

Self-respect as a normative foundation to integrate integrity in responsible leadership

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Abstract

There is a growing interest among academic researchers and practitioners in management studies to show that integrity matters for leadership and performance. Although integrity is generally understood as honouring one's words with a plausible link with ethics and morality, it is not clear whether there is any responsibility for leaders to act with integrity. Integrity is shown to be a positive phenomenon for leadership and performance without any normative foundation. This paper attempts to show that responsible leadership requires a normative foundation of self-respect. It demonstrates that integrity can be integrated in leadership ethics for responsible leadership.

Keywords: self-respect, integrity, responsible leadership, leadership ethics, social virtue

Introduction – Outline

- The difference between self-respect and self-esteem and what is the problem with self-esteem?
- Why self-respect and what is self-respect?
- The significance of self-respect
- Ethics and morality and what is the real issue?
- Why does responsibility matter?
- The normative foundation of responsible leadership
- What is integrity?
- Self-respect and social virtues
- Integrity as a social virtue for responsible leadership

Self-esteem and self-respect

- Self-esteem is a psychological concept grounded in theories of self-concept, whereas self-respect continues to be a central issue in contemporary moral philosophy.
- Both self-respect and self-esteem have an impact on the individual's functioning through interaction of cognition, affect and behaviour.
- Self-esteem without a foundation of self-respect can lead to disrespectful behaviours and will not contribute to individual functioning.

Source: Nathan, 2010, Cf. Roland & Foxx, 2003

Self-esteem

- Self-esteem is a 'subjective measure', an emotional response to self evaluation in terms of liking or feeling good about oneself; it depends on how one feels about one's capacities, performance and perception of others' opinions.
- It is therefore believed that low self-esteem causes emotional distress and dysfunctional behaviour, whereas high self-esteem is related to optimal mental health.
- Social psychologists have claimed that high self-esteem increases one's likelihood of treating others with respect, kindness and generosity, and is a causal factor in personal and social responsibility.
- However, none of these claims have much empirical support.

Source: Nathan, 2010; cf. Roland & Foxx, 2003

Self-esteem – potential negative impacts

- People who pursue tactics such as ‘self-serving attributions’ to increase self-esteem can get into social difficulties.
- When these people’s egos are threatened, they allow ‘self enhancing illusions’ to affect their decision-making processes and commit themselves to unattainable goals.
- Studies indicate an association between excessively high self-esteem and dysfunctional behaviour such as childhood bullying, rape and violence in youth and adult gangs.
- These findings, however, do not support the assertion that all individuals with high or low self-esteem are psychologically dysfunctional.

Source: Nathan, 2010; cf. Roland & Foxx, 2003

What makes people to function well?

- What makes these people function well despite their repeated failures and setbacks?
- Rowland and Foxx (2003) suggest that people who have *self-respect* believe '*that they are worth the effort it takes to consider their disappointments and failures as closely as their triumphs and successes*'.

What is self-respect?

- Self-esteem is a 'relational concept'. It means one has a favourable opinion of oneself (Walzer, 1983).
- Self-esteem is not conducive to one's functioning, taking responsibilities for oneself; whereas self-respect seems to advocate proper conduct of oneself.
- Is there a moral significance for self-respect?

Moral significance of self-respect

- The moral significance of self-respect, also known as ‘magnanimity’, ‘proper pride’ and a ‘sense of dignity’, has been discussed in moral philosophy by Aristotle, Augustine, Spinoza, Rousseau, Hume, Hegel, Nietzsche and many others.
- In short, one may define self-respect as ‘a sense of one’s own dignity’ or ‘a sense of personal dignity and worth’.

Source: Nathan, 2010; cf. Roland & Foxx, 2003; cf. Dillon, 1995

Kantian concept of self-respect

Kant introduced a new perspective to the concept of self-respect when he suggested that all persons deserve respect, regardless of their character:

‘Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.’

The importance of person and the quality of the person's conduct

- Philosophers previous to Kant identified the concept of respect with two characteristics: the 'recognition of something important' and the 'evaluation of the quality of something'.
- Kant brought these two characteristics together for the concept of self-respect, the importance of person and the quality of the person's conduct.

Source: Nathan, 2010; cf. Roland & Foxx, 2003; cf. Dillon, 1995

Four categories of self-respect

1. the proper appreciation of being a person;
2. as grounded in character and conduct;
3. as having two aspects, the importance of personhood and the quality of personhood;
4. as an integrated aspect of personhood without differentiating the importance of and quality of personhood.

Source: Nathan, 2010; cf. Roland & Foxx, 2003; cf. Dillon, 1995

Individual and Individuality

Dilthey maintains that the following characteristics are fundamental to individuality:

1. 'A prime feature of the individual is that he has a will of his own';
2. 'Individuation is a fundamental trait of human life';
3. 'Individual acquires a distinctive core of personality which is unique and irreducible'; however, 'it is also deeply implicated in a wider coherence composed of other persons and the patterns of society and culture'.

Source: Nathan, 2010, cf. Ermarth, 1978

Constituents of self-respect

Hence the concept of self-respect should highlight autonomy, character and conduct as essential components.

- **Autonomy** entails taking responsibility for oneself and leading a meaningful life by facing one's challenges in life.
- **Character** reflects a relational aspect of personality.
- **Conduct** is the manner in which a person carries out her meaningful activities through social participation.

Source: Nathan, 2010; cf. Sennett, 2003

The upshot of self-respect

The upshot of self-respect is that those who respect themselves and take responsibility will be considerate of others' social freedom within the context of an interdependent web of social relationships.

Source: Nathan, 2010

Ethics and Morality

- In general, what is good is associated with ethics, and what is right is associated with morality.
- John Rawls (1971/1999), however, asserts the priority of right over good, and his theory of justice is a deontological ethic, whereas theories based on the priority of good over right are teleological (e.g. utilitarianism).

Source: Nathan, 2010

What is the real issue?

- Whether what is right takes precedence over what is good is not really the issue. The real issue is one of **responsibility!**
- Ethical leadership or moral leadership should be concerned with responsibilities; i.e. we should be concerned **with responsible leadership.**

Source: Nathan, 2010; Cf. Kymlicka, 1989

The normative foundation of responsible leadership

- Self-respect
 - From Kantian perspective:

A self-respecting individual has the responsibility and moral duty to reflect on herself as a moral being, which is a precondition for respecting others as moral beings.
 - Those who respect themselves and take responsibility will be considerate of others' social freedom within the context of an interdependent web of social relationships.
- Self-respect is constituted by autonomy, character and conduct.

Basic social facts

- *Human diversity is inevitable. We differ in our capabilities and identities (including gender), and we individuate with our unique personalities within the sociocultural matrix.*
- *We live in an ethical plural society. We differ in our convictions of good or meaningful lives. Our ethical convictions can be incommensurable, or complementary, or conflicting.*
- *We are interdependent beings within the social world in many dimensions – economic, social, cultural and ecological.*

Source: Nathan, 2010

Responsible leadership

- Given the basic social facts of human diversity, ethical pluralism, and interdependency, responsible leadership should be concerned with social interaction and engagement – social participation – within the context of an interdependent web of social relations. (See also similar idea proposed by Maak and Pless, 2006)
- Responsible leadership is becoming an ‘emerging concept’ within cross-disciplinary studies of ethics, leadership and corporate social responsibility (CSR). (Voegtlin, Patzer & Scherer, 2010)
- How does integrity matter for responsible leadership?

Self-respect and social virtues

- With our differences in physical and social endowments along with differing ethical convictions of a meaningful life, we are living in an interdependent society. Many activities and pursuits require coordinated actions and a collective will.
- Each individual is responsible for assessing her convictions in order to ensure others may pursue various and differing ethical convictions.
- This responsibility shapes one's character and conduct as one interacts and engages with the social world without burdening or blocking others' engagement in their meaningful activities.
- The external organizations of society such as family, religious organizations, educational institutions, corporations etc., are also responsible for shaping social virtues by means of the institutional structures in order to nurture self-respect in individual citizens.

Source: Nathan, 2010

What is integrity?

- Integrity is defined by Jensen as “what it takes for a person to be whole and complete.”
(Jensen, 2009)
- A key aspect of integrity involves the relationship one has with oneself and integrity is connected in an important way to acting morally.
(Jensen, 2009; cf. Cox et al. 2005)
- Is integrity a social virtue? More importantly a responsible leadership virtue?

Honouring your word

“honoring your word as we define it means you either keep your word (do what you said you would do and by the time you said you would do it); or, as soon as you know that you will not, you say that you will not and clean up any mess caused for those who were counting on your word.

(Our use of the word “honoring” is not meant in its virtue sense; rather it is meant in the “being good for one’s word” sense.) (Erhard, Jensen & Zaffron, 2009)

Normative and positive realms

- Erhard, Jensen & Zafron (2010) attempt to link four concepts of integrity, ethics, morality and legality by defining two realms –
 - i) positive and without normative values and
 - ii) normative virtues.
- In their model, morality, ethics and legality exist in the normative virtue realm, whereas integrity exists in the positive realm.
- Is integrity a virtue?

Social virtue of integrity for responsible leadership

- Integrity as a social virtue (and a responsible leadership virtue) can foster self-respect.
- Even if we consider integrity within positive realm, this can be integrated upon the normative foundation of self-respect for responsible leadership.

Any questions?

Thank you for your attention.

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