

Co-Charismatic Leadership

Critical Perspectives on Spirituality, Ethics and Leadership

by

SIMON ROBINSON

and

JONATHAN SMITH



Current theories of leadership, spirituality and ethics are inadequate for the global, rapidly changing and complex environment in which leaders work today. Emerging from this book's critical analysis comes a new theory of leadership: co-charismatic leadership. This does not mean leadership focused in 'charisma', or the special qualities or charm of an individual. Charisma originates from the Greek word for gift or grace. Rather it emphasises the relational nature of charisma, as both shared throughout the community and dependent upon mutual relationships within the community. The charismata are in effect virtues, to be practised in the community by all members, hence the 'co' in the title.

The authors argue for a leadership that enables virtues, informed by the ongoing narrative of and dialogue in the community, to be practised in the community and beyond. These virtues enable the practice of responsibility, and taking that responsibility for ideas, values and practice is itself central to leadership. Through the practice of responsibility everybody in the organisation becomes a leader in some way. The task of the authorised leader is to enable all this.

This book will appeal to both practitioner and academic audiences alike as it provides an engaging mix of theory and practical application which tests and applies the concepts explored in a range of practical case studies.



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Co-Charismatic Leadership

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Ethics and Leadership*

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SIMON ROBINSON
and
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*To our wives Angie Robinson and Emma Smith
who evince such loving and creative leadership
as wives, mothers, grannies, and managers.*

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Introduction

This book presents a critical analysis of leadership, spirituality and values, and from this argues that current theories are inadequate for the global, rapidly changing and complex environment in which leaders work today. Emerging from this critical analysis comes our proposal for a new theory of leadership which we have termed co-charismatic leadership. By that we do not mean leadership focused in the 'charisma' of the individual leader. In other words it is not simply about the special qualities or charm of an individual, be they powerful or mystical, which enable her to take followers where she wants them to be. Charisma originates from the Greek word for gift or grace. This emphasises the relational nature of charisma, as both shared throughout the community, and dependent upon mutual relationships within the community. The charismata are in effect virtues, to be practised in the community by all members, hence the 'co' in the title. We are arguing therefore for a view of leadership that moves us away from the focus on a special or elite individual, and the traits that mark them out, to leadership that enables virtues, informed by the ongoing narrative of and dialogue in the community, to be practised in the community and beyond. We argue that these virtues enable the practice of responsibility, and that taking responsibility for ideas, values and practice is itself central to leadership. Through the practice of responsibility everybody in the organisation becomes a leader in some way. The task of the authorised leader is to enable all this.

Whilst this book is focused in business and professional ethics it speaks to three different audiences, not all of whom currently speak to each other. Our aim in this dialogue is to challenge the theoretical underpinning of all of these areas, but also to establish critical connections between them. We hope this will provide a more inclusive theory to aid understanding and practice of leadership in a complex, rapidly changing global context. In this we are not trying to assert a Western perspective, still less any particular religious perspective. The work emphasises the importance of a dialogic

and critical focus embracing difference and plurality and how to handle these, both within organisations and beyond.

One audience involves leadership, practitioners and theorists. We challenge traditional views of charismatic leadership, based in the individual leader and theories which focus on the transformational role of the leader. The latter are often themselves referred to as charismatic or neo-charismatic. We distinguish our work from these: focusing on a broader understanding of character, placing a greater emphasis on virtues, the development of a culture of critical dialogue, through all of which responsibility is embodied across the community of practice. We also aim to show that our view of leadership relates to and develops theories of relational and emergent leadership. In particular we aim to show this approach is focused in dialogue with multiple and complex narratives within and outside the organisation. We argue that this is the path to addressing issues of complexity theory.

The second audience is those involved with spirituality and its application in the work place. Our co-charismatic approach challenges traditional views of spirituality. In particular, we want to reclaim holism. Many views of spirituality espouse holism without working through its full implications. In arguing for greater focus on affect, for instance, the importance of the intellect and critical questioning is often lost, seen rather as a lack of faith. Equally, the somatic, or embodied aspect, is often lost, through stress on the transcendent view of spirituality. This can lead to a lack of genuine engagement with problems and difficulties in the workplace and a lack of critical engagement with theory and research in spirituality at work. Hence, many researchers assume a simplistic connection between spirituality and leadership effectiveness, as we show in Chapter Eight. We argue that cognitive, affective, somatic and relational aspects of holistic meaning, which are vital elements of spirituality, have all to be given full value in practice, and that this centres on the practice of responsibility. In this we argue that critical engagement with, and not simply tolerance of, difference along with the potential for conflict, is key to spirituality. Such engagement involves transcendence in terms of relational engagement, finding the self in relationship, as distinct from views of spirituality which stress spiritual transcendence as simply moving beyond the self. Our focus is on spirituality in a generic sense, inclusive of religion, noting that whatever the

definition of spirituality there is a need to bridge the gap between agency (the autonomy of the individual) and structure (with stress on order, but danger of imposing meaning).

The third audience is involved in business and professional ethics. A virtue ethicist might look at our proposals and suggest this is simply virtue ethics, and needs little engagement with the other audiences. Indeed it could be argued that virtue ethics theory is a strong corrective to the trait theory of leadership, locking into meaning making (narrative) and the practice of virtues in the community. However, virtue ethics theory is challenged by our critique of the spirituality literature, in relation to complexity and difference as part of the community and as part of the social environment with which the community engages, and the need to engage this critically. We argue also that virtues are directly connected to the practice of responsibility and dialogue. Spirituality also critically tests virtue theory. Integrity and practical wisdom, for instance, can be seen as focused in consciousness, as much as end, purpose, congruence or coherence.

The book then is an attempt to engage these audiences around mutual reflection on the meaning and practice of leadership and its relationship to ethics. We attempt to sum up co-charismatic leadership under seven heads, which emerge through the book, each of which we will relate to holism and virtues:

- Consciousness of the other, holistic meaning making (cognitive, affective, somatic and relational), involving awareness of thought, feeling, value, practice, and impact.
- Connectivity, appreciation (valuing) our relationship with the other, involving a sense of belonging, solidarity.
- Criticality, involving a testing of difference. We argue that awareness and testing of difference is key to spirituality. The presence of the other, and the connected narratives, challenges our understanding, meaning making, and beliefs. It also works against the dominance of single narratives. Hence, plurality in community is to be welcomed.
- Commitment to person and purpose and project over time – all three are key to consciousness. It is hard to be aware of the other

without being there for them, something which ties closely to the idea of shared and universal responsibility.

- Community. Community is key to identity, which is in turn key to relationship and meaning. On the one hand this means developing the disciplines of community which involved mutual support and shared responsibility. This requires a well worked out culture (system and discipline of meaning making). On the other hand this also requires working with difference both inside and outside the community, enabling learning and an associated sense of journey.
- Character. This focuses in the virtues, the embodiment of shared meaning and value. Virtues are both strengthened by spirituality, not least in the stress on consciousness as much as any sense of ethical value. They also strengthen spirituality. Their practice enables responsible action, including responsible leadership. Consciousness includes awareness of moral limitations, including dispositions which limit awareness and the capacity to respond to the social and physical environment (the vices).
- Creativity. The focus on character and community takes leadership away from the realm of utility and tools to ontology and existential concerns. Spirituality and any leadership based in it is about the person and her engagement with meaning. In this respect practice, action is a further embodiment of meaning, focused in the negotiation of shared responsibility, and the creation of value that moves beyond the individual and the organisation. This reminds us that spirituality is as much physical and relational as it is about concepts or feelings.

All these aspects of spirituality, we argue, are to be embodied in the leader and enabled in the members of the organisation and beyond. Hence, it takes us beyond simplistic views of stakeholder relationships and management. They are also underpinned by and embody a complex view of responsibility, focusing on agency, accountability and shared responsibility for the social and physical environment. In turn this depends upon mutual critical dialogue.

Structure of the book

Chapter One critically examines leadership theory, from traditional charismatic, neo-charismatic, transformational, servant, transactional and relational, to emerging theories of leadership. We argue that in the theories focused in value there is not enough attention to agency and critical testing and that in relational theories there is not enough attention to different levels of complexity and the means of responding to it. We conclude that the impetus is towards the handling of increased complexity and to leadership which is often characterised as focused in spirituality.

The second chapter examines the meaning of spirituality and how this relates to leadership, focusing on holistic meaning making and consciousness (awareness and appreciation of the other) and connectedness.

Chapter Three moves into the importance of criticality, commitment and creativity as different aspects of responsibility, noting the existential basis of much of this. The fourth chapter focuses on character and how this is practised in community. The practice of responsibility and virtues are a key part of bridging the gap between agency and structure, moving beyond the charisma of individual leadership (trait theory) to the charismata of the community, enabling leadership that is dispersed and able to practice multiple responsibility based in different holding different narratives in community. The implications of this co-charismatic leadership are then worked out through the next chapters.

Chapter Five uses the example of Shakespeare's Henry V to show how complex narratives, including those of power and authority, can be engaged holistically, and goes on to develop the place of dialogue and conflict resolution theory in leadership. The next chapter looks more closely at the nature of complexity in an organisation, noting the dangers of polarising different narratives. An example from Higher Education examines the very different narratives which compete to inform leadership and management, and which are focused in different aspects of value and meaning. In this chapter we explore the ways that professions can relate to spirituality, and the importance of including management in the professional dialogue, not simply dismissing it as value-neutral.

Chapter Seven focuses on different aspects of the complexity of any organisation, not least different spiritualities that may be brought to work and how these are affected by work legislation. The following chapter extends the critique of spirituality at work presentations to claims about the positive effect of spirituality on the workforce, arguing against the use of spirituality as a tool to enhance workplace experience or productivity.

Chapter Nine looks at the leadership education and the place of spirituality. It argues that business schools in particular have not begun to address the issues put forward by this book. This is partly because of the positivistic paradigm, asserting value neutrality and utility, that informs much of the curriculum, partly because of the lack of a genuinely holistic perspective, and partly because the lack of critical reflectivity, and connections, between disciplines and different aspects of the intellect (from rationality to affective agendas).

The final chapter attempts to summarise the book and offers two perspectives of practice. The first critically examines the case of the Mid Staffs Hospital Trust and provides a response. The second offers positive examples of what co-charismatic leadership might look like in practice.

Leadership

This chapter focuses on the meaning and practice of leadership. Most commonly this is seen in terms of business. However, simply to assert that business is the context of management and leadership can be misleading. First, 'business' involves a wide variety of institutions, from small corner shops to multi-billion pound multinational organisations. Second, business is not an isolated practice. In global contexts for instance, businesses may be connected to politics, with para-state corporations.¹ Third, leadership and management are critical in public organisations as well as organisations in the market place. Public sector organisations such as health, police and education and not for profit organisations such as charities and Non-Governmental Organisations (from religious institutions to sports teams) all require management of people, physical resources and finances as well as leadership in the sense of setting and communicating vision. What are often counted as the traditional professions such as medicine or the law, often also offer a strong sense of leadership applicable to wider society as much as the profession. There is an on-going debate about how leadership relates to management (Western 2008). Some see them as quite distinct, with leaders as focused in vision and direction. Others suggest they are much the same or at least overlapping. We will examine this relationship, and the meaning of management, more closely in Chapter Six.

In this chapter we will critically examine some of the traditional views of leadership, often based in quasi scientific theory, and argue that there are strengths and also weaknesses with all these theories. One of the most significant factors they overlook is that of value and meaning. We argue that

1 Business with close connections to Government, sometimes involving the political appointment of board members.

this is a significant omission because it does not address issues of underlying meaning. We will then critically examine the theories which place value and particularly ethical value at the centre of leadership, including transformational, transactional, and servant leadership. We end this section with an exploration of the emerging theories of leadership and management, including eco-leadership, social relations and servant leadership. We will argue that even theories that are ethics centred are inadequate, because they ignore or do not critically work through underlying worldviews or the epistemological issues behind them. This is important because it raises questions about power and freedom in leadership. We argue that to address this omission requires a critical engagement with spirituality.

Defining leadership

There are many hundreds of definitions of leadership in the academic literature, as Pye (2005) points out. There is much debate about whether these are descriptions, definitions or paradigms, and whether the differences are substantive or simply arise from different contexts. It is not surprising then that the very concept of leader is contested.

Attempts have been made to narrow the term to ideas around the core actions of a leader, not least the simple idea that a leader gives direction. Covey (2009) offers the helpful analysis of meta, macro and micro-leadership. Meta-leadership relates to setting vision, and stewardship of what is entrusted to the leader. This sets out the direction of the organisation's journey. Macro leadership focuses on strategy, organisation and process, the means of reaching that end. Micro leadership is about relationships, the use of power and how people relate to each other on the journey. This Micro aspect of leadership is key to enabling change in the organisation (Rost 1991), and in turn is about taking responsibility for that change in relation to purpose and vision.

This seems to be an unexceptional starting point to defining leadership. However, none of these aspects of leadership are straightforward. All have major questions around them that are ultimately about value and purpose. In meta-leadership, for example, there are questions about authority, boundary and responsibility. Who decides the vision and purpose of the organisation, and whether and how this should relate to wider concerns about the social and physical environment? Is the leader primarily or only responsible for her group, or does leadership demand a much wider awareness and response? If the latter, how does this wider response tie in with the sustainability of the organisation? Already this shows potential tensions and conflicts of value and interest that may test, and even require a new vision or a change of direction. Most of these questions have to do with meaning making at individual, organisational and global levels that offers constant challenge.

There are questions too about the Macro aspect of leadership. How do strategies and process relate to the vision and purpose? Is it simply a matter of applying strategies that affect the purpose? Or can, for instance, a stress on targets and measurability affect the core purpose and its meaning? We shall give examples later in the book where the stress on targets has radically changed core values, especially in public corporations.

Micro-leadership raises questions about power. Where does a leader's power and authority come from? How is the authority of the leader to be used? When does the assertion of authority become abuse of power? Does followership mean compliance, and if so does that diminish the autonomy and engagement of the follower? What power do followers have? Why should followers demand autonomy? Can leaders legitimately manipulate followers in the interest of the organisations purpose? (See Price 2008).

Against the backdrop of all this debate are questions about the core functions of leadership. Covey assumes this is about enabling effective change and success. But what do the terms change and success actually mean? In different cultures and contexts they may have very different meanings (Jackson 2011) but often western interpretations are used and carry most influence. Leadership can be very successful even when there has been no change, or when the primary objective has not been achieved. Ernest Shackleton (Huntford 2000), the polar explorer for instance, failed

in his primary objective, having had to abandon his ship without traversing Antarctica. However, he argued the trip was a success. When faced by adverse conditions he managed to get all his crew back without loss of life. In this situation the key criteria for success came to the fore, which were not simply to do with targets but with fundamental values of the importance of human life, of the leader's responsibility for the safety of his crew, or loyalty and comradeship. Targets and priorities changed or were modified by the demands and challenges of the social and physical environment.

Considerations such as these lead Ciulla (2004) to argue that there is no value neutral view of leadership. As Tawney (1930) suggested any practice is built upon ethical and procedural values that influence the leader's actions and so have to be justified and may well be challenged. This has led Ciulla (2004), amongst others, to challenge some of the earliest views of leadership, built around descriptions of trait, function and control.

Individual leadership and traits

Trait theory defines leadership in terms of key traits. A trait is a genetically determined characteristic or distinguishing quality of a person. Yukl (1999) sums up much of the research in this area with the core traits of the effective leader he identifies, which includes: high energy level, achievement orientation, need for affiliation, emotional stability and maturity, and personal integrity.

The trait theory of leadership is most often based in two views of leadership, the 'great man' and the functionalist approach. The first, stresses the innate capacities that make up the exceptional person, mostly seen as male, and which enable that person to lead, a view reaching back to Plato (1992). The functionalist approach focuses on the core traits which enable leadership functions to be achieved. Such functions are themselves based in particular anthropologies, in the sense of views about humanity. Two of the most popular are proposed by McGregor (1960) and suggest negative

and positive views of humanity. The first argues that human beings are essentially negative, wishing to avoid responsibility and work. Hence, the function of the leader is to force or persuade followers into working. The second suggests that human beings are creative, positive and want to do meaningful work and take responsibility. The function of the leader then is to enable such creativity. Each 'function' requires different traits.

There are many problems with the trait approach. First, there are in fact many different views of traits, all commonly contested. Charan and Colvin (1999), for instance, suggest different traits to Yukl's (1999). Their proposals are built on an analysis of successful CEOs and include: integrity, maturity and energy; business acumen; people acumen (the capacity to effectively judge and work with people); and organisational acumen (the capacity to engender trust, communicate and enable change). How then do we decide between the different lists, and how do we distinguish these from more general employability traits? Many, if not all the traits, could apply to followers as much as leaders. Western (2008) notes that the meaning of common traits is open ended, leading to debate about what they actually mean in context.

Such traits feed into the 'great man' myth, the idea that leadership can only be practised by an elite group. This assumes that leaders work with followers who are less able and who need to follow their leader. This in turn presents a picture of obedience to leaders, and compliance rather than empowerment and commitment and the possibility that followers can have creative ideas. This raises real questions around work place democracy, power, empowerment and what constitutes respect for a work force (Western 2008). In any case the relevance or importance of traits such as extroversion is often simply assumed. Introversion, for instance, may involve deeper thinking, calm decision making, and more reflective leadership (Kahnweiler 2013). Even the concept of leadership as essentially individualistic is never critically established.

Second, the trait and competency versions of this theory presents the view that there is a clear understanding of the role of leadership, and one of the roles of the effective leader as ensuring the successful pursuit of the organisation's aims and objectives. Scientific credibility is claimed by empirical work that draws traits from successful leaders. However, there

is little that is scientifically convincing about drawing such theories from a very narrow sample and from an uncritical view of the function of leadership. The surveys ask no critical questions about the role of leader and so cannot expect to find anything different than the old charismatic paradigm. Third, Western (2008, p. 5) argues that the trait theory attempts to fit all contexts, applying to all leadership positions. Moreover, this then supplies the basis for selecting leaders 'scientifically' through the development of means of testing, training and measuring these traits in leaders and potential leaders of the corporation. Once again, however, there is little scientific in this approach. All that has been done is to assume the core leadership traits and then hand over the task of developing these to self-proclaimed experts in identifying and developing them. None of this shows any evidence of critical reflection about diversity of leadership, or how traits different from the list may help develop different styles, that may be equally successful. The majority of these theories of leadership have either been developed in America or the UK, are largely focused on male styles and few consider the impact of different cultural perspectives on leadership. Moreover, none of this, even in the business context, seems aware of the empirical work on leadership and corporate governance. The work on corporate governance suggests the possibility of quite different styles of shared and dispersed leadership (see Chapter Six).

Fourth, and connected, Western (2008, p. 34) argues that this model takes no account of context. He notes the example of the UK National Health Service (NHS) which has developed a competencies framework. The framework assumes leadership as essentially individualistic, offering generic competences that are associated with 'success'. However, it is not clear that a generic model can fit the many different professional groupings in the NHS. Contextual differences between the leader of a surgical unit, a charge nurse on a busy accident and emergency ward, and a chief finance officer need to be considered. This example suggests that leadership, far from being individualistic, is a function of negotiation amongst leaders of several different groups.

Fifth, it is not clear that value neutral theory can begin to capture the essence of leadership. As noted above, Ciulla (2004, p. 4) argues that value, and in particular ethical meaning, is central to any understanding of

leadership. She suggests that the reason why this ethical identity has not be explored more is because of the stress on a more positivist approach reflecting a more general trend in business studies to scientise (Ghoshal 2005), and to focus on skills, performance and success, something we examine in more detail in Chapter Eight (Calas and Smircich 1988).

Finally trait theories were developed at times of greater stability, and with less global influence. They do not take sufficient account of the rapidly changing global environment in which leaders are working today, including global interdependence and multiculturalism.

None of this says that the great man theory and related ideas are totally wrong. However, it is not sufficient to explain or explore all leadership. Moreover, the related individualist and great man views of leadership are built on the assumption that leaders are the only ones who grasp what can and should be done. Hence, followers are essentially passive and without autonomy. Western (2008) argues this leads to dependency and often to the imposition of leadership.

There is a danger, as Rayment and Smith (2010) identify, that these powerful and well known early theories of leadership and the assumptions that underlie them strongly influence at an unconscious level our thoughts and perceptions about what a leader should do and how they should do it. As Rayment and Smith (2010) show, these often result in ineffective leadership approaches being adopted, or expected by followers, which they term misleadership. All this suggests that a more fundamental and critical exploration of the factors that leadership theory and approaches are built upon is required.

Many of difficulties we have identified with the traits approach point to a need for greater focus on the influences from the internal and external social environments in order to find appropriate ways of responding and using power. If this is the case it would suggest that values discourse is central to attempts to define leadership. As an example, Binney and Williams (1997), argue for a mutuality in leader-follower relationships, which demonstrates mutual respect, is ethical, and is effective in dealing with change. This mutuality in turn points to the need for a more dispersed or shared approach to leadership, with responsibility and power not being held by one person.

Value-centred leadership

Given the problems with the attempt to develop value neutral views of leadership, focused on the leader alone, a number of writers have set out views of leadership that are consciously centred in values and the importance of group members rather than just the individual leaders. We will focus on two of these, transformational leadership and servant leadership, which build around core ethical values, to see if they provide a more convincing view of leadership.²

Transformational leadership

The founding advocate of this approach was James Burns (1978), with later developments by writers such as Bass (2005). Burns argues for a view of the leader which is essentially moral. Figures, such as the tyrants of history, by definition, are excluded from leadership discourse according to Burns. He argues that the purpose of the leader is by definition transformational, enabling the organisation to change and respond to change. He distinguishes transformational leadership from transactional leadership. Transactional leadership, he argues, is primarily about targets. Hence, transactional, or modal, values are about the means of any process of achieving this, and include responsibility, fairness, honesty, promise keeping and honouring commitments. Central to this are processes that enable the development of consensus, and Burns argues that the transactional approach to leadership values this above core values and purpose.

Transformational leadership on the other hand focuses on moral ends beyond the narrow interest of the organisation, including justice, freedom, and equality. The task of the leader is to lead the members of his organisation to the practice of the common good (Appiah 2007). He offers Gandhi as the classic example of such a leader, raising the aspirations, and

2 We address broader views of value leadership in the next chapter.

life chances, of a whole nation, effecting social change that lead to independence, based in core values of freedom and equality.

Central to this is Burns' use of Maslow (1943) and Kohlberg (1973). Maslow's hierarchy of needs stresses the primacy of core physical needs, including safety and shelter, leading to social/relational needs and self-actualisation. Burns argues that the transformational leader should: address followers' core needs; develop their understanding of higher needs and values; enable confidence and with that behaviour change; motivate followers to higher levels of personal achievement, in terms of Maslow's self-actualisation (Burns 1978). At the heart of this is the argument that the leader should enable followers to develop moral maturity. Moral maturity is equated with the capacity to base ethical behaviour not on unquestioning adherence to the codes or rules of the group but on the underlying universal principles, which Burns ties into Kohlberg's (1973) stages of moral development. These move from the early stages where values are based in either self-interest or frameworks of discipline, to stages where ethics are based on community codes and peer pressure, to the mature stages where the members of a group or project can both belong to the group and achieve rational based moral autonomy.

This leads, argues Burns, to more effective leadership. The focus on values and rationality means that the transformational leader is better able to access the widest possible data, different perspectives of that data and different possible options, thus leading to better leadership decisions. The whole approach leads to the development of a better, more effective, motivated and responsive organisation. The effect of all this is to enable group members to develop into fully moral agents. Transformational leadership in this can develop not simply change in the organisation but also wider social change, hence it fits into the concern in business and beyond for social responsibility as a key part of the identity of the organisation.

Burns' approach is broadly Kantian, involving universalisable principles that the leader should engage with. However, it is not a simple Kantian position, in that he is not just asking leaders to fulfill such principles. It is the fundamental purpose of the leader not simply to handle change for the organisation ethically, but to do it in such a way that takes the organisation and its members on a journey of ethical development.

Ethical development, however, runs the risk of manipulation and disempowerment, as some critics of Burns suggest. Other transformational leadership theorists (Bass and Steidlmeier 2004) acknowledge this and in response distinguish pseudo transformational leadership from authentic. Authentic transformational leadership involves four primary behaviours: idealised influence (focused in charismatic leadership); inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; and individualised consideration.

The first of these is centred in morally uplifting values. Pseudo transformational leadership in contrast may have the charisma but not ethical values focused beyond the organisation. This can lead to what Rayment and Smith (2010) term misguided and Machiavellian forms of misleadership which are purely focused on the organisation gain or on the leader's own objectives and omit consideration of the greater good, exemplified in the leadership case of Enron which we explore in Chapter Three.

Inspirational motivation provides followers with 'challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertaking' (Bass and Steidlmeier 2004, p. 180), focusing on harmony and altruism. Pseudo transformational leadership tends to focus on fear, defence and insecurities, as was typified again in Hitler's leadership. They give the appearance of offering charismatic leadership that leads to motivation and fulfilment but actually do not actively engage the followers in personal or moral development.

Intellectual stimulation places an 'open architecture dynamic' into the discussion of vision, evaluation and implementation. In short, such leadership encourages rational consultation and debate. For Bass and Steidlmeier (2004) this involves openness to world views that underlie the moral vision. In connection with this they write of 'spirituality', and strongly imply the need to develop rational reflection, so that all can rationally defend the values of the organisation. The focus is not on people (bad or good) but on the issues and rational grounding for judgement. In contrast, pseudo transformational leadership is not tolerant of the dynamic of critical conversation or its development.

The 'authentic' leader focuses on the development of followers in the practice of deontological principles. This looks to enable followers as leaders within the organisation and beyond. In contrast the pseudo

transformational leader looks to maintain the dependence of the followers, setting up child-parent relationships that discourage autonomy.

The development of this authentic leadership approach is often referred to as neo-charismatic, because it accepts the need for charisma which helps to motivate, but is focused in core values rather than simply the personality of the leader.³ In the light of this, transformational is again contrasted with transactional leadership. Both Bass and Burns argue that transactional values are not to be underestimated and have a real part to play, but that this secondary to the wider values. Transactional leadership is focused in the different interests of the people involved. It seeks to satisfy immediate needs, and is therefore happy about making compromises. Any ethics then is contractual, based in a coincidence of self-interest, and thus an ethics of the lowest common denominator (Bass and Steidlmeier 2004).

Critiques of transformational leadership

There is no doubt that there is much of importance in the model of transformational leadership. Most important is the stress on ethical and spiritual value and growth to moral maturity. However, there remain several questions.

Using research by Birnbaum into leadership in Higher Education, Keeley (2004) begins by questioning what he sees as the three myths of transformational leadership. The first is that leaders have to create a vision that will transcend the interests of the individual. Birnbaum found that successful leaders reflect the varied interests and values of the different stakeholders in higher education. In Birnbaum's study listening effectively to the different value narratives was found to be more beneficial to developing values that transcended self-interest than was communicating a single vision. This supports the idea of stakeholder theory in business and in higher education (Robinson 2005a). Stakeholder theory suggests that organisations have to deal with many different stakeholders, internally

3 We will contrast this view with our title neo charismatic leadership in Chapter Four, where charisma is examined in terms of virtues.

and externally, and that this involves handling not simply plural interests, but also different views about the values and purpose of the organisation and beyond.

The second myth was that university heads should be transformational leaders, i.e. should be effecting change in their institutions. The research suggests a different picture. Change is in any case given in the life of the academic community. It is a function of relationships with very different stakeholders, and is often imposed on the organisation by government or professional bodies whose training is based in the university. Higher Education leaders argue that the most effective way of handling this is through reflection on the values already held by the members of that community, using these as the basis for working together.

Finally, Birnbaum notes that charisma is not essential in this leadership. On the contrary charisma can easily subvert the lower levels of management through diminishing their responsibility and authority in relation to the leader. In the Higher Education sector this means that providing a safe space for critical reflection is more important than charisma. This will be examined more closely in Chapters Five and Eight. In all this Birnbaum argues that Burns, Bass and others have not effectively justified the centrality of their core ethical values, or of the related leadership behaviours.

There are also logical inconsistencies within the transformational position. On the one hand Burns and others rest a lot of their thinking on Maslow's view of needs. Maslow's (1998) hierarchy is a well-established perspective, but has little theoretical underpinning. Maslow (1943) himself highlights that he only studied a relatively small number of people he regarded as having achieved the highest level of self-actualisation, including Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Adams, William James, Albert Schweitzer and Baruch Spinoza (Ewen 1998, p. 424). At the top of Maslow's hierarchy is self-actualisation, and this, for the most part is interpreted as the development of autonomy – seen from an individualistic perspective. However, at the same time Burns focuses on higher values such as justice and equality which seem to have a collective strength, and are less to do with individual autonomy.

Several commentators also argue that the actual dynamic of transformational leadership is about compliance. Keeley (2004), for instance,

argues that such leadership assumes that collective ends are more legitimate or morally powerful than individual ends. It is the leader who has the understanding of the common good, and this understanding should be communicated to the follower who will of her own free will accept the core values. Whatever Burns says about autonomy and freedom, this sets up a teacher-pupil or parent-child relationship: the leader knows what the core values are and he or she has to communicate them to the follower, who is not aware of them and needs to develop the awareness. The follower on his or her own will then come to know the truth. This is reinforced by the idea of prophet and messiahship referred to in Bass's justification of authentic transformational leadership. If the pseudo-transformational leader is the false prophet this assumes that the authentic one is the true prophet. Authenticity is then focused in truth, and the truth is mediated by the leader. Bass sums this up:

Leaders are authentically transformational when they increase awareness of what is right, good, important and beautiful, when they help to elevate followers' needs for achievement and self-actualisation, when they foster in followers higher moral maturity and when they move followers beyond their self-interest for the good of their group organisation or society. (Bass 1998)

The language in this goes beyond empowerment. The task of the leader is to elevate, and Western argues that this actually involves establishing normative thinking and the engineering of cultures. In other words this approach is as directive as any strong individualist models.

The suspicion seems to be confirmed by the reliance of Burns on the Kohlberg model of moral development as staged. The model is based in a Kantian view of ethics, based as we noted universalisable principles, rationality, and individuality. Kohlberg's use of Kant has been critiqued by Gilligan (1992) on several grounds. In particular she argues that it assumes that ethical solutions can be imposed upon a situation without the creative input of those involved. She argues for a feminist ethical perspective which looks to establish ethics on the view of humanity as interconnected and interdependent. From that anthropology she argues that moral maturity is not a function of staged development but rather a function of the development of a critical moral consciousness, which is developed through

everyone being involved in working out an ethics of care. Gilligan also questions the exclusives rationality at the heart of Kohlberg. She argues for a more holistic basis for ethics, focused in empathy and imagination. Enteman (1993) argues, moreover, that there may be very different moral values that require attention in leading particular organisations. In the case of leadership in business, the core purpose of the business may take moral precedence over the concern for higher values, depending on the circumstances. At the very least the ethical case for the survival of the business, especially where the survival of many stakeholders may depend upon it, is of equal importance to any view of higher values.

This takes us into a similar criticism to that we made of trait theory in the lack of careful ethical analysis, and to serious questions of deontological approach. First, the values of equality, justice and the like are in effect general moral principles. Their very generality means that it is difficult to simply apply them to practice. The term equality, for instance, can have over a hundred logically distinct meanings (Rae 1981). Hence, meaning has to be worked out in context and this is difficult to do in any group or project without the people involved being engaged in dialogue around these values and how they can be embodied in their community of practice, including any transactions. Second, there may be conflict between the higher ethical values. For instance, justice based in need may conflict with justice as desert or merit. Moreover, whatever form of justice is agreed there is also the requirement of procedural justice, embodying the practice of justice in organisational terms. Working through such differences in core values that may well be expressed in the narratives of different groups in the organisation, such as professional bodies or unions, involves much more than communicating transcendent values. As we shall see in Chapter Six this becomes key to developing some sense of organisational justice in relation to remuneration.

A key difficulty then with the transformational leadership model is that the leaders cannot simply assert principles and enable followers to accept and embody these. The principles themselves only take on significant meaning when worked through in context and in dialogue. Bass (2005) and other followers of Burns are aware of this at points and of the need to choose between different views of the values in context. The question

then is who chooses. Despite an awareness of the complexity of values Burns comes down on the side of the leader. He or she must decide how that value is embodied in that situation. Price (2008) asks then what is to stop the leader from deciding on a view of the values that does not take into account the complexity, or is for the leader's own ends.

In all this the rigid distinction between transactional and transformational values is an unhelpful dichotomy. Bass and Burns both accept the need for some transactional aspects to leadership, but only under the head of transformational values. However, this fails to understand two things. Firstly, what Burns sees as the values of transactional leadership are more significant than he allows. The values of fairness, responsibility, trust, and promise keeping, for instance, would be seen by Kant as central to the higher moral project, and as such relate directly to the 'higher values' such as equality or justice. Rawls (1985), indeed, argues that justice be defined in terms of fairness.

Second, transaction, focused in contract relationships can be the basis of embodying the higher values. Burns associates the idea of contract and negotiation around principle with compromise and assumes that this will lead to the loss of the higher values. Robinson (2001) argues that contract can be the basis of good relationships in both business and therapy. The therapeutic contract, for instance, sets up a series of expectations that in themselves form the basis of ethics in practice. They provide shared purpose, grounds for challenge where one member of the relationship does not fulfill agreed terms, and even the ground for equality and justice, enabling the client to challenge the therapist. In and through contract then the different parties are able to reflect on their own and wider values, and begin to establish more long term values of commitment.

There is much in the transformational approach to leadership that is important. Ultimately, however, its stress on higher principles is based in a narrow view of rationality and individualism. As such it is paternalistic, not taking into account wider views of ethics or the more holistic perspective of writers such as Gilligan. Hence Western (2008) argues that this runs as much the danger of totalising as the great man models.

Servant leadership

Related to the transformational approach through its emphasis on values is the concept of servant leadership. Greenleaf (1977) developed the idea through a reading of Herman Hesse's story of his journey to the East. Central to the story is Leo, a servant who carries the bags and does all the essential chores for the group. Over time it becomes evident that Leo gives to the group a sense of coherence and well-being, not least through his presence and singing. When Leo unexplainably disappears, the group loses its coherence and direction and it becomes clear that he was in fact the leader of the group.

As Ciulla (2004, p. 70) points out this is a simple but radical shift from all the other theories of leadership. This is principally because it questions the paradigm of relationship and power between leader and follower, with the leader taking the function often associated with followers, that of servant. In one sense, this marks it out very clearly from the transformational model and challenges the prophet and messiah idea of that model. Servanthood involves putting the needs of those who are being led first. The paradigm, for most servant leadership theorists, is the Judeo Christian figure of the suffering servant (from Isaiah to Mark 8, 27–30). Here the Messiah is cast as servant of Messiah as powerful figure (Mark 8, 27–30). Service is central also to Islam in the concept of *Hizmet* (active service).

Apart from these elements the question remains as to what the substantive nature of servant leadership is. Laub (2004) argues that there is a need first to define leadership as such and then to show how the idea of servanthood fits with that. He defines leadership as 'an intentional change process through which leaders and followers, joined by a shared purpose, initiate action to pursue a common vision' (Laub 2004, p. 5). In the light of this he defines servant leadership as 'an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader' (Laub 2004, p. 5). This raises two points. First, servant leadership is not simply a different model. It involves an underlying view of the good that informs any practice. This involves a complete change in mind-set, viewing leadership in a different way from other theories. Second, the focus is on the led, therefore on the people in the workplace or project,

moving away from a concern with the leader's wishes, the organisational interests, and even the needs of the customers. Servant leadership does not say these areas are not important, it is just that they become peripheral to the focus of care of the followers. Laub argues that this is what makes servant leadership distinctive from transformational leadership. The success of the group and its members will emerge from this focus on the followers, not on universal principles expressed in shared organisational objectives.

Laub argues that this is the only theory that clearly challenges the self-interest of the leader. He contrasts this with the leadership styles of autocracy, and paternalism. The first uses the power of leadership to focus on the self-interest of the leader; the second uses the focus on organisational goals. The first tends to focus more on the charisma of the leader to effect change, with follower empowerment as secondary to the alignment to the values of the organisation.

All this takes any assessment of leadership beyond simply targets and task fulfillment and into relationships, and examining whether real service has been achieved. Just what is involved in servant leadership is made clearer in the six key behaviours of servant leadership that Laub (2004) sets out: valuing people; developing people rather than imposing control; building community; displaying authenticity; providing leadership; sharing leadership. Greenleaf adds to this ten core characteristics of the servant leader:

- Listening. Here the servant leader is listening both the feelings and values of the group but also to those of herself.
- Empathy. We examine this idea more closely in Chapter Four, but for Greenleaf it involves recognising and accepting others for their uniqueness.
- Healing. The capacity to make broken spirits whole.
- Awareness. This involves self-awareness and awareness of the surrounding social and physical environment. It also means being open to surrounding disturbance.
- Persuasion. The capacity to convince, contrasting with coercion through positional authority.
- Conceptualisation. This is characterised as the ability to develop a vision with the followers.

- Foresight. The capacity to understand and learn from the past, and apply these lessons to the present and future.
- Stewardship – holding resources, people and projects in trust for others.
- Commitment to the growth of people. This emerges from the belief in the intrinsic value of the other, as distinct from instrumental value to the groups of to any targets of the group.
- Building community. This involves ‘an unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group’ (Greenleaf 1977)

Neither of these lists of attributes or behaviours systematically sets out the meaning of servant leadership. Nonetheless, it is clear in ethical terms that the idea goes beyond the universal principles of Burns to principles centered in altruism and care. As such it looks to develop a greater focus on people in organisations, a more holistic approach which takes into account a broader awareness as well as rational reflection and the development of community and culture as well as individual growth. This includes an appreciation of the common good, but also wider levels of consciousness of the social and physical environment, and ways of being mutually responsive.

Critiques of servant leadership

Servant leadership has generated much debate and research. However, it is at times hard to grasp just what the centre of it is. Polleys (2002) argues that there is no theoretical base to the concept. Moreover, she suggests that it is not possible to build any theory. This should come as no surprise. The concept is based first and foremost in ethical and relational value. Empirical research has then aimed to provide support for the model in practice, not least because many criticisms suggest that it is not practical in the context of leadership in an organisational context which demands difficult and swift decision making. However, the real problems are on what to do with the idea. Part of the problem here is that the servant leadership advocates often do not provide a substantive analysis of the term. We suggest that servant leadership is a view of leadership that is based on a strong ethical principle – service – but this is not rigorously thought through. The