

Preface

Purpose

When in 2006 I received an invitation from Professor László Zsolnai, editor of the series 'Frontiers of Business Ethics', to develop an anthology based on a selection of my writings on ethics, values and spirituality in leadership, I declined, primarily because I felt this would be counter-productive to my goal of reducing the role played by my ego on my personal development. However, when two years later I was asked to reconsider my earlier decision, renewed reflection resulted in a change of heart. I realized that it would be possible to compile the anthology not as a premature literary mausoleum (I am still going strong), but rather as a potential source of inspiration to social scientists who are interested in the evolution of what many have considered 'alternative', radical, expansive perspectives on leadership. I made the following note to myself regarding my motivation: *A primary motivation, although one that will not be explicitly dealt with, is to inspire leaders as well as teachers and students of leadership to integrate their hearts, minds and souls when making decisions and leading – to develop the awareness, conviction and courage that truly successful leadership deals not just with effectiveness and wealth generation to owners, but with contributing to the well-being and development of all those one serves as a leader.*

I realized as well that preparing the book would enable me to obtain new insights into both my own development and the development of the fields I have contributed to – insights that could not be obtained without a concentrated period of reflection and synthesis as is a prerequisite for preparing such a book.

The title

Before actually starting to consider the structure of the book, I thought seriously about its title. I ended up with: *Rational, Ethical and Spiritual Perspectives on Leadership*. The title is both logical and misleading. It implies a 'movement' over time, and certainly the foci of my professional writings over almost 50 years have changed dramatically, particularly starting from 1985. In the first roughly 25 years, my ultra-rational period, I focused on perspectives provided by operations research and economics, with a major emphasis on optimization, algorithms and mathematical/computer models of decision problems (for example, my advanced doctoral dissertation from 1982, almost 20 years after my PhD, was: *Locational Decisions and Discrete Optimization*). My academic research during that period was complemented early on by a decade of leading a successful and highly innovative international consulting company that specialized in operations research.

Personal experience from leading some major consulting assignments whose results affected large segments of society led to reflection as to whether what I was doing, both as an advisor to major institutions, and as a teacher, was in fact of value to society. Gradually I realized the paucity and the potential negative consequences for the human condition of my world-views and of my earlier work. Starting in the mid-1980s I began to explicitly complement my focus on rationality with ethical perspectives on leadership. And with time, stimulated by a growing existential wonderment as to my true identity and purpose in life, even these ethical perspectives began to be complemented by a deeper, spiritual perspective as the basis for both rationality and morality. This movement was characterized by a shift from an emphasis on intellectual reasoning as to ethics in organizations to discovering and giving expression to more fundamental sources of guidance at both the personal and organizational level.

But the title is also misleading. For all the while that these new perspectives emerged, they were subject to rational scrutiny. That is why I write about them. Of course ethics and spirituality are very personal matters. But that does not eliminate them as subjects of reflection and investigation.

Target audience and aims

The book is aimed at reflective practitioners and theoreticians in the field of 'leadership philosophy', particularly those who work with concepts of ethics, values, responsibility, authenticity, sustainability and spirituality.

Having identified the potential readers, a few words should be offered on what they can expect to gain from reading the book. It is certainly not a 'how to do it' or a traditional text book. Nor is it intended to be autobiographical, although certainly there are many personal reflections based on the development of my leadership-philosophical concepts as they have evolved and transformed my mind set. Rather, it is intended to provide insight and inspiration to mature reflective leaders and teachers of leadership as to the deeper purpose and significance of such leadership-philosophical concepts.

My urge to write about these matters over the years has been far more than to live up to academic traditions of publishing; it has primarily been motivated by a feeling of responsibility – to contribute to the vocabularies of ethics and values and spirituality, and to lift these perspectives on leadership from a matter of subjective, personal conviction to legitimate fields of study within the academic domain of leadership. And in so doing to contribute to the development of leadership practices that are better tuned to serving humanity, and the world as a whole, than are provided by traditional perspectives.

Analysis ⇔ Synthesis

The fact that I have 'moved on' from more analytical, quantitative and objective perspectives on leadership to more holistic, qualitative and subjective perspectives is in no way a denial of the importance of the former. I am immensely happy that I have for so many years developed a fine-

tuned rational mind, both as leader of an international enterprise and as professor of managerial economics and operations research; without this background I would not have been capable of realizing the limitations, as well as the strengths, of traditional economic rationality with respect to complex problems faced both by individuals and organizations. I continue to draw heavily upon my rational mind-set in my teaching and writing. For example, at present (spring 2009) I am giving two courses in the Philosophy of Science to PhD students at Sri Sathya Sai University in India, where I draw heavily upon both the rational and the extra-rational mind-set to present a rather unique curriculum that challenges and excites my students. However, I emphasize that I am now convinced that the rational/analytical perspectives that enabled me to achieve a reasonable degree of academic and business success earlier in my life can also serve as the basis for greed and nihilism – as is evident in the scandals we witness throughout the world – when rationality is not tempered by ethical and spiritual perspectives.

On a more optimistic note, I am also convinced that there is a growing awareness of the need for integrating ethical and spiritual approaches into leadership. But there is a long way to go before such approaches are ‘mainstream’. Changes in a collective mindset face inertia and resistance, and this is good, in spite of a heartfelt wish that things speed up. The reason being that if our mind-sets and corporate cultures could easily shed existing value systems and replace them with others, society would become very unstable – and values would lose their value as the bedrock upon which our actions are based.

I have developed some of these thoughts in greater detail in an article I was invited to write based on my ‘farewell lecture’ upon retiring as Professor of Systems Science at the Copenhagen Business School in 2003. The article, ‘From optimization to transformation – my path to the wellspring of rationality, morality and spirituality’, will be presented in the prologue that follows immediately after this preface.

Structure of the book

The publisher requested a manuscript of roughly 100,000 words. Although this may seem substantial, it required difficult balancing of two conflicting desires: 1) to present thoughts in depth, which would mean relatively long extracts from relatively few publications, and 2) to present extracts from many publications dealing with different aspects of the concepts of rationality, ethicality and spirituality. The result is a compromise, where I have in many places seriously reduced the size of individual publications presented. This in turn has necessitated editing so that the 'flow' in each publication is maintained, even though various sections may have been removed. When performing this minor editing (most often consisting of adding or deleting a few words), I was tempted to update matters, e.g. to modify earlier statements in light of new knowledge. This has not been done. This would be incorrect as in each case I received permission from the original publisher (and when publications were co-authored, from the other authors as well) to reprint what was originally written. Furthermore, my goal has not been to present an up-to-date exposition, but to present an overview of how my insights as to the relationships between rational, ethical and spiritual perspectives on leadership have developed over the years – so as to present a picture of this development in general.

Having mentioned co-authored publications, I must note that when I include extracts from such publications, I do not imply that I have written everything presented. Rather, in each case the work has been the product of a true teamwork whereby it is not meaningful to say who wrote what.

In addition, I have also attempted to assure that there is a logical progression in the sequence of publications presented so that the reader can follow the way my thinking and writing developed over time. This means that the publications are not simply presented in chronological order; sometimes reflection at one point of time resulted in a publication much later.

The book is organized in the following six themes: 1) Morals and Ethics, 2) Ethical Accounting, 3) Values and Leadership, 4) Identity,

5) Responsibility, and 6) Spiritual-based Leadership. Each of these is presented in a separate section that commences with an introductory essay and then presents extracts from relevant publications, each in its own chapter. The reason for introducing each section with a brief essay, often from a major newspaper, is to provide the reader with an ‘appetizer’, an easy-to-read introduction to the subject matter, and to demonstrate as well the emphasis I have put on making abstract thoughts readily available to a broader public than that which tends to read academic journals and books. I note that I have translated several of these essays from Danish into English, just as I have translated a number of the publications in the first section on Morals and Ethics.

The book concludes with a list of my publications that have been included in the book, together with an acknowledgment of the source of these publications. I note that publications from my ‘ultra-rational’ period, 1960–1985, are *not* included in the list, as is the case for my many publications after 1985 that have not been directly included in the book.

Some technical details

Finally, a few notes as to ‘technical’ matters:

- In order to simplify the presentation as well as to save space, I have omitted many footnotes that were in the original publications.
- For ease of reading I have used the same formatting, ways of referring to literature, etc. in all the excerpts, even though these may differ from the original publications.
- I have maintained the ways of referring to persons as in the originals, even though this usually means use of ‘he’ rather than ‘she’; there is absolutely no gender bias intended.

- To enable the reader to clearly see when I have felt it necessary to make a comment underway, the comment will be placed within brackets as follows: (*comment*; *PP*).
- Similarly, to enable the reader to clearly differentiate between my brief introduction to each of the book's parts and chapters and the excerpts from my publications, my introductory comments are written in italics.
- References are provided at the end of each chapter.
- Publications that were written in Danish are also listed with their titles translated into English.