive was the good of others, not your own. Your only definition of the good is a negation: the good is the 'non-good for me.'

"Your code—which boasts that it upholds eternal, absolute, objective moral values and scourts the conditional, the relative and the subjective—your code hands out, as its version of the absolute, the following rule of moral conduct: If you wish it, it's evil; if others wish it, it's good; if the motive of your action is your welfare, don't do it; if the motive is the welfare of others, then anything goes.

"As this double-jointed, double-standard morality splits you in half, so it splits mankind into two enemy camps: one is you, the other is all the rest of humanity. You are the only outcast who has no right to wish or live. You are the only servant, the rest are the masters, you are the only giver, the rest are the takers, you are the eternal debtor, the rest are the creditors never to be paid off. You must not question their right to your sacrifice, or the nature of their
wishes and their needs: their right is conferred upon them by a negative, by
the fact that they are ‘non-you.’

“For those of you who might ask questions, your code provides a conso-
lation prize and booby-trap: it is for your own happiness, it says, that you
must serve the happiness of others, the only way to achieve your joy is to give
it up to others, the only way to achieve your prosperity is to surrender your
wealth to others, the only way to protect your life is to protect all men except
yourself—and if you find no joy in this procedure, it is your own fault and
the proof of your evil: if you were good, you would find your happiness in
providing a banquet for others, and your dignity in existing on such crumbs
as they might care to toss you.

“You who have no standard of self-esteem, accept the guilt and dare not ask
the questions. But you know the unadmitted answer, refusing to acknowledge
what you see, what hidden premise moves your world. You know it, not in hon-
est statement, but as a dark uneasiness within you, while you flounder between
guiltily cheating and grudgingly practicing a principle too vicious to name.

“I, who do not accept the unearned, neither in values nor in guilt, am here
to ask the questions you evaded. Why is it moral to serve the happiness of oth-
ers, but not your own? If enjoyment is a value, why is it moral when experi-
enced by others, but immoral when experienced by you? If the sensation of
eating a cake is a value, why is it an immoral indulgence in your stomach, but
a moral goal for you to achieve in the stomach of others? Why is it immoral
for you to desire, but moral for others to do so? Why is it immoral to produce a
value and keep it, but moral to give it away? And if it is not moral for you to
keep a value, why is it moral for others to accept it? If you are selfless and vir-
tuous when you give it, are they not selfish and vicious when they take it? Does
virtue consist of serving vice? Is the moral purpose of those who are good, self-
immolation for the sake of those who are evil? . . .

“Under a morality of sacrifice, the first value you sacrifice is morality; the
next is self-esteem. When need is the standard, every man is both victim and
parasite. As a victim, he must labor to fill the needs of others, leaving himself
in the position of a parasite whose needs must be filled by others. He cannot
approach his fellow men except in one of two disgraceful roles: he is both a
beggar and a sucker.

“You fear the man who has a dollar less than you, that dollar is rightfully
his, he makes you feel like a moral defrauder. You hate the man who has a dol-
lar more than you, that dollar is rightfully yours, he makes you feel that you are
morally defrauded. The man below is a source of your guilt, the man above is
a source of your frustration. You do not know what to surrender or demand,
when to give and when to grab, what pleasure in life is rightfully yours and
what debt is still unpaid to others—you struggle to evade, as ‘theory,’ the
knowledge that by the moral standard you’ve accepted you are guilty every
moment of your life, there is no mouthful of food you swallow that is not
needed by someone somewhere on earth—and you give up the problem in blind resentment, you conclude that moral perfection is not to be achieved or desired, that you will muddle through by snatching as snatch can and by avoiding the eyes of the young, of those who look at you as if self-esteem were possible and they expected you to have it. Guilt is all that you retain within your soul—and so does every other man, as he goes past, avoiding your eyes. Do you wonder why your morality has not achieved brotherhood on earth or the good will of man to man?

"The justification of sacrifice, that your morality propounds, is more corrupt than the corruption it purports to justify. The motive of your sacrifice, it tells you, should be love—the love you ought to feel for every man. A morality that professes the belief that the values of the spirit are more precious than matter, a morality that teaches you to scorn a whore who gives her body indiscriminately to all men—this same morality demands that you surrender your soul to promiscuous love for all comers.

"As there can be no causeless wealth, so there can be no causeless love or any sort of causeless emotion. An emotion is a response to a fact of reality, an estimate dictated by your standards. To love is to value. The man who tells you that it is possible to value without values, to love those whom you appraise as worthless, is the man who tells you that it is possible to grow rich by consuming without producing and that paper money is as valuable as gold.

"Observe that he does not expect you to feel a causeless fear. When his kind get into power, they are expert at contriving means of terror, at giving you ample cause to feel the fear by which they desire to rule you. But when it comes to love, the highest of emotions, you permit them to shriek at you accusingly that you are a moral delinquent if you're incapable of feeling causeless love. When a man feels fear without reason, you call him to the attention of a psychiatrist; you are not so careful to protect the meaning, the nature and the dignity of love.

"Love is the expression of one's values, the greatest reward you can earn for the moral qualities you have achieved in your character and person, the emotional price paid by one man for the joy he receives from the virtues of another. Your morality demands that you divorce your love from values and hand it down to any vagrant, not as response to his worth, but as response to his need, not as reward, but as alms, not as a payment for virtues, but as a blank check on vices. Your morality tells you that the purpose of love is to set you free of the bonds of morality, that love is superior to moral judgment, that true love transcends, forgives and survives every manner of evil in its object, and the greater the love the greater the depravity it permits to the loved. To love a man for his virtues is paltry and human, it tells you; to love him for his flaws is divine. To love those who are worthy of it is self-interest; to love the unworthy is sacrifice. You owe your love to those who don't deserve it, and the less they deserve it, the more love you owe them—the more loathsome the object,
the nobler your love—the more unfastidious your love, the greater your virtue—and if you can bring your soul to the state of a dump heap that welcomes anything on equal terms, if you can cease to value moral values, you have achieved the state of moral perfection.

"Such is your morality of sacrifice and such are the twin ideals it offers: to refashion the life of your body in the image of a human stockyards, and the life of your spirit in the image of a dump. . . ."

"Since childhood, you have been hiding the guilty secret that you feel no desire to be moral, no desire to seek self-immolation, that you dread and hate your code, but dare not say it even to yourself, that you're devoid of those moral 'instincts' which others profess to feel. The less you felt, the louder you proclaimed your selfless love and servitude to others, in dread of ever letting them discover your own self, the self that you betrayed, the self that you kept in concealment, like a skeleton in the closet of your body. And they, who were at once your dupes and your deceivers, they listened and voiced their loud approval, in dread of ever letting you discover that they were harboring the same unspoken secret. Existence among you is a giant pretense, an act you all perform for one another, each feeling that he is the only guilty freak, each placing his moral authority in the unknowable known only to others, each faking the reality he feels they expect him to fake, none having the courage to break the vicious circle.

"No matter what dishonorable compromise you've made with your impracticable creed, no matter what miserable balance, half-cynicism, half-superstition, you now manage to maintain, you still preserve the root, the lethal tenet: the belief that the moral and the practical are opposites. Since childhood, you have been running from the terror of a choice you have never dared fully to identify: If the practical, whatever you must practice to exist, whatever works, succeeds, achieves your purpose, whatever brings you food and joy, whatever profits you is evil—and if the good, the moral is the impractical, whatever fails, destroys, frustrates, whatever injures you and brings you loss or pain—then your choice is to be moral or to live.

"The sole result of that murderous doctrine was to remove morality from life. You grew up to believe that moral laws bear no relation to the job of living, except as an impediment and threat, that man's existence is an amoral jungle where anything goes and anything works. And in that fog of switching definitions which descends upon a frozen mind, you have forgotten that the evils damned by your creed were the virtues required for living, and you have come to believe that actual evils are the practical means of existence. Forgetting that the impractical 'good' was self-sacrifice, you believe that self-esteem is impractical; forgetting that the practical 'evil' was production, you believe that robbery is practical. . . ."

"Accept the fact that the achievement of your happiness is the only moral purpose of your life, and that happiness—not pain or mindless
self-indulgence—is the proof of your moral integrity, since it is the proof and the result of your loyalty to the achievement of your values. Happiness was the responsibility you dreaded, it required the kind of rational discipline you did not value yourself enough to assume—and the anxious staleness of your days is the monument to your evasion of the knowledge that there is no moral substitute for happiness, that there is no more despicable coward than the man who deserted the battle for his joy, fearing to assert his right to existence, lacking the courage and the loyalty to life of a bird or a flower reaching for the sun. Discard the protective rags of that vice which you called a virtue: humility—learn to value yourself, which means: to fight for your happiness—and when you learn that pride is the sum of all virtues, you will learn to live like a man.

“As a basic step of self-esteem, learn to treat as the mark of a cannibal any man’s demand for your help. To demand it is to claim that your life is his property—and loathsome as such claim might be, there’s something still more loathsome: your agreement. Do you ask if it’s ever proper to help another man? No—if he claims it as his right or as a moral duty that you owe him. Yes—if such is your own desire based on your own selfish pleasure in the value of his person and his struggle.”

**Review Questions**

1. What does it mean to be successful as a leader? As a human being?
2. Would leaders in today’s political and organizational settings be effective if they rejected what Rand calls the morality of sacrifice?
3. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of a leader who only acts on his or her own self-interest.
4. How does Rand’s advice compare and contrast with Machiavelli’s?
5. Would Rand agree with Hobbes’s assessment of human nature?