AN ARISTOTELIAN FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

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In his 1934 novel *Journey to the End of the Night*, French novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline wrote that "philosophy is simply one way of being afraid, a cowardly pretense that doesn't get you anywhere" (p. 177). Although some might agree, others have contended that philosophy in general, and ethics in particular, are both necessary and pragmatic (e.g. Noddings, 1982). Céline posed his proposition to a general readership, but two more specific audiences, practicing educators and those who prepare educators, might take note and reflect on the veracity of this statement. Many educational philosophers and researchers have argued the importance of including ethical study and reflection in educational preparation programs, both for prospective teachers and administrators (e.g. Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001; Strike & Soltis, 1998). Among other potential benefits, a moral foundation allows educators to evaluate current practices and assess their work amidst a seemingly never-ending onslaught of instructional fads, trends, methodologies and ideologies (Beck & Murphy, 1997; Starratt, 1997). As a ship must have a compass and rudder to reach its destination on a dark and stormy sea, an educator must

likewise be guided by personal, thoughtful, considered action to attain personal and organizational goals (Normore, 2004).

Ethical engagement satisfies intellectual curiosity and helps guide leaders on their quest to get at the truth, whether that truth is educational or metaphysical. Moral inquiry can help educators design meaningful definitions for abstract ideas they work with daily. A few concepts each leader will want to define are: assessment, teaching, instruction, learning, achievement, success, failure, progress, leader, follower, effectiveness, and even education itself (adapted from Merrill, 1990). However, while ethical reflection and inquiry may help clarify some elusive concepts and help educational leaders reframe their thinking about their work, curiosity and perspective-shifting are not enough—action must follow. The purpose of this paper is to describe an approach to the teaching of ethics to one sub-set of educators, prospective educational administrators, which may prompt them as practitioners to readily understand the value of an ethical orientation in their leadership practice. We preface our presentation of a particular framework for developing ethical leadership by reviewing certain salient themes gleaned from a review of literature on moral leadership.

Moral leadership

Fullan (2003) and Furman (2004) assert that as moral role models, educational leaders (i.e., school principal, college professor) must work to create a climate, culture and community ethic that exemplify the very values that these leaders espouse. Their actions should be representative of how they instruct, guide, and lead. Various scholars (e.g., Gutierrez & Green, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001) have highlighted other significant ethical leadership issues that have recently drawn attention at universities that are using race-based admissions processes as a factor in their admissions decisions. Such issues encompass an ethical framework of multi-dimensional ethical perspectives (Gutierrez & Green, 2004) including what Starratt (1994) refers to as 'ethic of critique, ethic of justice, ethic of care', and what Furman (2004) maintains as the 'ethic of community'. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001) discuss an 'ethic of the profession' perspective that requires educational leaders to make decisions "that consider moral standards unique to their profession as well as their own personal and professional codes of conduct…this ethic also factors into decision making what is the best interests of the student…when applied

to admission decisions, the ethic of profession warrants leaders in academe to heed anti-discriminatory policies and practices" (pp. 23-23).

According to Fullan (2003) and Sergiovanni (2001), administering schools as a moral imperative makes an effective school leader. The moral imperative enables leaders to develop successful practices and a craft 'savoir-faire' that allows them to understand leadership techniques, and skills to employ the techniques effectively, making decisions as well as understanding implications of what's "right" and "wrong", and being able to diagnose and interpret the meaning of what is occurring as people interact in problematic situations. Sergiovanni (2001) argues organizations "do things right" with a technical image whose sole purpose is valuing knowledge efficiency, orderliness, productivity and social usefulness. While these purposes are equally as vital to schools, there is also a moral image that is upheld along with the technical image whereby institutions (i.e. schools) "do the right things" by molding character, shaping attitudes and producing virtuous and thoughtful people (p. 345). Moreover, several competencies have been explored by Sergiovanni (2001) that play a role for school leaders when leading a school. First, leadership is focused on values, ideas, goals and purposes, otherwise known as 'management of attention'; second, by focusing on connecting teachers, parents, and students to emphasize the usefulness and value of their lives, leaders engage in helping to build meaningful relationships; third, the leader's role should be built on the foundational force of trust and regarded as credible, legitimate, and honest, and; finally, management of self that emphasizes the ability of school leaders to know who they are, what they believe, and why they do the things they do…when a leader's behavior can be defended by that leader in a way that others at least understand and respect, self-knowledge has been achieved (pp. 349-350).

Leaders have things they want to do, programs they must implement, and changes they endeavor to facilitate. They seek to reach goals, pursue objectives, and stay the course toward realizing a vision of personal and institutional excellence. But how does one get from here to there? Educational leaders need a plan, and a basic set of guiding principles which will help them move forward amidst the storm, stress, and change endemic to educational organizations. Ethical study can help the individual formulate not only an important part of their philosophy of education, but also a life pattern by which they can assess progress and correct direction

as needed or desired. That being said, the journey is long and the road unclear. Few leaders, if any, can develop an immutable ethical orientation which will be consistent and flexible enough to provide guidance during uncertain times. However, the benefit is not in the product, but the process. Whatever moral philosophy educational leaders build enthusiastically and rationally will help immeasurably in giving their professional lives a meaning, a framework, a kind of shelter in the complex and ever-shifting world of education (Merrill, 1990). If we accept these many benefits of engaging the practice of moral leadership and agree that there is value to ongoing ethical study and reflection, the question remains for those who prepare educational leaders—what should be emphasized in the preparation of moral leaders?

Character, emotion, logic: An Aristotelian framework

In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (1991) described ethos, pathos and logos. While Aristotle's intent was to introduce a critical framework by which conversation, written text, and performed drama could be analyzed, his ideas about deconstruction hold great value in that they constitute a framework by which situations can be assessed from an ethical perspective. Ethos, pathos and logos translate roughly as character, emotion, and logic. Essentially, Aristotle suggested that actions may be analyzed by taking each of these moral aspects into account. These same three concepts can be helpful to leaders not only as they analyze situations, but also may aid a prospective leader in the development of their own ethical foundation. By reading and examining ethical works which emphasize logic, character, and morals, and then considering them in relation to one another, they may better see the practical implications of an emergent personal ideology. This Aristotelian framework allows ethics to be examined in three distinct, manageable ways, and ultimately as a synthesized whole.

However, if character, emotion, and logic are to form the foundation of an ethical ideology, we must be able to look at each of these abstract notions in a more manageable way. To further ground discussions of these three abstract concepts, a second idea of Aristotle's (2003) is also adapted. Each appeal is examined at three different levels: theory, practicality, and wisdom. This means that a student will study Logic, Character, and Emotion from theoretical, practical and learned perspectives. Students will look at concepts from each appeal in relation to the others and

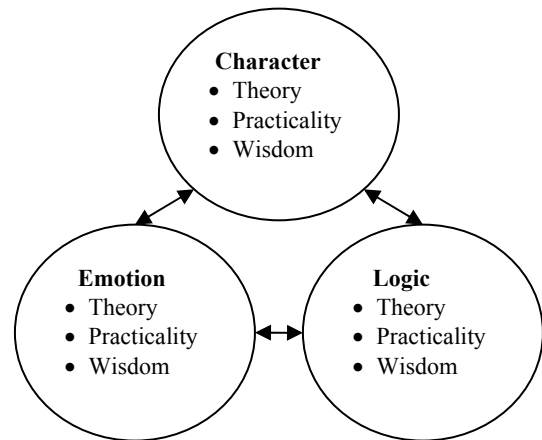consider how the various pieces might form a single ethical orientation (see figure 1).

Figure1. Flow of ethical development and instruction

As logos, pathos, and ethos each address a different ethical dynamic, it is necessary to examine each in greater depth. Likewise, it is essential to draw distinctions between each sub-component (theory, practicality, and wisdom) and define its parameters. The following sections consider each of these concepts in turn and include suggestions for materials and experiences one might include when instructing a prospective educational leader. It is important to note that the order in which each appeal and sub-component are discussed is in no way meant to imply relative importance, or denote a particular starting point for discourse or exploration. Certainly, this will vary from instructor to instructor, from student to student, and from leader to leader.

Character: Examining morality as an expression of habit

The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy defines ethos as character produced by moral as opposed to intellectual habits. Character encompasses such qualities as tone, disposition, values, and sentiments (Angeles, 1992). The study of character may include religious or spiritual precepts, but is not restricted to morality of a religious nature. One analytic tool often introduced when examining character through the theoretical subcomponent of character is Immanuel Kant's (Coppleston, 1994) categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is Kant's notion that "a good act is one which the actor would be willing to see universalized" (Merrill, 1990, p. 5). In essence, this perspective tends to look at character and principles of morality that transcend particular situations and

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personal preferences in order for people to act morally. Kant (1953) reiterated that, in order for any set of principles to be considered ethical, these same principles must have universal appeal and applicability. Kant suggests that abstract principles should serve as the guiding force for moral decision making, and that most people will accept rules that apply to most people under most circumstances as reasonable guiding principles. Likewise, concepts such as duty and moral disposition would be discussed. Another education-specific possibility would be to discuss Dworkin's (1986) studies of the criterion for a morally legitimate community. Certainly, the concepts such as leading for social justice, teleology, deontology, and character education could also be addressed. Additional examples of character based ethical theory can be found in Wren's (1995) excellent compendium.

Practical moral character represents morality in action. As with all three practical subcomponents discussed in this article, this aspect of morality can be addressed in a classroom setting through the use of problem-based learning (PBL) modules, such as those regularly published in the *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership* (see www.ucea.org for full-text resources). There are certainly other sources of problem-based learning exercises, including Cunningham and Cordeiro's (2003) *Educational Leadership, A Problem-Based Approach* and Strike and Soltis' (1998) *The Ethics of Teaching*. Using these "real-life" situations will help prospective leaders test some of the theories they have investigated. Practical moral character can manifest itself as a morally motivated act whether it is "good" or "bad." Therefore, while the selfless act of a person tending to an injured stranger constitutes moral character, so does an act of ethical callousness. Practical moral character is the *active* sub-component of character.

Beck and Murphy (1997) assert while ethics can guide decisions where reason is the focus for applying moral principles, "ethics when used as guidelines and rules emphasize the ability to see 'morally salient features' of a situation and the development of dispositions or attitudes or virtues that enable one to live and work and interact with others in an ethical fashion" (p. 41). Understanding ethics in this light means coming to grips with more than just reason and action, but also with the development of character and as a way of living and working rightly in specific contexts. Much has been written about the ethics of educational leadership in ways which indicate that ethics must be concerned with how people perceive

themselves, others, and their shared experiences (Blum, 1991, 1994; Hauerwas & Burrell, 1977). More recently, others have echoed their conceptions. According to Greenfield (2004), ethics is concerned with the ways individuals think about themselves, others, and the organizations and the experiences they share. Hodgkinson (1991) suggests that school leaders must be aware that while education has "relevance to all aspects of human condition, it is also invested from the outset with a moral character" and decision making (p. 27). Sergiovanni (2001) capitalizes on three important dimensions of moral decision making: (a) the heart (beliefs, values, dreams, personal vision), (b) the head (theories of practice developed over time, reflection on situations we face in light of these theories) and, (c) the hand (actions we take, decisions made, leadership and management behaviors we use as strategies become institutionalized in the form of school programs, policies and procedures). These elements might be an integral component of leadership preparation programs so prospective school leaders can engage in ethical decision making scenarios (Sergiovanni, 2001, pp. 343-344). This is the place to describe what ethical theories look like as habits in use.

One can have a great command of ethical theory and be able to explain what it should look like implemented, but still not have the savvy and experience to pull it off. Moral character wisdom is practical moral knowledge as examined through reflection on moral action. There is no classroom experience that will likely ever replace the hands-on application of ethical principle. Wisdom is here conceived as a meaningful combination of theory, action and reflection. Although personalized in some respects, wisdom is the place for practitioners to relate stories from the field or try and make sense of how their own actions were guided and misguided ethically. The wisdom sub-component occurs often within the context of a particular complex community, something that problems based learning situations have difficulty taking into account. As such, an instructor of an ethics class for educational leadership might assign reflective papers or critical incident analysis to engage this sub-component. It is important for students to examine the successes and failures in which they have been an active participant as they form their orientation as an ethical leader.

Emotion: Love, anger, and leadership
Emotion is perhaps the most neglected aspect of ethical inquiry in educational leadership literature. This

is due in part to the emphasis that Western philosophies (which are for the most part the works upon which ethics instruction in the Americas rests) places on logical rather than affective or intuitive constructions of meaning (Coppleston, 1994). Moral emotion is largely a private, individual experience rather than something necessarily connected to a community context (Angeles, 1992, p. 221).

Theoretically considered, moral emotion includes any theories of emotion. In essence, we are talking about a summation of beliefs and assumptions a person holds concerning emotive response and the underlying psychological structures which guide them. For example, in *Situation Ethics*, Joseph Fletcher (1966) goes to great lengths to differentiate between agape (a brotherly love), and romantic love. In specifically delineating what differentiates love and agape, he moves toward establishing a theory of love that might aid leaders in considering what levels of compassion and passion might be appropriate and acceptable to their own beliefs (pp. 104-110). Similarly, educational theorists such as Nel Noddings (1982) have constructed stirring theories with significant emotional components. Noddings's theoretical perspective that caring and nurturing are crucial elements of educational relationships and actions is a powerful expression of theoretical moral emotion.

Practical moral emotion is a description of what an emotive response looks like in an educational setting and how it might manifest itself through leadership activities. Leaders might well use this aspect of moral emotion to try and figure out why policies and practice are sometimes guided by what they feel rather than what might be logical. Intuition is certainly a part of leadership, and this is the place for prospective leaders to consider when compassion and intuition are appropriate guides to be used as a compass when faced with ethical dilemmas. This is particularly difficult when values compete with one another. A systematic and rational approach to ethical behavior relies heavily on elements that direct and guide the thinking of decision makers. Beck and Murphy (1997) suggest this view presumes that "a function of ethics is to help individuals avoid being swayed by their emotions and personal interests, concerns, and beliefs as they seek to choose morally sound strategies and activities from a range of viable alternatives" (p. 40). An exploration of moral emotion prompts prospective leaders to consider the types of decisions which might be made with the heart rather than their head; an important aspect of

leadership often neglected in rational decision making models of educational leadership (Palestini, 2002).

Moral emotional wisdom seems best explored through reflection. It manifests itself in instinctual, affective emotional responses to situations and critical incidents. Leaders experience authentic feelings of elation, ennui, anger, love and the like. This sub-component of emotion asks people to reconsider and deconstruct the ways they have acted when emotion and intuition provided the impetus for action.

Logic: The sense and nonsense of leadership

Logic represents the principles and methods individuals and organizations use to make decisions. In effect, logic encompasses the rationale educators have for choosing from among the various courses of action available to them. According to Aristotle, logic is the science of making correct inferences, and is an indispensable foundation for creating and examining all types of knowledge. Logic is a critical instrument of inquiry, a tool for unlocking the intelligible connections between and within concepts (Angeles, 1992).

There are several theories of logic. In Aristotelian logic, the syllogism constructs meaning through categorical classification:

Major Premise: All students in our school learn
Minor Premise: Adam is a student in our school
Conclusion: Therefore, Adam learns

However, this familiar form of reasoning is only one of many. Other forms of logical theory include the scientific method, cause and effect relationships, and even "common" sense. Among educational theorists, Paulo Freire conveyed a fascinating theory of logic in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. His dialogics are a methodological strategy for developing conscientizacão, the ability to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 33). This is achieved through a fascinating application of what has come to be called critical theory. In short, logical moral theories provide an abstracted methodology for conceptualizing meaning.

Practical moral logic is application of logic to educational leadership situations. For example, using the type of Aristotelian syllogistic logic described above, one might analyze PBL cases as a way to practice decision making (e.g. Alexander & Nderu, 2003). Certainly, exercises using data driven decisions would be here explored and their moral implications

considered (e.g. Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003; Johnson, 2002).

Reflection on the application of logical decision making methods to past experiences will aid in exploration of logical moral wisdom. By creating new meaning of completed strategies used to make decisions, one achieves a wholly different form of insight and is able to construct new meaning from the past. This can be powerfully facilitated by reflecting on how decisions made in the past might have produced different outcomes if different decision making strategies or different information were used.

Putting it all together: Syncretism and synthesis for moral leaders

According to Mertz (1997), "teaching about ethics without making students grapple with the possible uncomfortable realities of their own behavior or the complexities of the ethical questions with which they would be confronted is unacceptable" (p.81). This notion leaves them unprepared and mostly unaffected. Students of educational leadership need to realize the intrinsic ethical issues in the work of school leaders and to engage in nurturing their own abilities to identify these issues. It seems appropriate therefore to tailor leadership preparation programs around the development and enhancement of the students' ability to examine the values and motivations that guide their leadership behavior and the consequences of those behaviors. Students need to examine the relationship between what they espouse and what they express. Starratt (1997) asserts that leadership programs must deal explicitly with formal ethical concerns and argues that the ethics of critique, justice and care are mutually inseparable and complimentary to each other. The ethic of critique calls upon us to "speak out against unjust rules and laws and social arrangements on behalf of those principles of human and civil rights…on behalf of a common humanity which is violated through discrimination…and an arbitrary denial of equal treatment" (p. 99). According to Starratt, the ethic of justice concerns the "universal application of principles of justice among individuals in society" (p. 98) and the ethic of care "compels us to be proactively sensitive to another person, extending ourselves beyond duty and convenience to offer other persons our concern and attention" (p. 99)

Assessing theory, practicality and wisdom in each of the appeals allows a prospective educational leader to study the emotional, character, and logical qualities of morality and ethics. This is helpful, but still leaves students with some work to do. They must try and create a meaningful whole by synthesizing the three appeals into a coherent ethical paradigm. To achieve this synthesis, it is imperative that they examine how the various concepts they have studied interact with each other, both positively and negatively. This will happen through a combination of syncretism, which is the combination of discordant elements, and synthesis, an amicable merger of harmonious elements (Angeles, 1992).

Ethical syncretism is natural. As illustrated by this excerpt from the end of a book espousing a particular moral philosophy:

> My orientation, my philosophy...can be summarized in a few words, words indicating emphases found throughout this book: libertarianism, individualism, rationalism, pluralism, self-direction, existentialism, competition, duty to principle, and personal integrity. It may seem that certain of these concepts are contradictory (e.g., rationalism and existentialism), but I have tried to show how, through a kind of dialectical process, they may be reconciled (Merrill, 1990, pp. xii).

The author suggests that through dialectical processes of reflection and exploration (syncretism), reconciliation, and indeed *synthesis*, can be the result of combining seemingly disparate ethical principles into a coherent whole. Figure 2 represents graphically the process of syncretism and synthesis (as compared with figure 1).
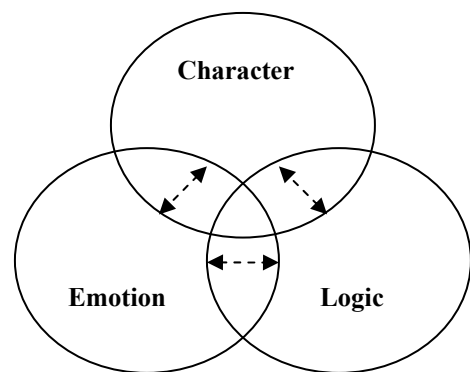

Figure 2. The processes of syncretism and synthesis

Note that the arrows which originally connected three separate constructs are now conceived as overlapping. The arrows in this second figure represent the process of bringing together what were theretofore only loosely connected concepts; this is accomplished by having students explain, explore, and reflect upon the

connections (and disconnections) between the various elements of their own moral philosophies. This part of the process represents students taking steps toward creating a personalized moral philosophy that synthesizes the concepts they have studied into a whole. In effect, students are creating their own "-ism," their own moral philosophy. Exploring and reflecting on how these various aspects of moral philosophy are alternately incompatible or philosophically harmonious can help prospective leaders grow into moral leaders who are aware, informed by theory, experience, and their wisdom. Attempting to understand how these aspects interact with one another prompts students to reflect on the totality of their ethical orientation. For example, to name some of the philosophies discussed in this paper, students may discover that they are libertarian in some respects and deontological in others, they may see that the way they make decisions is democratic, but that they also believe that "the buck stops here" under certain conditions. They may combine aspects of Existentialism, Feminism, and critical theory into an as yet undiscovered and unique philosophy of educational leadership.

Conclusion

Many researchers have called for educational leaders to develop a moral grounding for their work. This paper presented one approach which may help facilitate the discovery of a personal moral philosophy. By teaching students the ethical concepts of character, emotion, and logic and simultaneously making them aware that these abstract concepts function at theoretical, practical and wise levels which are at times contradictory and at others conciliatory, leaders might enter the field better equipped to act with ethical orientation.

Quick and Normore (2004) assert that true leaders understand that their "actions speak louder than words," and that they must "practice what they preach" for inevitably they "shall reap what they sow." (p. 345). Although these adages are cliché, they serve as a map for the educational leader because of the powerful evidence of experience. Educational leaders will testify that the culture, climate, and community are a direct reflection of the leader's leadership. The relationships created by the leader, the philosophies and structures that s/he supports, and the decisions that s/he makes will impact the entire school. With this in mind, the leader must consciously and intentionally take the actions that s/he believes are in the best interests of the students, while modeling the importance of caring and just relationships and understanding that his/her decisions have consequences across the entire system. This will afford the leader the opportunity to collaborate with all the stakeholders in the school community. This assures that the school will reflect the communities intended goals and assists students in fully realizing their potential. It also conveys to them that they are connected to others through a web of interrelationships of which they may not even be conscious, but one that exists none the less. This should be the goal of all educational leaders, especially those who understand that they are role models for ethical and moral action.

Engaging in reflective practice and problems based learning activities designed to challenge their growing understanding of ethos, pathos, and logos, and supporting each individual's creation of a coherent ethical system which can direct their decision making processes, educational leaders at all levels may well be prepared for the moral imperative of leading schools into the 21st century. As reiterated by Begley and Stefkovich (2004):

> Leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners that understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership, and authentic in their leadership practices in the sense that many scholars have advocated for some time. The first step towards achieving this state is, predictably enough, to engage in personal reflection (p. 134).

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