

Forum

Habits and Virtues: Does It Matter if a Leader Kicks a Dog?

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Abstract This paper argues that it is reasonable to make attributions about a leader's character based on minor incidents such as kicking a dog. It begins with a short review of the relevant literature from leadership studies and social psychology on how our prototypes of leaders affect the attributions we make about them. Then the paper examines the role of virtues, habits, and dispositional statements to show why an act such as kicking a dog can offer insight into a leader's moral character.

KEYWORDS: Leadership; Leadership Ethics; Virtue; Habit Attribution; Dispositional Statements

Riassunto *Costumi e virtù: conta se un leader prende a calci un cane?* - In questo articolo si sostiene che è ragionevole compiere attribuzioni concernenti il carattere di un leader basate su piccoli eventi incidentali, come prendere a calci un cane. Il testo prende le mosse da una piccola rassegna della letteratura più importante tratta dagli studi sulla leadership e dalla psicologia sociale su come le nostre immagini prototipiche di leader influenzano le attribuzioni che di solito compiamo nei loro confronti. Successivamente il testo esamina il ruolo delle virtù, dei costumi e delle affermazioni disposizionali per mostrare la ragione per la quale un atto come il prendere a calci un cane possa gettar luce sulla caratura morale di un leader.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Leadership; Etica della leadership; Virtù; Attribuzione di costumi; Affermazioni disposizionali.



Introduction

FOLLOWERS WATCH THEIR LEADERS. THEY consciously or unconsciously notice how leaders act in formal, informal, public and private settings and they use this information to draw inferences about leaders' virtues, vices, habits, and future behavior. One reason they do this is because this personal knowledge helps compensate for the real or perceived power imbalance between leaders and followers.¹

There are times when people observe what a leader does in the blink of an eye that influence their opinion of a leader almost as much or even more than his or her entire *résumé*. This leads one to wonder: Is one instance or one small gesture a fair and reasonable way to make a moral assessment of a leader? We might ask this question about the behavior of anyone but it takes on a special significance in the case of leaders because of the ways they are scrutinized and perceived by followers.

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In this paper, I look at why a seemingly minor act of a leader can influence our perceptions of her moral character, even in the face of other positive information about the leader. For example, would you hire a successful, well-qualified person to be a CEO or vote for a politician who you discovered kicked a dog? What would you think of a leader who kicked a dog? Is dog kicking even relevant to leadership?

For a dog lover it would matter even if he only kicked a dog once; for others it would not matter if he kicked a dog once but it would if he did it all the time. There are also those who would consider dog kicking completely irrelevant to a leader's moral character and ability to lead. One simple reason for condemning the behavior is that most people think leaders should be role models but does being a role model require moral perfection in every aspect of life or does it only require that that a leader serve as a model in areas relevant to his or her role as a leader?²

This hypothetical may seem like a trivial thought experiment, yet the point of the question and this paper is to tease out some philosophical insights into an important practical question. What does a small gesture or off-handed behavior tell us about the moral character of a leader?

This question lies at the heart of judgments we make when hiring people for leadership roles and deciding which candidate to vote for in an election. It touches on the relationship between a leader's public and private morality, her everyday behavior, and behavior that is part of her job. I refer to these minor gestures that people sense are morally significant as "morality in the miniature". Morality in the miniature consists of the little things people do that we perceive as indicators of the virtues that they actually possess.³

This paper begins with a short review of the relevant literature from leadership studies and social psychology on how we make attributions about a person's character and how those attributions are related to our prototypes of what a leader should be like. I will then discuss the role of virtues and habits in ethics

as a means of showing why judgments about a leader's character that are based on incidents of morality in the miniature such as kicking a dog, while subject to error, can offer insights into a leader's moral character.

Leadership ethics in Leadership Studies

Most of the literature in leadership studies looks at leadership along two main axes. The first axis includes things like behaviors, traits and styles, and the second consists of the historical, organizational, and cultural context of the leader. Studies of leadership usually aim at understanding good leadership, which I have argued means leadership that is both effective and ethical.⁴

Hence, on the one hand, if one regards ethics and effectiveness as two very separate criteria, the question of dog kicking is irrelevant if the kicker possesses the traits, knowledge, and skills to be an effective leader. On the other hand if one sees ethics as intertwined with leader effectiveness, then dog kicking may be significant. Researchers have yet to discover a universal set of traits that leaders make leaders effective in all contexts,⁵ nonetheless, most leadership theories have normative aspects to them.⁶

For instance, some leaders have traits that are effective in a business context but not in a political one. Leadership scholars and practitioners have long enjoyed clustering traits and behaviors into ideal types of leadership, most of which make normative assumptions about leaders. A disproportionate amount of the leadership literature consists of research on transformational leadership,⁷ transforming leadership,⁸ servant leadership,⁹ authentic leadership,¹⁰ and a construct with a somewhat misleading name called "ethical leadership".¹¹

The attraction of enumerating the traits or behaviors of leaders under the umbrella of a theory is that you can measure them. Hence the most discussed theories are the ones that have questionnaires, such as transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership. All three of these theories have implicit or explicit norma-

tive assumptions. Transformational leadership assumes that the leader inspires followers.¹² In James MacGregor Burn's theory of transforming leadership leaders and followers engage each other a dialogue about values and through this process leaders and followers become morally better. Bernard M. Bass begs the question of ethics by asserting that only ethical leaders are *real* transformational leaders, whereas he calls the unethical leaders *pseudo-transformational*.¹³

From a philosophic perspective the "ethical leadership" construct developed by Michael E. Brown, Linda K. Treviño, and David A. Harrison tests a somewhat peculiar grab bag of things. Some of the questions are about managerial behaviors, such as the leader «listens to what employees have to say», while others are personal moral assessments such as «conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner», and others look like virtues such as «makes fair and balanced decisions».¹⁴

Respondents of survey studies such as this one have their own take on the ethical ideas in them but do not usually have the latitude to express their own implicit theory of ethics. Another limitation of these survey studies is they often filter out attributions that are uniquely part of how people construct their idea of a leader.

■ Agency and implicit theories of leadership

We interpret the behavior of people around us daily. In doing so we also make inferences about their intentions, motivations, traits, and values. People exercise agency when they intentionally do something. Albert Bandura says:

An intention is a representation of a future course of action to be performed. It is not simply an expectation or prediction of future actions but a proactive commitment to bring them about.¹⁵

We contrast agency with accidental acts such as tripping over a stone and knocking

someone over. In such cases there is no intent and from a moral point of view, we usually do not assign blame in the same way. The woman did not intend to knock the man over, so we would consider her blameless or perhaps negligent for not watching where she was going. Yet, between accidental behavior and intentional behavior is a third domain and this is what we sometimes call "absent minded behavior". The leader kicks the dog out of the way and carries on with his business, apparently without thinking about it. This is the domain of morality in the miniature what I want to explore in this paper. Acts that the agent hardly appears to think about that may have moral import.¹⁶

It includes cases where a leader does not intentionally do something bad but fact that he does it has significance to the followers, not because he had bad intentions but *because* he did it without thinking. Moral agency has an inhibitive form that consists of the power to refrain from acting inhumanely and a proactive form that we express in humane behavior.¹⁷ The leader who kicks a dog may raise concerns about his ability to control himself.

Leadership scholars and social psychologists have done extensive research on implicit theories of leadership and the role of attribution in leadership. Attributions are ways of inferring the reasons and causes of actions. According to social identity theory, people base their attributions of leaders on their personal prototype of what a leader ought to be like.¹⁸ Meindl et al. argue that the attributions concerning leaders are so strong that they call them "the romance of leadership" because people tend to assume that leaders have more power and control over things than they actually do.¹⁹

According to Meindl et al. the romance and mystery of leadership may be what sustains followers and moves them to work with leaders toward a common goal but it also creates prototypes of leaders that are unrealistic. If this is true, then all kinds of seemingly trivial behavior may have relevance concerning the behavior of leaders that they may not

have for others.

The romance of leadership research illustrates an ethically distinctive aspect of being a leader. Unlike people who are not in leadership roles, we hold leaders responsible for things that they did not know about, did not do, and are unable to control. This is not because people really believe that leaders have agency over everything that goes on. Yet we still give leaders credit for all of the good things that happen under their watch and blame them for the bad, regardless of whether they had anything to do with it. Moral concepts such as responsibility are embedded in many or perhaps most prototypes of leaders. Ideally leaders are the ones who give direction and take responsibility for what happens in a group, organization, or society.

To *take* responsibility means to accept the role of someone who gets praised, blamed, and has a duty to clean up problems. *Taking* responsibility is different from *being* responsible in the sense that an agent may not be personally responsible for doing something or even ordering that something be done. This does not mean that leaders always take responsibility, but this expectation is clear to anyone who has noticed how bad leaders look when they fail to do so. For example, when Americans tried to sign up for health insurance and the government computers crashed, President Obama told the public that he was responsible for the failure. It would have been ridiculous for the President to say, "It's not my fault I did not program the computers".

■ Attribution errors

As mentioned earlier, we also watch leaders to gain insights into how they will behave in the future. People look for invariances or regularities in human behavior because this helps give order to their world. As Fritz Heider points out, one problem with doing so is that we tend to «overestimate the unity of personality» and look at people in the context of the role that they play.²⁰ Another related problem is one of faulty inductive logic. Sometimes people make

the unwarranted generalizations about a person from only one or a few observations. The fact that a man once kicked a dog once does not logically warrant the conclusion that he will always kick dogs or always kicks dogs.

When we do not possess knowledge about why the man kicked the dog, we may also discount the behavior because we do not feel we have enough information to make a harsh judgment about the man's character and intent. Hence, we dismiss the act because maybe the man was distracted, under stress, or did not mean to do so. This is called the discounting principle in which the «role of a given cause in producing a given effect is discounted if other possible causes are present».²¹ While we sometimes make mistakes when we discount bad behavior, we also make mistakes when we fail to consider a person's background knowledge.

Terry Price argues that leaders make two types of cognitive moral mistakes.²² The first is about the content of morality, meaning that he cannot see why it is wrong to kick a dog. The second kind is about the scope of morality, meaning that he does not place dogs in the category of things that are morally considerable. Understanding that the leader in effect "does not know any better" may be helpful yet it still does not make some behaviors morally excusable.

This leads us to another type of attribution error. Sometimes people do not take into account the context of the behavior and the actor.²³ The leader may have kicked the dog because there were rabid dogs in the area. We also have to consider the cultural context of the agent. Sociologists Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu both use the term *habitus* to discuss how environment interacts with and shapes behavior. As Mauss notes, people's habits and the meaning of behavior «vary between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, and prestige».²⁴ Bourdieu says that individual behavior is a «structural variant of all other group or class habitus».²⁵ Maybe the leader is from a place where dogs are considered vermin and dog kicking is so normal that no one

even notices it.

While people err in failing to take into account the cultural context that affects a person's behavior, they may also make the mistake of assuming that other people react the way that they do or act on the same interests or values that they have.²⁶ This may influence both positive and negative attributions. Hence, the dog lover may think that everyone should have the same respect and concern for dogs that she does. For her, the act of dog kicking as extremely immoral. Whereas a cat lover who hates dogs may approve of the leader's behavior – if given the chance, she would have kicked the dog too.

Other factors may also influence attributions such as proximity to the event.²⁷ The person who sees the man kick the dog up close may react differently from the person who simply hears about it or watches it on the news. An empathetic witness to the event may feel distress because he hears the dog's cries and sees its discomfort. This may elicit a feeling of physical disgust, which has been shown to increase the severity of a person's moral judgment.²⁸ These are just a few factors related to how we misinterpret the behavior of others and make false attributions about their character. Because people tend to carry strong assumptions about what leaders should be like and how they should behave, they tend to be hyper-sensitive to what leaders do. Now we will examine whether making moral judgments about leaders incidents of morality in the miniature are warranted.

Virtue and *virtuosi*

The most obvious place to start looking at the moral significance of kicking a dog is in virtue ethics. Aristotle says that moral goodness is the result of habit or *hexis*. He does not regard *hexis* as mechanical activity in the way that a behaviorist like B.F. Skinner might think of it.²⁹ Consider the opening of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Excellence of character results from habi-

tuation [*ethos*] – which is in fact the source of the name that it acquired [*êthikê*], the word for character-trait [*êthos*] being a slight variation of that for habituation [*ethos*].³⁰

However, in Aristotle's and Plato's ethics, you cannot become virtuous through habit alone. In the *Republic*, Plato tells us that a person who becomes good «through habit and not by philosophy» is destined to make bad decisions.³¹ Virtue is not the result of conditioning nor does it include the repetition of a particular behavior – e.g., a courageous person is not always courageous in the same way. It takes knowledge and one might argue, imagination. Thornton C. Lockwood argues that:

Aristotle's idea of ethical character (*ethos*) or virtue (*aretê*) captures the notion of a *virtuoso* who is responsive in an excellent fashion to what reason perceives in particular and changing circumstances.³²

The idea of a virtuous person as a moral *virtuoso* has some provocative implications for our discussion of morality in the miniature. The definition of the word “*virtuoso*” consists of the key elements that mirror Aristotle's idea of virtue. First, it means a learned person who has a special technical skill. Second, is often related to someone with good taste and third, such a person is sometimes a dabbler in a variety of arts.³³ A *virtuoso* has technical skill and knowledge found in (*phronesis*). The attraction to fine things or taste reminds us of what Aristotle's says about being motivated by the love of “the fine”, which are activities that give us pleasure because they are good.³⁴

Aristotle's ethics assumes that virtues should be practiced regularly. A *virtuoso* violinist should be able to play any piece of music well. If she played a simple piece of music badly, we might wonder if she was really a *virtuoso*. If a virtuous person is a *virtuoso*, what do we say about her when she behaves badly in a minor incident?

Aristotle also says that there is a unity of virtues. You cannot practice and have some virtues without having others. Based on Aristotle's account in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, such a person should know "the right rule" for practicing a virtue and virtues in a variety of situations.³⁵ For example, courage is facing danger for the right reason. We cannot know what the right reason and hence practice courage without knowing about justice, fairness, and the good life in general.³⁶ Aristotle's virtue ethics show us why it is reasonable to question the moral character of the leader who kicks a dog. If virtues are supposed to be habits and intertwined with each other, then it makes sense. Here we see a tension between a unified concept of morality and the potential attribution error of overestimating the unity of personality that was mentioned earlier.

Habits

We tend to look assume regularities in human behavior. While this can be problematic, it is not always wrong to do so. Habits have always been a difficult part of ethics because they complicate the meaning of an action. Immanuel Kant thought habits undercut the idea of good will, which he saw as the foundation of morality. For Kant, the very idea of ethics rests on following moral laws, especially in cases where we choose respect for the law overcomes our inclinations. Friedrich Nietzsche thought that short-term habits were okay, but disliked "enduring habits" because they prevented humanity from improving itself through "self-overcoming".³⁷ The negative interpretations of habits are based on their connotation as mechanistic and repetitive behavior. The positive views on habit tend to follow Aristotle's lead and incorporate free will, reason and intentionality into them.

William James recognized the tension between determinism and voluntary behavior but regarded habit as central to the pragmatist framework. He said that habit serves as "happy harmonizer" of different elements of human experience.³⁸ In a similar light, John De-

wey argued that habits are a way for people to link past, present, and future events. He said, «The view that habits are formed by sheer repetition puts the cart before the horse».³⁹ Repetition is the result of a habit, not its cause. Habits are formed by knowledge, socialization, and reason, which we then streamline into behavior. Kicking dogs may be a bad habit, but since habits are not mindless, the agent is still accountable for what happened before he began to repeatedly exercise the behavior.

In some ways, David Hume's account of habit captures the concern people feel when they witness acts of morality in the miniature. Hume says that moral judgments are about custom or habit and they vary across time and culture. On Hume's view, it is reasonable to assume that if a person kicks a dog once, he will do it again or perhaps do other similarly bad things. Hume writes:

the supposition, *that the future resembles the past*, is not founded on arguments of any kind, but is deriv'd entirely from habit, by which we are determined to expect for the future the same train of objects, to which we have become accustom'd.⁴⁰

While people may read situations incorrectly when they make snap judgments about a leader based on some small act, Hume tells us they may do so because they have seen causal connections between things like dog kicking and other bad behaviors.

According to Hume it makes sense to be concerned about a leader who kicks a dog; however, in the same light Hume admits that this opinion can be changed by evidence to the contrary. As Hume famously said:

Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.⁴¹

When we witness any small unsavory gesture of a leader, it may elicit a feeling of discomfort in part, Hume argues, because it is associated with something else we have seen

or some other causal connection between such behaviors in the past. Hume notes that the passion or feeling we might have is not unreasonable unless we discover that it is “accompanied by a false judgment”.⁴² In that case it is the judgment not the feeling we have about the act that is unreasonable.

■ Integrity of morality

One bone of contention about virtue ethics is based on the attribution errors of assuming that virtues are unwavering character traits and assuming that behavior depends more on a leader's character than the context of it.⁴³ Critics argue that people cannot rely on virtues to resist behaving badly when others around them are. Even Machiavelli offers this “nice guys finish last” argument about leaders:

If a ruler who wants always to act honorably is surrounded by many unscrupulous men his downfall is inevitable.⁴⁴

Robert C. Solomon uses emotions to explain the relationship between virtue as a personal quality and a behavior that is influenced by context. He says emotions are part of virtues and since emotions are reactive to other people and situations, it is foolish to deny that virtues depend on the environment and yet that does not mean they are totally determined by it.⁴⁵

In contrast to Solomon, Gilbert Harman argues that moral philosophers sometimes commit the fundamental attribution error of assuming that certain behaviors are indicative of moral character traits. He calls this “misguided folk morality” and his argument privileges the empirical research of psychologists over the moral theories of philosophers.⁴⁶

Assuming that human beings are more consistent than they are is a psychological question. Experience and numerous experiments have demonstrated that character is not necessarily a stable part of human behavior. Yet, I do not think that these experiments imply that to avoid attribution errors people

should change the moral ideals inherent in their prototypes of leaders. One reason why the philosophers we have discussed are interested in habits is because the idea of consistency is fundamental to the idea of what it means to be ethical. Also, consistency is especially important in leadership for building trust giving people a sense of security. So, when we see a man leader kick a dog, it is not unreasonable to wonder if that behavior is consistent with or indicative of other behaviors, just as we wonder about the *virtuoso* who cannot play a simple piece of music.

People often talk about a leader's integrity, sometimes as if it is a psychological quality and sometimes as if it is a moral quality. The description of moral integrity has as many definitions as there are writers in the leadership literature. Leadership scholars often define integrity as a cluster of moral concepts that usually include honesty and sometime they use integrity to refer to all aspects of a leader's ethics. The descriptive meaning of the word “integrity” is wholeness and that wholeness is the umbrella over all aspects of morality or as Aristotle says, “the rule”. When a person has a virtue it is a *hexis* because we do not expect moral qualities to be selectively exercised or exercised in isolation from other virtues. As David Baum notes, integrity refers to a personal completeness that describes a person's unbroken or uncorrupted character.⁴⁷

While integrity is central to how we think of a person's moral character, it is also central to how we think about their immoral character. So our other intuition about the leader kicking a dog is that the incident may represent a tear in the fabric of the leader's morality. The alternative to this view of integrity is the assumption that people easily compartmentalize their moral behavior. On this view unsavory behavior in a leader's private life or outside of the leader's actual work irrelevant to his or her job as a leader. While this may be true in some cases, we also see cases where followers stop discounting this kind of bad behavior because they have enough evidence to see how a leader's bad private behavior or dog kicking

affects how they lead.

■ Dispositional properties

We have been discussing how we might make sense of the dog kicking incident from the perspective of leadership studies, psychology, and moral philosophy. Philosophy provides other insights into the problem based on how we formulate our ideas in language. In *The Concept of Mind*, Gilbert Ryle offers a way to think about attribution based on the statements we make about the “dispositional properties” of people and things. He says dispositional statements:

Apply to, or are satisfied by, the actions, reactions and state of the object; they are inference-tickets, which license us to predict, retrodict, explain and modify these actions reactions and states.⁴⁸

Following the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ryle believes that language has an elasticity of significance.⁴⁹ When we make the dispositional statement that someone is a dog kicker, we are not saying that the person is currently kicking a dog, has repeatedly kicked dogs in the past, or will kick dogs in the future; nor are we reporting on observed or unobserved behavior. Dispositional statements do not narrate incidents but «if they are true, they are satisfied by narrated incidents».⁵⁰

So an observer may see a leader kick a dog and make the statement “the leader is a dog kicker”. This statement is not true or false but rather a provisional statement about the leader. The meaning of the statement depends on whether it fits with other narratives of events in which we are able to see a family resemblance to dog kicking. For instance, dog kicking might at some point become meaningful in the narrative of other behaviors such as humiliating low-level subordinates. Ryle’s analysis of statements about dispositional properties gives us a way of understanding how a person might think about the act of dog

kicking. She may infer from the leader kicking the dog a tentative set of dispositional properties ranging from cruelty, to disdain for subordinates, to impatience, etc., and then watch to see if these qualities manifest themselves in his behavior as a leader. This is analogous to Hume’s point about judgments. We may make a wrong judgment based on the facts, but our thinking about how we feel at the time is sound. It is neither illogical nor false to say that someone who kicks a dog once is a dog kicker. Dispositional statements have the potential to refer to acts of morality in the miniature that may or may not at some point be either relevant to or even constitutive of a person’s morality as a whole.

■ No more dogs! A real case

At this point the reader is probably weary of hearing about a leader kicking a dog, so let us look at a real example that illustrates the way people use an observation of morality in the miniature to gain insight into a person’s morality. Several years ago, the manager of a large Wall Street bank told me a story of a time that they tried to hire a “superstar” broker away from a competitor to lead a new division of his company. The management team had met with the broker many times over a period of months to convince him to join their firm. After a number of interviews, long lunches, and conversations with the broker, he agreed to join the bank. On the way out of the office after the final interview, the broker turned to the receptionist and said “honey, get me a taxi and move it, I’m in a hurry”.⁵¹

The receptionist blushed and looked surprised at being addressed in such a rude fashion. The interviewers witnessed his behavior and were quite surprised by it. The man had not behaved that way before and they assumed that he should know better. After the incident, they started to feel uneasy about him. Despite his stellar track record as a broker, his academic credentials, and the fact that they thought he would make a lot of money

for the bank, something about him did not seem right. The question on their minds was a question about his virtue: "Is he in the habit of behaving this way?"

They not only wondered about how he treated women and subordinates but they started to wonder how he did other things. Was this a tear in the fabric of his character? The incident compelled them to take a closer look into the broker's background. After further investigation they discovered that there were indeed problems that were unrelated to how he treated women or subordinates, but about how the broker did business. The managers decided not to hire him because they worried that he had "risky habits".

This case illustrates how morality in the miniature can offer potential clues into a person's character. While being rude to a woman is more serious than being rude to a dog, the behavior indicated an inconsistency from their previous observations about his behavior and fit in their organization. One might object that perhaps lapses like the broker's are a one-off and it would be unfair to judge him by it.

Yet, the case illustrates is that by viewing actions as morality in the miniature they did not condemn the man based on one act or how they felt about his behavior. Rather, the broker's behavior led them to question his character. Some organizations take the idea characterized by morality in the miniature seriously. They look for insights into job candidates' character by taking them out to lunch and observing how they treat the server. The assumption being that if they are rude to the waitress then they might be rude to subordinates.

■ Conclusion: Why the little things matter

The case about the broker is exemplified by the saying, "where there is smoke, there is fire". I am not willing to make such a strong claim about the leader who kicks a dog. Instead what I have attempted to show in this paper is that where there is smoke, it makes sense to keep an eye out for fire. Leadership scholars have shown us that people have pro-

totypes of leaders that influence their attributions of them. Psychologists have demonstrated how people make attribution errors about the character of leaders, such as ignoring the context of the behavior or overestimating the unity of personality.

We also know that prototypes of leaders usually entail moral theories or moral norms. As we have seen, the anchor of many moral theories is that a person's moral character requires some sort of consistency and coherency such as in Aristotle's idea of a unified and intertwined set of virtues. The fact that people have free will and behave inconsistently does not mean that we should remove the expectation of moral coherence from our assumptions about morality or from the moral ideals inherent in our prototypes of leaders.⁵²

By viewing a virtue as something that a person practices all the time and is related to other virtues, we set a high standard, especially for leaders who have the power to do great good or harm to others. So while such assumptions about virtue may be wrong from a psychological point of view, they are not necessarily wrong from a philosophical one.

By assuming that the character of a leader is on display in a variety of behaviors from the small gesture to intentional act, we are able to hold leaders to a high standard of morality. We should pay attention to acts of morality in the miniature because such acts serve as red flags that alert us to potential problems. Like the rest of us, leaders are morally imperfect.

Yet unlike the rest of us, the consequences of their moral imperfections can potentially do immediate or long-term harm to many people. This is why leaders should be watched (especially by citizens in a democracy) and why the off-handed things leaders do may matter. I am not arguing that we should obsess over everything that a leader does, but rather that it is reasonable to pay attention to the acts that seem inconsistent with what you know about the leader, or behavior that could be indicative of other problems.

Lastly, we live in an era when we know more about our leaders than ever before. The 24-

hour news organizations watch and dissect everything that high-level leaders say and do. Some find it difficult to sort through what is relevant and what is not relevant to a leader's moral character, especially in politics. When faced with too much information it becomes all too easy to say that the little things do not matter as long as the economy is good or the company makes a profit. Nonetheless, history has shown us that this is always true. While kicking a dog may not bear any relationship to a person's moral character, in the case of leaders the stakes are sometimes too high to simply ignore it.

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Notes

¹ See M. HOGG, D. VAN KNIPPENBERG, *Social Identity and Leadership Processes in Groups*, in: M.P. ZANNA (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. XXXV, 2003, pp. 1-52.

² See T.L. PRICE, *Why Leaders Need not be Moral Saints*, in: J.B. CIULLA (ed.), *Ethics, The Heart of Leadership*, ABC Clio LLC, Santa Barbara (CA) 2014, III ed., pp. 129-150.

³ See J.B. CIULLA, *Leadership and Morality in the Miniature*, in: A.J.G. SISON (ed.), *The Handbook on Virtue Ethics in Business and Management*, Springer, New York (forthcoming).

⁴ See J.B. CIULLA, *Ethics and Effectiveness: The Nature of Good Leadership*, in: D.V. DAY, J. ANTONAKIS (eds.), *The Nature of Leadership*, Sage, Thousand Oaks (CA) 2011, II ed., pp. 508-540.

⁵ See B.M. BASS, *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Applications*, Free Press, New York 1990, III ed.

⁶ See J.B. CIULLA, *Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory*, in: «The Business Ethics Quarterly», vol. V, n.1, 1995, pp. 5-24.

⁷ See B.M. BASS, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, Free Press, New York 1985.

⁸ See J.M. BURNS, *Leadership*, Harper & Row, New York 1978.

⁹ See R.K. GREENLEAF, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Paulist Press, Ramsey (NJ) 1977.

¹⁰ See F. LUTHANS, B. J. AVOLIO, *Authentic Leadership Development*, in: K.S. CAMERON, J.E. DUTTON, R.E. QUINN (eds.), *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco 2003, pp. 241-261.

¹¹ See M.E. BROWN, L.K. TREVIÑO, D.A. HARRISON, *Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing*, in: «Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes», vol. XCVII, n. 2, 2005, pp. 117-134.

¹² B.M. BASS, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, cit.

¹³ B.M. BASS, P. STEIDLMEIER, *Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership Behavior*, in: «Leadership Quarterly», vol. X, n. 2, 1999, pp. 181-217. And see Terry Price's critique of it, T.L. PRICE, *The Ethics of Authentic Transformational Leadership*, in: «Leadership Quarterly», vol. XIV, n. 1, 2003, pp. 67-81.

¹⁴ M.E. BROWN, L.K. TREVIÑO, D.A. HARRISON, *Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing*, cit., p. 138.

¹⁵ A. BANDURA, *Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective*, in: «Annual Review Psychology», vol. LII, 2001, pp. 1-26, here p. 6.

¹⁶ I limit my discussion here to acts that we perceive to be bad or immorality in the miniature and save my discussion of such good acts for another paper.

¹⁷ See A. BANDURA, *Moral Disengagement in the Perpetuation of Inhumanities*, in: «Personality and Social Psychology Review», vol. III, n. 3, 1999, pp. 193-209.

¹⁸ See M. HOGG, D. VAN KNIPPENBERG, *Social Identity and Leadership Processes in Groups*, cit.

¹⁹ See J.R. MEINDL, S.B. EHRLICH, J.M. DUKERICH, *The Romance of Leadership*, in: «Administrative Science Quarterly», vol. XXX, n. 1, 1985, pp. 78-102.

²⁰ See F. HEIDER, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, John Wiley & Sons, New York 1958, p. 55.

²¹ See H.H. KELLEY, *Attribution in Social Interaction*, in: E.E. JONES, D.E. KANOUSE, H.H. KELLY, S. VALINS, B. WEINER, *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behavior*, General Learning Press, Morristown (NJ), 1972, pp. 1-26, here p. 8.

²² See T.L. PRICE, *Explaining Ethical Failures of Leadership*, in: J.B. CIULLA (ed.), *Ethics, The Heart of Leadership*, Praeger, Westport (CT) 2004, II edition, pp. 129-146.

²³ See H.H. KELLEY, *Attribution in Social Interaction*, cit., p. 18.

²⁴ See M. MAUSS, *Techniques of the Body* (1935), in: M. MAUSS, *Sociology and Psychology. Essays*, translated by B. BREWSTER, Routledge and Kegan, London 1979, pp. 95-123, here p. 101.

²⁵ P. BOURDIEU, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), translated by R. NICE, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p. 86.

²⁶ See H.H. KELLEY, *Attribution in Social Interaction*, cit.

²⁷ See F. HEIDER, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, cit.

²⁸ See S. SCHNALL, J. HAIDT, G.L. CLORE, A.H. JORDAN, *Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment*, in: «Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin», vol. XXXIV, n. 8, 2008, pp. 1096-1109.

²⁹ See B.F. SKINNER, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1971.

³⁰ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by D. ROSS, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980, II.1 1103a 14-18. See T.C. LOCKWOOD, *Habituation, Habit, and Character in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, in: T. SPARROW, A. HUTCHINSON (eds.) *A History of Habit. From Aristotle to Bourdieu*, Lexington Books, Lanham (MD) 2013, pp. 19-36, here p. 19.

³¹ PLATO, *Republic*, X.619c-d, in: PLATO, *Collected Dialogues*, edited by E. HAMILTON, H. CAIRNS, translated by P. SHOREY, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 1971.

³² See T.C. LOCKWOOD, *Habituation, Habit, and Character in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, cit., p. 20.

³³ See the entry *virtuoso*, in: OED Online, June 2014, Oxford University Press – URL: <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/223848?redirectedFrom=virtuoso&>> (accessed June 20, 2014).

³⁴ John Stuart Mill echoes this point in *What Utilitarianism is* when he notes the importance of cultivating the «capacity for nobler feelings» and a preference for the happiness of a Socrates over the happiness of a swine. See J.S. MILL, *Utilitarianism* (1861), in: J.S. MILL, J. BENTHAM, *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, edited by A. RYAN, Penguin in Classics, New York 1987, p. 281.

³⁵ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, cit., 1144b27-29.

³⁶ See R. SORABJI, *Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue*, in: «Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society», vol. LXXIV, 1973-1974, pp. 107-129,

here pp. 114-115.

³⁷ F. NIETZSCHE, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), in: W. KAUFMAN (ed.), *The Portable Nietzsche*, Vintage, New York 1968, pp. 103-440.

³⁸ W. JAMES, *What Pragmatism Means* (1907), in: W. JAMES, *Pragmatism and The Meaning of Truth*, edited by A.J. AYER, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1978, pp. 27-44, here p. 39.

³⁹ J. DEWEY, *Logic. The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), in: JOHN DEWEY, *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, vol. XII, edited by J.A. BOYDSTON, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale (IL) 1980, here p. 39.

⁴⁰ D. HUME, *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740), edited by L.A. SELBY-BIGGE, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1968, p. 134.

⁴¹ *Ivi*, p. 415.

⁴² *Ivi*, p. 416.

⁴³ See R.L. WALKER, P.J. IVANHOE, *Working Virtue*, Oxford University Press 2007.

⁴⁴ N. MACHIAVELLI, *The Prince* (1513), edited by Q. SKINNER, R. PRICE, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, p. 54.

⁴⁵ R.C. SOLOMON, *Victims of Circumstances? A Defense of Virtue Ethics in Business*, in: «Business Ethics Quarterly», vol. XIII, n. 1, 2003, pp. 43-62.

⁴⁶ See G. HARMAN, *Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error*, in: «Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society», vol. XCIX, 1999, pp. 315-331.

⁴⁷ See D.C. BAUMAN, *Leadership and the Three Faces of Integrity*, in: «The Leadership Quarterly», vol. XXIV, n. 3, 2013, pp. 414-426.

⁴⁸ G. RYLE, *Concept of Mind* (1949), University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2000, p. 124.

⁴⁹ See L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophical Investigations*, edited by G.E.M. ANSCOMBE, R. RHEES, Blackwell, Oxford 1953.

⁵⁰ *Ivi*, p. 125.

⁵¹ J.B. CIULLA, *Sleazy or Stupid?*, in: J.B. CIULLA (ed.), *The Ethics of Leadership*, Thompson Wadsworth, Belmont (CA) 2003, p. 63.

⁵² Ethical realists and other philosophers have rejected the naturalistic fallacy that one «should not derive an ought from an is». I think that this is a mistake, because sometimes there are cases when we want people, especially leaders to aspire to ideal moral standards not standards based on how people act. See, G.E. MOORE, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1922.