

## Chapter 17

# A “Novel” Approach to the Moral Dimension of Leadership

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent times ethics and leadership have become dominant concerns in business. The foundations of the business establishment have been shaken by the examples of insider trading, manipulative accounting, and blatant fraud. The cause of ethical compromise can often be traced to the failure on the part of the leadership to actively promote ethical ideals and practices. In the current scenario, it is therefore, essential to give training on ethical leadership. This chapter adopts a three dimensional approach integrating the novel *The Devil and Miss Prym* into the study of ethics by exploring various related leadership theories. It harnesses the multifaceted nature of literature, which presents the interaction of a variety of characters with radically different beliefs, desires, and behaviours, thus increasing the complexity of an ethical dilemma. Charismatic and Servant leadership have been mapped to virtue ethics. Transactional leadership adopts ethical egoism as an ethical perspective. The transformational leader adopts the utilitarianism approach. Authentic leadership is based on altruistic principles. Deontological ethics is explained with Value Centered leadership. A thematic analysis of the novel has been done to exemplify the components of the leadership theories with an ethical perspective.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61350-510-6.ch017

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Divorced from ethics, leadership is reduced to management and politics to mere technique.*

—James MacGregor Burns

In 1988, the best selling *The Gower Handbook of Management* (Lock & Farrow) allocated two out of 1200 pages to leadership. Today the scenario is quite different with innumerable books on leadership available off the shelf. In recent times ethics and leadership have become dominant concerns in business. Public confidence in many organizations has undergone upheaval in the wake of travesties like those at Enron, WorldCom, and Parmalat. The foundations of the business establishment have been shaken by the examples of insider trading, manipulative accounting, and blatant fraud. The cause of ethical compromise can often be traced to the failure on the part of the leadership to actively promote ethical ideals and practices. In the current scenario, it is therefore, essential to give training on ethical leadership.

In the course of business, an organization is bound to be exposed to unethical activity. Most students, regardless of their levels in the organization, will face ethical issues on a regular basis. Hence preparing students for ethical decision-making should be a key component in the preparation of ethical business leaders. Learning experiences should expose students to ethical issues that they are likely to face in the business world, which should in turn enhance their abilities to recognize ethical issues and to increase their ethical sensitivity and awareness.

## **HOW IS ETHICS TAUGHT?**

In contrast to core areas like accounting, finance, and marketing, which are seen as hard skills, ethical issues are often viewed with disdain, as soft and conceptual. (Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, & Knouse, 2003) The history of ethical thought often includes

the teachings of Aristotle, Nietzsche and Kant. Business Ethics is often taught by incorporating current ethical case studies (O’Connell, McCarthy & Hall, 2004), analyzing modern concepts such as whistle blowing (Comer & Vega, 2006), controversial contemporary issues (Garner & Siegel, 1991) and then looking backward to apply the traditions of ethical thought to analyze such issues. Students are able to grasp the nuances of the underlying patterns and thus are guided in the ethical choices they face. Above all, they learn what questions should be asked and what factors need to be considered in their decision-making. However, students may find it difficult to grasp the history of ethical thought which could lead to lengthy discussions and explanations that they may find too complex to apply.

Several pedagogies like lectures, case studies, films, novels, simulation games, role play and workshops have been used to teach ethics and ethical leadership. Odiorne (1976) attempts to highlight the advantages of the lecture method. O’Connell, McCarthy & Hall (2004) feel that case teaching has the potential to involve students in complex decision settings, which can enhance their identification with protagonists facing difficult challenges. Comer & Vega (2006) present a role-play exercise to make the topic of whistle-blowing familiar to undergraduates. Schumann, Anderson & Scott (1997) discuss how to introduce ethical dilemmas into computer-based business simulation exercise to teach business ethics. Wolfe & Fritzsche (1998) advocate the use of Management games, to simulate the types of competitive conditions faced by real-world executives, which may be useful devices for teaching ethics and helping managers to deal with the moral and ethical dilemmas they will face in their careers. McAdams (1993) argues for the use of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel, *The Great Gatsby*, as a text for studying business ethics. Giri (1997) examines the debate on teaching ethics in management education with specific reference to pedagogic interventions in India and the United States through

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