Guest Editors' Introduction

Philosophical Contributions to Leadership Ethics

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ABSTRACT: This article introduces the first of two special issues on philosophical approaches to leadership ethics. In it, we show some of the ways that philosophy contributes to the study of leadership and leadership ethics. We begin with an overview of how philosophers have treated some of the ethical aspects and challenges of leadership. These include discussions of self-interest, the problem of dirty hands, responsibility, moral luck, power, gender and diversity, and spirituality. The articles in this issue draw on philosophy to explore a variety of ethical questions related to leadership and the relationships that leaders have with followers and others.

KEY WORDS: leadership ethics, ethical leadership, responsible leadership, leadership and philosophy, critical leadership studies, power, diversity, spirituality

History tells us that there is nothing new about the interest in the ethics of leadership. People have always paid attention to the ethics of leaders because, like it or not, leadership matters since it has the potential to greatly benefit or harm the well-being of people. What is curious about leadership ethics is the fact that so few contemporary philosophers have written about it. Throughout history, philosophers, ancient sages, historians, story tellers, dramatists, and artists have chronicled, contemplated, criticized, and even cringed at the ethical behavior of leaders. This is because leadership is a fundamental part of the human condition and how we live and work together. Furthermore, leadership is something that almost everyone engages in at one time or another. It consists of more than a position or a person—it is

"a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, emotion, and some shared vision of the good."[1]

Moral action in groups, organizations, and societies is difficult unless a person or group of people exercise leadership. So, not only is ethics inseparable from leadership, but sometimes leadership is required for someone to take moral action, which is one reason why leadership ethics serves as a companion to business ethics. Topics such as CSR, whistleblowing, corporate governance, employee rights, etc., inevitably require us to take into account leaders, followers, and social processes that influence them to take action and embrace certain values. *Business Ethics Quarterly* published one of the first special issues on leadership ethics in 1995. In that issue, the editor David Smith wrote, "Not all problems of business ethics are questions of leadership and not all issues of organizational effectiveness that have placed leadership and leadership development high on the agenda are matters of ethics, but the overlap is great."[2]

We embarked on this special issue because we wanted to bring more philosophy into the study of ethics in leadership studies. In the early days of business ethics, most of the literature came from philosophers who specialized in ethics. As the field developed, empiricists began to contribute their research. Today the business ethics literature consists of a healthy mix of empirical research, social science, and philosophy that is important in all areas of applied ethics. This is not the case in leadership studies where few philosophers write on leadership ethics as opposed to conducting empirical research on the topic. For example, Michael Brown, Linda Treviño, and David Harrison's ethical leadership construct has inspired numerous studies that use their questionnaire to measure people's perceptions of their leaders' ethics or what they call "normatively appropriate behavior."[3] This research examines the antecedents and consequences of ethical leader behavior but because of the practical constraints of doing empirical research, it tends to beg the question of what "normatively appropriate" means for leaders and followers. Furthermore, just because survey respondents in these studies think their leaders are ethical does not mean that they actually are.[4] So, to put it simply, we need a more complex and nuanced understanding of ethics and leadership. That's where ethics in philosophy comes into play and spills over into political philosophy when the leadership issues concern justice, fairness, authority, and democracy.[5] For the field of leadership ethics to develop and contribute to our understanding of leadership, it too must develop a healthy mix of philosophical and empirical literatures.[6]

Grounded in thousands of years of discussions that span across cultures and religions, philosophy offers an in-depth look at enduring moral questions that are inherent in human relationships and societies. How philosophers approach ethics is as important as what they have to say about it. Philosophers specialize in questioning everything from our basic assumptions about the world, the meaning of language, and the nature of reality, truth, causation, and knowledge. As such, a philosophical approach to leadership ethics also serves as a critical approach to leadership studies. Critical leadership studies (CLS) developed on the back of the growth and impact of critical management studies (CMS).[7] It draws on Marxian philosophy and challenges the asymmetries of power and privilege associated with leadership.

CLS also uses the work of Jürgen Habermas to examine discourse ethics as a counter to the negative or dark sides of leadership where, for example, cults or religious fundamentalism may evolve to mesmerize believers and demonize those who challenge the message or its meaning.[8] Inspired by the philosophies of Aristotle, Alastair Macintyre, and Emmanuel Levinas, CLS tends also to pursue ways in which leadership might concern itself with ethical standards[9] or justice.[10] CLS scholars have drawn on the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and Merleau Ponty to develop a more embodied and material sense of ethical leadership[11] and yet others have found Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault as valuable in studying masculinity and ethnicity in leadership.[12]

We were heartened by the both the quality and quantity of papers that came our way in response to the original call for submissions to the special issue. With the review process yielding more publishable articles than a single issue can accommodate, BEQ's editors have agreed to publish two sets of articles (a second set will appear in another issue later this year). Before we preview the contributions to this first set of articles, we will briefly discuss a few of the ethical aspects and problems with both the idea and the practice of leadership.

SOME ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP ETHICS

All areas of applied ethics have a set of distinctive ethical challenges related to practices such as business, law, medicine, etc. We begin by looking at a few problems and aspects of leadership that are distinctive to leadership and make leading ethically difficult. Leaders have, or we allow them to have, power and influence, and responsibility for others. Because of this, the stakes of their actions are higher and the challenges to the self are greater. Also, for better or for worse, leadership entails a relationship that draws on people's hopes, fears, emotions, and identities.[13] Hence, in the practice and relationships of leaders to others, morality and immorality tend to be magnified.[14] Critics often challenge the legitimacy of this proprietary notion of leadership, which yields power and authority to an individual or set of individuals. This may not be the way leadership ought to be, but it certainly is the way it is in many organizations and sectors of society.

Self-Interest

Plato discusses one of the most distinctive elements of leadership in *Republic*, Book I: self-interest. In it, the protagonist, Thrasymachus, makes the case that it is in your self-interest to be a leader because you get power, money, and other good things. Socrates' response captures one of the key normative aspects of leadership when he argues that it is about pursuing the interests of others or of a cause. He writes, "anyone who is really a true ruler doesn't by nature seek his own advantage but that of his subjects."[15] Plato also points out the down side of being an ethical leader. He says, for example, your friends and family may get angry with you because you will not give them special favors. A leader's role and the very idea of a leader is to serve the interests of a group, organization, country, or cause. Leaders who do not do that are not only unethical, they are actually not doing their jobs as leaders.

Some scholars have argued that leadership requires altruism, but most of the time, enlightened self-interest is adequate.[16] Since leaders are supposed to put their interests after the interests of the group, a key set of problems in leadership ethics center around self-interested behaviors and conflicts of interest. This is why many ancient Eastern and Western philosophers thought that the most important virtue for leaders was reverence, which they said was the virtue that kept leaders from acting like gods and reminded them that they were part of something bigger than themselves.[17]

Dirty Hands

While the virtue of reverence is supposed to keep the ego of leaders intact, leaders still need to think about their own preservation in order to lead. Machiavelli captures one of the most difficult ethical problems of leading: sometimes leaders must do bad things, either for their own self-interest or the interest of others. He says that leaders have to learn how not to be good, especially in situations where other leaders are unethical.[18] He writes: "If a ruler, who wants always to act honorably, is surrounded by many unscrupulous men his downfall is inevitable."[19] Here he refers to the prince's personal downfall and also the downfall of the prince's soldiers and constituents. There are situations where leaders must compromise their own moral principles to fill their obligations to others. Machiavelli tells us that leaders cannot afford to take the high moral ground when their power, and the lives of their people are at stake. Max Weber makes a similar observation when he says in some situations it is inappropriate for leaders to behave like saints: "A leader must know that he is responsible for what may become of himself under these paradoxes."[20]

   Contemporary philosophers have reframed this idea into "the dirty hands problem." As Michael Waltzer observes, we select leaders to make these difficult choices and then we often condemn them for doing so, hence, no leader leads innocently.[21] Needless to say, leaders who do bad things to fill their responsibilities stand on the precipice of a slippery slope. Walzer and others argue that leaders may be able to resist sliding down it if they feel that their hands are dirty. They have to be disgusted by what they have done and determined to avoid doing such things in the future. This is a tall order—both the problem of and the solution to the dirty hands problem are two of the most morally challenging aspects of leadership. When the stakes are high, leaders do not have the luxury of following their own moral convictions when they conflict with their moral obligations to constituents. They have to make a choice when all of the options are bad. The dirty hands problem highlights the fact that personal moral compromise and moral self-control are almost inevitable in the practice of leadership.

Ethics and Effectiveness

The dirty hands problem focuses on real ethical dilemmas, meaning the types of ethical problems where no course of action is morally satisfactory. The relationship between ethics and effectiveness focuses on a broader category of ethical problems in leadership based on the relationship between competency and morality. One way of looking at this relationship, called "the Hitler problem," poses the question,

"Was Hitler a good leader?"[22] The criteria for unpacking "good leadership" ranges from organizational and motivational skills, to the means for achieving his goals, to his success at reaching them. In some of these categories, Hitler would get high marks for his leadership, if we focused on some "objective" ethics-free notion of effectiveness. There is quite a bit of research on leader effectiveness but when you add a moral dimension to how Hitler led and what Hitler did, and why he did it, we see the need for a nuanced understanding of the normative complexity of what constitutes effective leadership or, for that matter, what we mean by a leader. For example, James MacGregor Burns asserts that Hitler was not a leader, he was a tyrant.[23] Some philosophers have argued that the very idea of a leader is loaded with normative implications.[24] Furthermore, since incompetent leaders have the potential to perpetrate great harms to others, it may well be that it is immoral to be an incompetent leader. Aristotle and the virtue theorists offer ways of unpacking this question because virtue or arête is an excellence that encompasses both ethics and competency.[25] Aristotle writes: "the excellence of man also will be the state which makes man good and which makes him do his work well."[26] Some problems in leadership ethics are the result of a tension between ethics and a leader's desire to be effective, whereas other problems emerge when leaders are morally mistaken or morally incompetent.[27]

Responsibility and Moral Luck

Perhaps one of the most distinctive ethical features of leadership is that we hold leaders responsible for things that they did not directly do. Numerous studies have shown that people often attribute to leaders more control over events than is actually the case.[28] We praise leaders when their followers do something good and blame them when they do something bad. This is true even when the leader did not know about an action and did not directly or indirectly do anything to influence or cause it to occur. This assumption is especially common in hierarchical organizations such as corporations. For example, if an airplane crashes, there is a sense in which the CEO of the airline is responsible for it. In such cases, it would not look good for the CEO to say, "it's not my fault that the plane crashed, I wasn't flying it." While this is true, it sounds bad because we expect the CEO to take responsibility for it, which in this case would include doing everything from investigating the crash to putting measures in place to prevent similar crashes from occurring in the future. Usually when an individual or group of people undertakes leadership, there is either an explicit or tacit assumption that, as leaders, they will be accountable or be held accountable for what transpires. When we *give* leaders power and privilege, we expect or even require them, to *take* responsibility for whatever happens to their constituents, groups, organizations, or society. If we treat leadership as a proprietary and hierarchical position, then perhaps this accountability is one of the prices that they must pay for their privileges. The responsibility of individual leaders is also an integral part of assessing corporate responsibility—i.e., when do we blame a corporation and when do we blame its leaders?[29] A growing body of literature in leadership ethics explores the many aspects of what responsibility means in leadership.[30]

The fact that leaders have this unique kind of responsibility complicates cases where we need to assess the accountability of a leader as an individual agent. Here is where philosophical discussion of moral luck is useful.[31] Moral luck is when good fortune allows leaders to appear moral because things have worked out well for them. It underscores the ethical problems with assessing leadership based only on outcomes and it overlooks Kantian considerations, such as whether the leader acts on moral principles, treats people as autonomous wills and ends in themselves, and so forth.[32] The moral value of leadership is as much about the process of leadership and the relationships leaders have as it is about achieving goals. These aspects of leadership are somewhat colored by the fact that leaders often have or are given power and this affects their relationships with others.

Critical Studies Focus on Power

Within critical studies of leadership, it has become commonplace to give attention to the notion of power and the politics of meaning.[33] It has also been suggested that "leadership communication is inherently power-based, a site of contestation about the nature of leadership."[34] Yet other critical leadership theorists have argued that power processes and the politics of meaning alongside questions of identity have been almost completely neglected by the mainstream[35] or when power is considered it is assumed reasonable to see it as possessed by leaders.[36] However, there is still a tendency to adopt a proprietary conception of both leadership and power, which arguably creeps back in largely because of common sense conflations of leadership with hierarchical position in the senior ranks of organizations.[37] Consequently, attributions of leadership, but also power and identity, are seen as the property of persons or groups rather than of relations, and this is combined with a frequent failure to take an embodied approach to understanding organizations and social relations through which these phenomena find expression.[38] One way in which this can be avoided is to engage more thoroughly with Foucault,[39] who develops the concept of governmentality and subjective self-discipline (that lies between games of sovereign power where people try to control the conduct of others and domination where they do so through coercion), for this makes it possible to "bring out the freedom of the subject and its relationship to others" —"which constitutes the very stuff *[matiere]* of ethics."[40]

Diversity: Gender and Race in Leadership Studies

Leadership studies have a history of treating the topic in a rather masculine, linear, rational, and individualistic manner such that leaders are seen to possess agency and power, display high levels of certainty and decisiveness, and exhibit a masterly control of all that they survey. Equally, ethics has been dominated by masculine technical approaches regarding practical reason (Kant), normative rules and regulations (deontology), calculations of consequences (utilitarianism), and the elevation of "good" individual character (virtue), although feminist[41] and anti-colonial alternatives[42] around embodied engagement have been around for some time. The marginalization of such alternatives reflects and reproduces both the Cartesian binary

between mind and body along with fundamental dualisms between subjects and objects (ontology), representational and realist knowledge (epistemology), agency and structure (methodology) as well as other binaries of a political nature relating to age, ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, and the able-bodied.[43] In each of these dualisms, there is a hierarchy whereby one side of the binary is elevated over the other and with respect to politics, young able-bodied, white, heterosexual males are privileged.[44] It is why even though diversity, gender, and the body remain comparatively marginalized in leadership studies, western leadership studies presume leaders to be "white able-bodied," heterosexual "males." This also reflects and reinforces proprietary conceptions of leadership and power as the property of individuals or groups, and this can be so culturally engrained as to operate subconsciously even among critics of mainstream leadership studies.

Discourses of masculinity are quite clearly embedded in leadership studies that embrace conceptions of heroism that stretch back as far as Homer's epic, mythic tale of Odysseus's ten-year voyage back home from his heroic battle of Troy. Contemporary leaders have never struggled with the elements and war in the way that Odysseus is proclaimed to have done yet they often display similar kinds of claims to masculine leadership whereby technically rational disembodied and performance oriented, highly instrumental aggressive competition for privileged material and symbolic positions are combined with homosocial bonding and social exclusiveness.[45]

When it comes to the relationship between philosophy and leadership studies, this homosociality is even more marked as is partly evident from the articles in this issue, since rarely do the women, let alone other diversities, secure much acknowledgement. Of course, the submissions and the review process currently do not sanction quotas and positive discrimination, and we cannot reverse the history of western men dominating philosophy and science. Yet just as one of our contributors has focused on a major woman philosopher, this exercise of enabling the voices of women philosophers—Diotima of Mantea, Hypatia of Alexandria, Simone de Beavoir, Ruth Braidotti, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Monica Gatens, Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Rosa Luxembourg, and Mary Warnock, as well as Hannah Arendt (who is included in this issue)—generates valuable insights for a study of leadership ethics.

Leadership and Spirituality

While much philosophical writing assumes a person-centered world view where morality, including the ethics of leaders, is determined or at least shaped by material conditions and individual agency, an open philosophical system allows for a faith-based approach whether this be a divine, spiritual, or some other transcendent reference point, knowable or mysterious. For as Ludwig Wittgenstein once said, "to pray is to think about the meaning of life."[46]

Recent years have witnessed a stream of writing on spiritual leadership theory.[47] Some organizational scholars have started to use theology to develop alternative approaches to management theory.[48] Given that leadership "touches on matters of human well-being and motivation in the workplace, on oppression and emancipation,

on power and powerlessness, on organizational purpose and meaning, it is perhaps not surprising that, alongside philosophy, theology can speak to such matters" and prompt us to expand the frame of modern organization theory.[49] As part of this trend, some authors have sought links between personal/collective faith and the morality of leadership in organizational settings.[50] Others trace the impact of a particular belief system: in one instance, to explain the theoretical foundation for an Islamic model of leadership[51] and from a Judeo-Christian perspective, authors bring the wisdom of Solomon[52] and the teaching of Jesus to bear on the way leaders lead.[53] For instance, one could argue that far from being conformist, conservative, and protecting of the status quo, religious leaders like Jesus taught and modeled a radical critique of corrupt practices with a strong agenda for supporting the voiceless.

The specific application of theological/spiritual insights to the practice of leadership ethics is relatively immature, as evidenced by the paucity of such submissions to this special issue. Clearly, there are academically entrenched schisms between the social sciences and theology on the one hand, and philosophy on the other. However, perhaps the time has come for methodological agnosticism, which allows religious truth-claims to be bracketed as irresolvable in social science terms but respected philosophically, thus providing "a way of locating a researcher's own faith position before, during and after fieldwork."[54]

THE ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

The four articles in this issue explore both our relationships with the world and our relationships with other people. Drawing on the works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Hannah Arendt, Baruch Spinoza, and Emmanuel Levinas, our contributors see philosophical ethics as a worldly orientation grounded in lived experience. Across the collection, the authors offer some provocative ways of framing the relationship between leaders and the people around them, including followers, other stakeholders, and the multitude of different others. From their respective philosophical standpoints, they challenge us to probe the limits and some even question the possibility of leaders behaving ethically.

The first article, by Kostas Amiridis,[55] deals with the opposite of the dirty-hands problem. Instead of choosing between bad and bad options, leaders have to choose between good and good ones. Drawing on Hegel, Amiridis suggests that one of the great ethical challenges concerns the irreconcilable and tragic conflict between different but equally valid and valued moral positions and objectives. Hence, it is difficult for leaders to pursue legitimately ethical courses of action without *negating* someone else's equally valid ethical commitment. From this perspective, ethical crises are not necessarily the result of overtly unethical leadership. Even the best-intentioned leader ends up being both ethical and unethical, "both innocent and guilty."[56] Hegelian ethics is not about attributing blame (perhaps the blight of our individualistic age) or condemning people for their moral lapses, but rather about recognizing the impossibility of the perfect or pure ethical endeavor and the inevitability of crisis and suffering. Away from the abstract simplicity of good versus evil, the ethics of leadership unfolds in the lived experience, concrete affairs, and

pragmatic concerns of real human beings caught in impossible binds. In the tragic narrative, leaders either face their own destruction because of their one-sided and dogged pursuit of what they think is right, or they have to sacrifice their own ethical commitment and accept what they had once opposed. In this paradox of tragedy, it seems impossible for a leader to be ethical.

In our second article, Rita Gardiner explores the connections between leadership, responsibility, and ethical action.[57] Working with the philosophy of Arendt, Gardiner challenges the idea of leadership as hierarchy and mastery and argues that everyone has a moral obligation to be actively engaged in the world. For Arendt, ethics is entwined in our relationship with the world, which unfolds in lived experience, shared obligation, and political commitment. Our lives flourish, she argues, when people think independently and courageously for themselves, and come together to discover common cause and collective strength. This is not the seeking of unanimity or harmony, but rather, a meeting of different, independent perspectives emerging "from the heart of life in all its expansive and messy disarray, not as consensus, but as a comingling of viewpoints."[58] In Arendt's view, leadership becomes *primus inter pares*—first amongst equals—taking us away from notions of leadership as hierarchy, which invokes not leadership, but mastery. Mastery not only encourages self-fixation and self-obsession amongst the masters; it also dulls followers in their efforts to take care of the world themselves. Leadership ethics is thereby deeply rooted in responsibility, involving imagination and ability to see other viewpoints; willingness to judge for oneself; and willingness to act, and to pay for these actions, if need be. But this is the challenge for all of us, irrespective of formal role or place in the world. We all fail in our ethical commitment if we refuse to do our due diligence on what is happening around us, whether in organizations or in the broader political and social arena. Our challenge is, therefore, "to show through our actions how much we care, not just for ourselves, but for others and the world."[59]

In the next article, Iain Munro and Torkild Thanem present an ethics based on joyful encounters between people, regardless of hierarchy, status, or position.[60] We assume that leaders are supposed to care for their followers but Munro and Thanem argue that care can also be oppressive. Drawing on Spinoza, they argue that care reinforces inequality and unfairness in organizational practice, because an ethics of care is based on the assumption that the people who are in need or receipt of care are lacking or inadequate in some way. The authors argue that relationships of this kind can be described as an instance of *potestas,* which is the power of command that leaders derive from their institutional position. There is a Spinozan alternative, involving a collective sense of energy and possibility, whereby "ethics and power do not lie in opposition to each other, but are mutually bound together as our constitutive *potentia* increases both our freedom and our ethical capacity for action."[61] Here, ethical leadership is not held proprietarily by individuals or even groups but is simply embedded in a multitude of relationships and communities that enhance affective and joyful actions. From this perspective, ethics unfurls in relationships based on friendship, for our endeavors to act with freedom, responsibility, and understanding can only be undertaken in the company of others who are striving to do the same. These are relationships in which we are free to voice our opinions

and concerns, and aim to understand the workings of desire, distinguishing between those passions which encourage action—the joyful affects—and those which foster passivity—the sad passions. This is a profoundly democratic vision. It is an uplifting one, too, for "the creativity of the multitude is quite clear from its bodily capacities to create forms of social life such as language, habits, and new forms of immaterial labor such as peer-to-peer networks, none of which have required hierarchical leadership or capital to flourish."[62] An affective ethics is thus not only possible without "leaders," as traditionally understood; it will also enhance our capacity to take action in the world.

The final article in this issue by Carl Rhodes and Richard Badham centers on a profound paradox.[63] They draw on Levinas to explore what they see as an impossible ethical mandate. According to Levinas, ethics is infinitely demanding because we have an unbounded responsibility to the other, without expectation of reward or reciprocity. When taken into the realm of organizational practice, however, significant tensions emerge that limit our ability to meet this challenge. In any multiple stakeholder environment, we are accountable to many different individuals, so how should we decide which of these different demands to prioritize? Moreover, leadership relations are steeped in the politics of hierarchy and asymmetry, no matter how hard we might try to mitigate their effects with dialogue, respect, and care. From this perspective, "to fail to account for the organizationally embedded and asymmetrical power relationship that exists between leaders and followers risks an ethics informed by naïve idealism and bourgeois niceties."[64] This reverses Levinas' position on asymmetry: instead of a leader being in thrall to the other, i.e., follower, the other is, in practice, in thrall to the leader. Thus, the predicament for leadership is that ethics is both necessary and impossible. It relates more to facing ambiguity, tension, contradiction, and uncertainty than to any security of moral certitude. In the light of such a predicament, and while recognizing the danger of some interpretations, the authors offer the notion of irony as a way of managing the impossibility of the ethical commitment without collapsing into despair. They propose three dimensions of ethical irony—perspective, performance, and predilection—which help us to "accept and enact the unbearable burden"[65] of an irresolvable ethical dilemma, in which "the quality of ethical leadership … arises not from having achieved ethical status, but rather from an unending realisation that ethics can never be fully achieved yet must always be pursued."[66]

CONCLUSION

The philosophical works that inform the articles in this special issue compel us to take a deeper look into the ethical challenges of leadership. They give us a place to stand and interrogate our assumptions about leadership and the ethics of leadership. For example, while most people would agree that leaders ought to pursue morally worthy goals, Hegel shows us the tragedy of leaders who try to do good things, yet in doing so, are forced to eliminate all competing alternatives even though they may be equally valuable. It is common to assume that ethical leaders should care and take responsibility for others, but Arendt cautions that when we regard leadership

as mastery, it diminishes followers, even when such leaders take responsibility in caring for others. On a somewhat brighter note, Spinoza's *potentia* offers a model of leadership as collective action that enhances everyone's freedom and capacity for what he calls "joyful" action. And finally, while we would like to understand how to develop ethical leaders, Levinas questions whether ethical leadership or even leadership itself is actually possible because of the infinite nature of responsibility to a multiplicity of others who equally deserve our care. He leaves us with a paradox about the absolute necessity of ethics in leadership and at the same time the impossibility of it.

The critical and philosophical articles in this special issue demonstrate the potential of philosophy to enhance research on leadership and deepen our understanding of leadership. They offer researchers and scholars a richer understanding of complex moral concepts in leadership such as responsibility, care, and the moral relationship between leaders and others. Leadership ethics is a relatively new area of applied ethics, but the literature is growing.[67] We hope that these articles stimulate the interest of *Business Ethics Quarterly* readers and inspire them to contribute to the literature of this emerging field of study by drawing on philosophical literature from all cultural and academic traditions. We feel no need to present an argument for why we need to gain a better understanding of leadership ethics. All anyone has to do is pick up a newspaper or watch the news to understand why. The topic is not only important, but in some ways it is quite urgent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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