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# Values-Based Leadership: A Shift in Attitude

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*Leadership that is values-based requires a shift in the way we think. A shift of attitude is important because it gives the hope that at least we know people are going to be considered. There's a chance that everybody will be looked at as a human being before a blanket decision is made.*

## Background: Looking Back

In this paper I argue that a shift in attitude is required for leadership to become values-based in the sense of conducting business ethically. Thus, I am proposing that there is a "certain" (Hester, 1975) subjectivity that lies just underneath our ethical decision-making. Understanding this subjectivity (our attitudes and biases) is fundamental if leaders are to become more rational in their decision-making and problem-solving. This is often neglected in leadership books as formulas and steps to leadership success seem to be the "meal of the day."

Ethics has a long history. It was Aristotle who early on introduced the idea of ethics as virtue. Since that time, scholars have tried to understand what he meant by "virtue." In Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics,* reality is found in the unfolding process of ideas and things. It is, discovered in a life well lived and thought of as an unfolding process of ideas and human behavior. It is a continuous development from potentiality to actuality where the moral Ideal is found in the structure of human nature. Aristotle uses the word *hexis* to signify this process of movement from the subjective to the more rational and objective. *Hexis* is not a passive behavior, but rather is an active condition of moral awareness. In contemporary jargon, to be moral is to give more than lip service to ethical principles. It means "putting feet" on those principles in everyday decision-making (NE, book 10, ch. 5).

Therefore, in Aristotle, we cannot understand "virtue" without adding that virtue is both an attitude and a behavior. In this sense, virtue indicates a cognitive and emotional equilibrium — a balance in one's life that enables ethical choice. This is what is meant by "character" — our innermost values exercised with courage, commitment, and reason. Achieving good character is a process in which we continually adjust ourselves to the realities of living. We

are challenged in both our personal and social behaviors to find a balance between our unethical ideas and behaviors and those that serve a greater good. Aristotle observes that...

> *Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate* (NE, book 2, ch. 6).

According to Aristotle, moral courage depends on the circumstances. For example, more courage is expected of the soldier than of the artist. And, it can be said, based on Aristotle's conception of virtue that more courage is needed of a leader – in business, education, politics, and religion, etc. – than those who unthinkingly follow. Circumstances and reason together enter into the determination of what conduct is virtuous. Moral virtues require both time and experience for their execution.

The theme of this article is fundamentally that values-based leadership requires a shift in attitude. Businessman H. Darrell Young (2004) says, "Our values determine to a great extend what we believe and our beliefs determine how we think, feel and behave. Decisions don't determine outcomes; the beliefs that drive the decisions determine outcomes. To change outcomes you must change the way you think." Thus, although we plan and strategize, organize and direct, it is important that the attitudes that lie just beneath the surface of an organizational leader's purposes and mission are unearthed.

We get support for this idea in the feminist ethics of care that was developed in the 1980s. Culturally and intellectually, much of this development was a product of an ongoing feminist movement and as a reaction to psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg who identified six stages of moral development. Kohlberg followed the development of moral judgment far beyond the ages studied earlier by Piaget, who also claimed that logic and morality develop through constructive stages. Dissatisfied that reason or the ability to reason logically is the ultimate authority in ethics, the feminist ethics of care recognized that there are certain affective or subjective commitments that precede any ethic.

Nel Noddings (1984), a contemporary exponent of an ethics of care, has pointed out that caring should be a foundation for ethical decision-making. The observation that undergirds her conclusions is that care is basic in human life and that all people want to be cared for (Noddings, 2002). She locates her position, not in ethics, but in the experience of women and in "a longing for goodness that arises out of the experience or memory of being cared for" (Flinders, 2001). In her words, an ethics of care is built in relationships characterized by "receptivity, relatedness and engrossment." In his book, *Leadership under Construction* (2004), H. Darrell Young makes the point that cultivating relationships is the key to linking members of a business to the business's performance. He says, "Focus on the needs of people, seek unity and inspire trust, influence others and create meaning, and build reciprocal relationships." For Young, these are foundational to organizational success.

Returning to Aristotle's idea of virtue, we discover that "the person of good character loves with right desire and thinks of an end with right reason." According to Aristotle (NE book 2,

ch. 1):

> *"It is only in the middle ground between habits of acting and principles of action that the soul can allow right desire and right reason to make their appearance, as the direct and natural response of a free human being to the sight of the beautiful."*

Without grappling too much with Aristotle's phraseology, because his culture was indeed different than our own, we want to make the point that leadership is a vital component of both individual and institutional life, and that ethical leadership is the life-blood of a democratic culture. It is important, therefore, to examine the "subjective" or "attitudinal" commitments necessary for values-based leadership in the ethical sense. These follow under the heading "Adjusting to Our Biases."

## An Ethics of Care

In 1992, John Grey published *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.* Although a light-hearted book about human relationships, this book prompted average citizens and the media to examine the differences between males and females seriously. When Grey published his book, feminism, as a movement, was at least a century old and a feminist ethics of care, although only about a decade old, had its roots in the larger feminist movement.

We find in the history of Western Civilization that most ideas and theories about morality and human relationships have come from men. The Bible and Qu'ran are definitely male-oriented, written, edited, and for the most part, interpreted by men. Early Greek thought was male-dominant. The ideas from the Renaissance and Enlightenment predominately came from men. This was a period of two to three hundred years that witnessed an explosion in art, writing, science, and mathematics, as well as the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. This was the time of Jean Rousseau, Emmanuel Kant, and John Locke whose views concerning liberty and the social contract are a part of the underpinnings of the American Declaration of Independence.

In ethics, men have influenced both sociological development in communities and economic theories. From Adam Smith to John Maynard Keynes, economic theory has mainly been male-oriented. Embedded in these theories are the ethics of contracts, rights, and justice. Ethics became oriented to defining "what is good" and "what is bad" behavior. Logic and reason was its guide. But this would eventually change. As the modern feminist coalition grew out of the early suffrage and temperance movements, questions were formulated: questions about male power — that is, domination and subordination — and questions about *good* versus *evil*, *care* versus *justice*, and *maternal* versus *paternal* thinking. As it developed, the feminist ethics of care incorporated these views and gave them a foundation in love, compassion, and the importance of caring relationships. This was also known as the "Eve Factor," about which Steve Walters says, "I say if you want to destroy a nation of people, you need to destroy the males, but if you want to destroy the moral fiber of a nation and cause it to become self-destructive, then you must reduce and defile the role of the female."

The feminist ethics of care still hasn't reached its goals. Although many people think that liberal feminism is passé and that the ethical issues that preoccupied it have been resolved, truth be told, as of 2009, the Bill of (Women's) Rights proclaimed by NOW in 1967 in the

United States has yet to be fully implemented. In the United States, women's reproductive rights are still not secure and the Equal Rights Amendment failed to pass. Moreover, in 2008, the average U.S. female worker still earns about 20% less than the average male worker (Maher, *The Wall Street Journal*, 2008); only 17 of 100 U.S. Senators are women (Confessore and Hakim, *NYTimes*, January 21, 2009); and as of December, 2008, only 13 Fortune 500 CEOs were women (*CNNMoney.com*, 2009). If the goal of liberal feminism is to push for equal rights for women, then its work is far from done. Women tend to do mostly dependency work — the work upon which Eva Feder Kittay (2003) focuses — and, in the public world, that caregiving work is some of the lowest-status, lowest paid work to be had. (At least, under this administration, we celebrated the passage of the *Lily Ledbetter Act*[1] (2009) and the addition of two females to the Supreme Court).[2]

Tom Beauchamp and James Childress (2008) offer support for an ethics of care that emphasizes values such as gentleness, sympathy, and genuine caring. They point out that this ethic focuses on the virtue and integrity of women and is primarily concerned with interpersonal relationships. Many, both women and men, believe these values have been devalued and are deemed irrelevant to the public world where self-rule and power thrive. Kittay says,

*"Carol Gilligan, a feminist theorist and psychologist, presumes that the morality of women is merely different from that concerning men's and that it is not at all inferior as her male counterparts claim it to be. She profoundly opposes the theories of moral development devised by her colleague, Lawrence Kohlberg, who only confined his study to males. His study neglects a woman's ability to possess self-legislated ethical dogma."*

[C]ompetition and self-interest dominate the male features of ethics but an environment based on interfamilial relations and mutual communication is one where an "ethics of care" will be embraced by its people.

Gilligan maintained that an ethics of care is an essential component of ideal moral thought. Children must be taught to "value their hearts over their heads." According to Gilligan, women and children may exhibit more moral depth than men, but if women are to tolerate the impersonal and rational principles anchored in the "ethics of justice," they might as well become merciless, heartless brutes (e.g., recent, shocking decision by a federal court female judge who proclaimed that employers should be able to demand of all its employees sole allegiance to the company and that a firing for taking time off to have a child is perfectly understandable as long as both genders are treated equally. Of course, the provisions of the FMLA[3] would conflict if a larger company with at least 50 employees was involved). She emphasizes the idea of involving emotion in moral judgment and believes that traditional ethics undermine rather than promote individual moral ability and agency

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[1] Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, codified as Public Law No. 111-2, 123 Stat. 5 (2009), amends the Civil Act Rights of 1964. Its main provision resets the 180-day filing requirement for a pay discrimination action with each new discriminatory paycheck.
[2] Sonia Sotomayor (added in 2009 and the first sitting Hispanic Justice) and former U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan (added in 2010) joined Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1993).
[3] The Family and Medical Leave Act, codified at Pub. L. 103-3; 29 U.S.C. §2601; 29 C.F.R. 825.

because the direction of traditional ethics is impersonal and merely focuses on management and control. Thus, she says, it doesn't uphold individual integrity. Supporters of an ethics of care often point out that competition and self-interest dominate the male features of ethics but an environment based on interfamilial relations and mutual communication is one where an "ethics of care" will be embraced by its people. In the male dominate ethic, sensitivity and kindness have never been equated with human goodness. Yet, it still seems that rationale and intellect overpower these feminine aspects in a male-dominated world.

"Virtue" is often used to mean "an ethics of care." This is a post-Enlightenment usage and of course some nineteenth century thinkers denied that virtue is or should be the same for both sexes (White, 2011). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a wide variety of thinkers including Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Catherine Beecher, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton addressed topics related to "women's morality." Each of these thinkers raised questions such as: Are women's "feminine" traits the product of nature/biology or are they instead the outcome of social conditioning? Are moral virtues as well as gender traits connected with one's affective as well as cognitive capacities? If so, should we simply accept the fact that men and women have different moral virtues as well as different gender traits and proceed accordingly? If not, should we strive to get men and women to adhere to the same morality: a one-size-fits-all human morality? Often, they provided a separate-but-equal theory of virtue according to which male and female virtues are simply different. Diverse groups of thinkers disagreed among themselves about how to assess the characteristics typically associated with women. These are nurturance, empathy, compassion, self-sacrifice, and kindness. The utilitarians especially (Bhaskar A. Shkla, 2008) asked whether these "female" or "feminine" traits are: (1) genuine moral virtues to be developed by men as well as by women; (2) positive psychological traits to be developed by women alone; or (3) negative psychological traits not to be developed by anyone.

The feminist ethics of care makes a strong case: that empathy and sympathy — the emotional part of our lives — ask us to pause and think not only of rights and justice, fair play, issues of honesty and integrity, and the ability to trust and be trusted, but of the personal dignity and integrity of the person or persons we address. The rationale for including the affective with the logical when defining the "point of view of morality" is tempered as much by feeling as by reason and is a strong indicator of an ethical community. And although the language is different, the amalgamation of an emphasis on justice and rights with that of love, forgiveness, and care are measures of personal civility and ethics. As Gilligan says, "… women are humane and acknowledge the fact that genuine impartiality requires emotive input in ethical reasoning and assessment. In order to judge morally, we must identify emotionally with the individual to make sense of his or her motives that triggered their actions." In other words, we must stop and ask, "How do you personally feel about 'that' and why?"

## Ethics from the Inside Out: *Looking Forward*

Sara Ruddick, Virginia Held, and Eva Kittay have much in common with Gilligan. They emphasize that human relationships are not between equally-informed and equally-powerful persons but between unequal and interdependent persons. When a parent relates to a child, or a self-confident and well-adjusted adolescent to a depressed and distraught friend,

for example, they do not relate as two business persons do during a contract negotiation, but as two differentially-empowered people trying to resolve an issue of mutual concern. Ethics should be built on a model that fits life as most people experience it on an everyday basis. And this is as true for institutions and businesses as it is for individuals. It is not the concepts, metaphors, and images associated with the practice of contracting, they say, but those associated with practices like parenting/mothering that best express the dynamics of moral life.

The ethics of care has important implications for business practices, especially emerging concepts of leadership as relationship based. According to Kevin Cashman (2008) and Peter Senge, (1990), character is about "growth toward wholeness."  It is about appreciating our strengths and developing the undeveloped sides of us.  It is leadership that stems from our values and beliefs, transformed into purpose and mission.  Cashman comments, "Character is the essence, the being of the leader, which is deeper and broader than any action or achievement.  It is the essential nature of the person. . . . The purpose of character is to transform and to open up possibilities and potentialities. Qualities of character include authenticity, purpose, openness, trust, congruence, compassion, and creating value."

Both Cashman and Senge are echoing themes we discover in an ethics of care. These themes are person-based and person-focused. They have originated in experience and, as Sara Ruddick (1984) points out, should properly be valued by society. Ruddick notes the importance of understanding "maternal practice" as a foundation for developing leadership competence. She points out that like any human practice, maternal practice has its own form of thinking with a vocabulary and logic peculiar to it, as well as its own aims and goals. In the case of maternal thinking, these consist in the preservation, growth, and acceptability of one's children (Ruddick, 1989). Preserving the life of a child is the first aspect of Ruddick's maternal practice. No human being is, on the surface, more vulnerable than an infant. Infants cannot survive unless someone feeds, clothes, and shelters them. She points out that in order to be able to treat their children well, even on bad days, mothers need to cultivate virtues like scrutiny (the ability to see things in perspective), humility, and cheerfulness. Equipped with these virtues, those who mother others will be emotionally equipped to handle adversity more readily than those who aren't.

The second aspect of Ruddick's maternal practice is *fostering* children's growth. To foster a child's growth does not mean to impose some sort of ideal life script on one's child. Mothers should not try to make their children perfect. Rather, mothers should help their children realize that what is important in life is trying to be a better person despite one's weaknesses and foibles. Connecting this idea to a business framework, we should point out that a role of leadership is building a mentoring environment. As H. Darrell Young says, "Great leaders don't divest of themselves and invest in others to develop a few good followers; rather, they divest and invest to create a successor generation of leaders." Thus, fostering the growth of future leaders is a leadership responsibility.

The third and final aspect of Ruddick's maternal practice is *training*. Typically, mothers work diligently to socialize their children — to help them become law-abiding citizens. But there are times when conscientious mothers refuse to conform to society's needs or expectations. For example, a conscientious mother may refuse to get her son ready to fight for an unjust cause or to diet her daughter down into a size zero designer jeans. She may find herself

caught between the values of a competitive, power-obsessed, individualistic society on the one hand and her own inner conviction that these values are fundamentally flawed on the other. If a mother trains her son in the ways of the world, he may gain success in it, but he may also become an arrogant employer who runs roughshod over his employees. In contrast, if a mother raises her son to be a "nice guy," he may grow up a "loser" in society's eye. Ruddick says that a conscientious mother must decide whether her values or those of the larger society should guide her child-rearing practices. Is it more important that her child adhere to social norms or critically question them?

Like Ruddick, Virginia Held (2006) finds in the relationship between mothering persons and children an excellent paradigm for human relationships in general. Held is concerned that traditional ethics not only discounts women's morality but presents what amounts to men's morality as gender-neutral morality. She claims that if traditional ethics were really gender-neutral, it would not favor paradigms — for example, the contract model — that speak far more to men's experience than to women's. In Held's estimation, too many traditional ethicists bless a human relationship as moral to the

> *Care can exist without justice but justice cannot exist without care.*

degree it serves the separate interests of individual rational contractors. Yet life is about more than conflict, competition, and controversy and about getting what one wants. It is, as mothering persons know, also about cooperation, consensus, and community — about meeting other people's needs. Held speculates that society might look different were the relationship between a mothering person and a child — rather than the relationship between two rational contractors — represent the paradigm for an ethical relationship.

Held insists that her advocacy on behalf of maternal ethics does not indicate a wholesale rejection of traditional ethics. Mothering persons must be just, as well as caring; critical thinkers as well as emotionally-sensitive persons; able to make generalizations about human relations as well as to bring out their unique characteristics. Like principles, relationships are subject to evaluation as good, better, or best (bad, worse, or worst). If bad principles should not be followed, then bad relationships should not be maintained. Asked whether it is **CARE** or **JUSTICE** that is the most fundamental human value, Held does not hesitate to answer that it is care. As she sees it, care can exist without justice but justice cannot exist without care. Held says that care is our first survival principle.

Similar to Ruddick, who speaks of maternal thinkers, and Held, who speaks of mothering persons, Eva Feder Kittay (1999) seeks to avoid the charge of female essentialism (the doctrine that things have an essence or ideal nature that is independent of and prior to their existence). Her feminist care ethics refers to "dependency relations" and "dependency workers" rather than "maternal relations" and "mothers."

According to Kittay, the dependency worker is obligated to the dependent because she is best suited to meet the dependent's needs. For example, the source of a mother's moral obligation to her infant is not the *rights* of the dependent person as a person, but rather the *relationship* that exists between the one in need and the one who is situated to meet the need. Importantly, Kittay claims that the dependency relation paradigm can and should

guide public policy about human equality. In her view, we are all equal because we are all the product of one or more mothers'/dependency workers' labor. Because everyone is some mother's child, everyone has the experience of being dependent on someone — indeed radically dependent on someone — for mere existence. It is only fair that society takes care of all its dependency workers, including its official mothers.

In summary, a feminist ethics of care reminds us that we can discern whether persons are people of character by how much they care. Caring exhibits both our respect for others and our concern and compassion for their lives. Attitudes are important to ethics and leadership. We discover in a feminist ethics of care not a disparaging of reason and objectivity, but a lifting of care and compassion, love and genuine concern for others as a foundation of values-based leadership. This theme is echoed repeatedly:

According to Thomas Merton (1998),
*"Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things."*

Arthur Jersild (1927) says,
*"Compassion is the ultimate and most meaningful embodiment of emotional maturity. It is through compassion that a person achieves the highest peak and deepest reach in his or her search for self-fulfillment."*

And Felix Adler (1918) reminds us,
*"To care for anyone else enough to make their problems one's own is ever the beginning of one's real ethical development."*

The major points we gather from an ethics of care are (Hester, 2003; Young, 2004):
(1) that we need to see things in perspective,
(2) that fostering growth in families and other organizations is a priority,
(3) that socialization and training in ethical decision-making ought to become a consistent practice,
(4) that ethical relationships should be cultivated in and throughout any organization,
(5) that care and compassion ought to be coupled with fairness and equality among members of any organization,
(6) that all of us, leaders and the led, are dependent on others, and
(7) that concern and respect for others should become a top priority in families, schools, governments, and businesses.

## Adjusting to Our Biases

In his essay on "moral objectivity," Hallvard Lillehammer (2001) begins with the following sentence, "I believe in ethical, moral objectivity." We notice right away that Lillehammer begins with "belief," not with reasoned or scientific knowledge as his foundation. He reasons that moral objectivity must admit to the possibility of moral knowledge being right or wrong, based on correct or incorrect information. In other words, he recognizes the various subjective commitments that form the foundation of the moral point of view. He says, "Ethical claims are objective if it is possible for agents who make them to do so correctly or incorrectly. Objectivity in this sense implies the possibility of moral error."

We should understand that biases are the lens through which we interpret our world. They allow us to view the world but with the possibility of error, discrimination, and poor judgment.

In my own doctorate dissertation in 1973 — *"Why Should I Be Moral?" Sense or Nonsense, a Meta-Ethical Examination* — and later in the journal of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (Vol. XXXV, June 1975, N0 4, *"Subjective Commitment and the Problem of Moral Objectivity"*) — the point was made that if we are willing to reason morally, then the element of choice need not upset the objectivity and rationality of moral reasoning. I argued then as I do now that to be ethical there are some subjective decisions to be made; namely, the decision to use reason and reconsideration in our decision-making, the decision to be level-headed and prudent, and the conscience decision to have some expressed concern, care, and compassion for others. But, as I pointed out in 1975, it is this willingness that more often than not causes problems. We cannot coerce others to be moral through rational means only, perhaps not at all. For this reason, I maintain that values-based leadership requires a shift in attitude. As Robert Firth argued in 1962, "...there is no way of rationally resolving fundamental moral disputes, for fundamental moral judgments or ultimate moral principles cannot correctly be said to be true or false independently of the attitudes of at least some people."

Thus, when we speak of such attitudes as care and compassion, our argument for a values-based leadership falls on the problem of subjectivity; namely, ethical or perhaps psychological egoism — that we ought or that we do always act in our own self-interest. This seems to be the mantel of many in government and in business nowadays. The core of the subjectivist's point of view is a theory of indeterminacy which postulates the arbitrariness of the emotions, and thus, as Abraham Edel says, that "...there is no moral bridge to break the individual's isolation. In short, that there are no common moral questions and above all, no common moral answers" (1955). This is a subjective point of view and those who adhere to a subjectivist ethic only believe that, in making moral judgments, people are doing nothing more than expressing their own opinions (Rachels, 1993). But a feminist ethic of care is more than this; it is based on sound psychological research, albeit, research that has uncovered an attitudinal component of ethics.

It is a truism that we all have moral opinions, but ethical subjectivism doesn't really entail that nothing is right or wrong or that nothing matters. As Rachels says, "Being a subjectivist only means that you have a particular philosophical understanding of what such views come to... A serious problem is that simple subjectivism cannot account for the fact that many of us disagree about ethics" and "that we can sometimes be wrong in our moral evaluations. None of us are infallible." I would argue that a purely subjectivist ethics pulls up too short of becoming a legitimate ethical theory. To include statements about inner attitudes and feelings into ethics is where we begin, not end our moral evaluations and decision-making. Any kind of value judgment must be supported by good reasons and must maintain internal consistency. That we talk about attitudes touches our human, familial nature, and that we use reason creates the possibility of cognitive understanding.

In this sense, values-based leadership is both subjective and objective, and there can never be anything that approaches total objectivity. Does this leave us in a morass of subjectivism and relativism where personal decision is king and values are ultimately arbitrary? Much of the attitudes of leaders in today's world are reflected in the poem quoted by Abraham Edel:

> *It all depends on where you are,*
> *It all depends on when you are,*
> *It all depends on what you feel,*
> *It all depends on how you feel,*
> *It all depends on how you're raised*
> *It all depends on what is praised,*
> *What's right today is wrong tomorrow,*
> *Joy in France, in England sorrow,*
> *It all depends on point of view,*
> *Australia or Timbuktu.*
> *In Rome do as the Romans do.*
> *If tastes just happen to agree*
> *Then you have morality,*
> *But when you have conflicting trends,*
> *It all depends, it all depends….*

Understanding the subjectivity that lies behind a rational morality, what can we do to become more rational in our decision-making and problem-solving? Kai Nielsen (1964) has warned us, "…there is no way of rationally resolving fundamental moral disputes, for fundamental moral judgments or ultimate moral principles cannot correctly be said to be true or false independently of the attitudes of at least some people." He believes that morality depends on what sort of a person one happens to be, that morality rests on the decision of the person who is moved by reasons to behave in one way or another (Aiken, 1952).

To move beyond the purely subjective, we argue that if a person is willing to reason morally, then the element of choice need not distress the objectivity and rationality of moral evaluation. In this, the human element is not negated, only enhanced – even being rational involves a basic human commitment. There are four identifiable, subjective (personal, attitudinal) commitments that need to be made to retain some element of objectivity in our moral considerations (Hester, 1975). These commitments will not resolve problems associated with irrationality, egoism, and relativism, or abject subjectivism, but recognizing them just might give us a heads up so that a shift in attitude — to values-based leadership — praised by many as compassionate and reasonable, might avoid more extreme ethnocentric traps.

To put this another way, if values-based leadership depends on what sort of a person one happens to be, then what sort of a person is it who is able to reason objectively concerning the foundations of the common values we seek as people of ethical integrity? There are at least four commitments to be made that will separate us from ethical arbitrariness. Because this requires a "look inside," this will be, as Kevin Cashman argued, "leadership from the inside out."

1. *To be rational involves a commitment to being consistent in both thought and action.* This is a minimum necessity for explaining and justifying one's beliefs and moral commitments. Reason is a universal language. When people are irrational, they cannot communicate with one another. Understanding behavior that appears inconsistent, irrational, and purely arbitrary is clearly impossible. When we lie or misrepresent our deepest values — be they moral or ego-oriented — others will no longer trust or follow us. A leader who falls into this trap will soon become a leaderless-leader.

2. *A values-based leadership also requires that leaders be prudent.* Prudential reasoning is characterized by calm, deliberate, informed judgments about decisions and organizational problems. A prudent leader and one who has made a subjective commitment to being consistent in thought and action, will be willing to seek out the best means to her or his ends. Clear understanding will also be a goal as the leader will desire

that the led buy into his or her vision and mission. Finally, prudent reasoning gives careful consideration to the probable consequences of an action or policy and will seek input from others on the various options open for resolving a troubling situation.

Prudential reasoning is not a sufficient condition for reasoning morally, but it is a necessary condition. The problem of moral reasoning is also a problem of supporting our values or justifying the beliefs and rules leaders lay down for all to follow. This is not a moral problem, but lies outside of morality as an activity of appraisal. This activity should be ongoing in any organization and requires leadership commitment to maintain an even flow of information and dialogic interaction.

3. *We must care for others.* This third commitment we must make for not only supporting our value commitments, but for living moral lives. The feminist ethics of care cautioned us that we must care for others; that an attitude of care is the foundation of ethics and of ethical leadership. This is where subjective commitment and a values-based leadership begin to overlap. One must be careful: some leaders will appear to act morally, but only for selfish reasons. The ethical person will make a minimal commitment to care for and respect others. This minimal commitment is a key subjective foundation for moral leadership.

Thomas Mayberry (1970) argued that "Obligation frameworks (moral codes, etc.) may be criticized, justified, and corrected by reference to shared moral understandings which begin with the sharing of deep attitudes and judgments toward and concerning animals and human beings and their interests and concerns. This shared understanding may be extensive or meager but it must exist. ... A moral framework can be justified by reference to shared attitudes of respect and concern for human beings and other living creatures which infuse many of our concepts with moral significance. These concepts constitute a common ground and a common bond which makes evaluation of a moral code possible."

4. *We must commit to the principle of reconsideration.* For the moral leader to be objective and fair, s/he has the responsibility to consider and then reconsider his or her own value commitments and those other relevant commitments of others, to reconsider, to compare, to adjust and readjust them, and then to apply them in his or her workaday world.

## In Conclusion

I began this essay with the idea that values-based leadership requires a shift in attitude and that this shift will be non-rational (subjective, but not irrational in the sense of ignoring reason, prudence, and the advice of others). Values-based leadership comes down to a simple question: "What kind of person do we really want to be and what kind of organization is it that we wish to shape?" Of course we want to be functional, productive, and profitable wherever we are. We want to be successful and we have a desire that others trust us for who we are and that our behaviors reflect this and are neither arbitrary nor deceitful.

We can jazz up "value" with all kinds of sociological and psychological theories and applications. We can translate "value" ethically or non-ethically. I believe that when we talk about "values-based leadership," we are referring to ethical values rather than to unethical ones. If we are not, then it makes no sense to use the term for "values-based leadership" is

then referring to a particular kind of values' understanding that value is a common term applicable in all kinds of situations and to all kinds of people — moral and immoral ones.

And so I argue for a "shift in attitude" among values-based leaders, a shift that requires the four subjective commitments mentioned in this essay if ethical decision-making is ever to gain a foothold in the leadership community. Will total objectivity ever be possible? No it will not. Can we pursue moral objectivity with some reasonable hope that it will bring moral leadership back to a balance — to use Aristotle's term — where leaders and followers can exist in some moral harmony where mutual expectations are not unreasonable? I think we can, but this will require our dedication to certain ethical ideals.

Philosopher Kurt Baier (1965) has pointed to the purposes of ethics as that of seeking "the best possible life for everybody, and that the best possible life for everybody," he says, "cannot be achieved in isolation but only in social contexts in which the pursuits of each impinge on the pursuits of others." He argues for a reasoned ethic which takes into consideration the various subjective attitudes and commitments of others, noting that all people have a right to pursue their own happiness and goals and when these impinge on the happiness of others, from the point of view of morality, we are required to modify our impulsive behavior by "observing certain rules, the genuinely moral rules."

Values-based leadership cannot progress without some sort of (subjective) commitment to these principles provided that there is communicative openness within the organization and outside with those seek the organization's services. Dialogue is the necessary ingredient in this formula. Our humanity identifies our subjectiveness. It seems that historically we fall far short of treating people equally unless we commit ourselves to standards that are set universally (the same for all) in our families, schools, businesses, and in our nation. Ethics is a phenomenon peculiar to humans as far as we know. It is as Wittgenstein (1984) said that things of this world can only become valuable as humans *attribute* values to them. It can be said that in matters of ethics and morality, moral values can never be found inherent in states of affairs or events without humans to value them. Being human, moral values are *basically subjective* in terms of origin. To change leadership into "values-based leadership in the moral sense" requires then a "shift in attitude" or a subjective commitment to (1) reason consistently, (2) reason prudently, (3) a shared concern and care for others, and (4) a commitment to reconsider our actions and behaviors in light of other relevant information from inside and outside our organizations and businesses.

The argument is simple: we humans contribute value to many things. Moral values are those that define human relationships and affect others either positively or negatively, whether they are simple friendships, political or governmental decisions, or decisions of businesses. The major contribution of the feminist ethics of care was to demonstrate that attitudes — love or hate, compassion or indifference, trust or suspicion, etc. — lie at the heart of all decision-making. At the center of moral decision-making lie commitments to care, compassion, trust, and benevolence. These are the definitive qualities of a moral person and foundational for any rational ethic. These attitudes are where we begin, not end, moral discussions.

Applied to businesses and other organizations, they are the sustaining spirit of a values-based leadership. This is why a values-based leadership requires, not more formulas, charts and procedures, but a shift in attitude. Our world is as Fritjof Capra (1989) said, *"...a*

*network of relationships; a web of relations between various parts of a unified whole. ... Life is understood and exists through mutually consistent relationships; the consistency of this interrelatedness determines the structure of the entire web."*

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**Joseph P. Hester, Ph.D.** earned the Bachelor of Arts Degree in the Social Sciences and History from Lenoir-Rhyne College (University) in 1961. He is a 1964 and 1967 graduate of Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest, N.C. where he earned both the Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees. His master's thesis was an analysis of the theology of the 19th century Anglican minister and theologian, Frederick W. Robertson. He earned the Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Georgia in 1973 completing his dissertation in analytical ethics. Working in the area of pre-college philosophy, he became a certified public school teacher and supervisor, earning doctoral certification as a Curriculum Specialist III. Hester is the author of many professional articles and books in philosophy, religion, and education. In the area of ethical leadership, he has authored *Ethical Leadership for Public School Administrators and Teachers* and, with H. Darrel Young, *Leadership Under Construction.*