

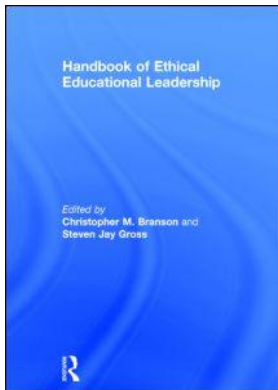
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## **Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership**

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### **Maintaining Moral Integrity**

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## MAINTAINING MORAL INTEGRITY

CHRISTOPHER M. BRANSON

Ever since Foster (1986, p. 284) so insightfully declared: “Leadership must be ethical [because] it carries a responsibility not just to be personally moral, but to be a cause of ‘civic moral education’ which leads to both self-knowledge and community awareness” tertiary institutions throughout the world have striven to inculcate ethical decision-making units into their educational leadership courses. Yet our current educational leadership literature is still brimming with calls to recognize the place of ethics in the professional development of leaders (Begley, 2006; Duignan, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Greenfield, 2004; Hollimon, Basinger, Smith, & Leonard, 2009; Richmon, 2003; Starratt, 2003; Tuana, 2007). Why, after more than 20 years of knowing that ethical decision making is integral to appropriate leadership behavior, does it still remain a major concern within our educational leadership literature? Surely, this is a clear indication that we have yet to find the most effective way to help prepare our current and future educational leaders for being able to confidently and effectively deal with their complex, problematic, and unavoidable ethical decision-making responsibilities.

To this end, this chapter proposes that our failure to date to adequately prepare our current and future educational leaders for being able to effectively deal with ethical decision-making responsibilities is caused by an inherent oversight in our existing ethical decision-making frameworks. Essentially, these frameworks do not cater to the pivotal role played by personal moral integrity in every ethical decision. Moral integrity is about instinctively and consistently doing what is right for the good of others in the absence of incentives or sanctions. People often try to explain moral behavior by referring to a personal benefit, such as the good feeling we experience when we act ethically. But to characterize moral behavior as conferring some form of personal benefit is a perverse way of seeing it. A more informed understanding of what constitutes moral acts are that they are carried out for their own sake and not because the actor expects any benefit, psychic or otherwise. In this way, possessing

moral integrity is about achieving a personal victory where the interests of others, rather than self-interests, are the spontaneous motivation.

Hence, this chapter seeks to redress this oversight, first, by describing the role of moral integrity within every ethical decision, and second, by explaining the nature of personal moral integrity. While self-reflection and self-inquiry can play a large part in ensuring that one's leadership actions reflect moral integrity, more needs to be known about what to reflect on, or what to inquire into, about one's self before such processes can be beneficial. Thus, this chapter will conclude by describing how our educational leadership development programs associated with ethical decision making can be easily adjusted so as to cater to the concurrent development of the leader's crucially important component of personal character that is moral integrity.

### **THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF MORAL INTEGRITY**

As described more fully by Branson (2009), our general understanding of moral integrity has been so altered during the past 400 years that we are now very unsure, if not dismissive, of its nature, its importance, and its relevance in today's society (Hamilton, 2008; Lennick and Kiel, 2005; Taylor, 2003). This being the case, how can moral integrity be an essential part of leadership? How can we expect our leaders to reflect upon the ethicalness of their actions if they do not understand what is really meant or expected of them?

Our confusion or ambivalence about the concept of morality is very much an outcome of its history. Ferrè (2001) reminds us that the "arbitrariness" of ethics has been a recurrent theme since the breakdown of the medieval society in late pre-modern and early modern thinking. Here, arbitrariness does not mean erratic but rather it means that ethics does not always obey rational or objective rules. From when the world first entered what has become known as the Enlightenment or modern era, ethics and moral decision making were recognized as being a distinctively different form of judgment from that of reasoned, rational, or objective judgment.

The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) held the view that the subjective realm of impressions, sentiments, feelings, and moral thoughts were far superior to that of reason. "Reason," wrote Hume (1955, p. 415), "is and ought to be only the slave of the passions and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." Moreover, Hume emphasizes his view of the clear distinction between ethical and reasoned thinking when he draws his often cited conclusion that "ought" can never be derived from "is." According to Hume, matters of fact and reason are questions of "is" and "is not," containing no trace of an "ought." In other words, what we ought to do so as to act with moral integrity can never, in Hume's opinion, be directed by rules based on supposed facts. No matter how closely we commit to facts or rules, there will only ever be a need for more facts and rules to guide our actions, and not values or beliefs, which are "entirely different." From Hume's perspective, rules and regulations can never develop a sincere commitment to moral integrity in a person. For Hume, it is the person's passions, feelings, desires, and subjectivity that form the foundation for moral decision making.

Although accepting Hume's clear distinction between ethical and reasoned thinking, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant passionately opposed the view presented by Hume. For Kant, according to Cottingham (2006), rationality was the only source of true knowledge. Kant's (1949) assertion was that any actions influenced by subjectivity did not merit moral esteem because only when someone acts "without inclination, from the sake of duty alone, does his action for the first time have genuine moral worth" (p. 11). Kantian philosophy perceives a moral person as someone who acts according to a universally accepted principle or rule.

Moreover, Kant provided the cornerstone for morality in the modern era by locating the source of moral value in the autonomous free will of the individual person. From a Kantian perspective, it is assumed that people will each exercise their free will in a rational way so as to maximize their respect for others and, thereby, enhance their own sense of self-respect. However, when describing the nature of free will, Kant (1956) added: "For the law of pure will, which is free, puts the will in a sphere entirely different from the empirical, and the necessity which it expresses, not being a natural necessity can consist only in the formal conditions of the possibility of a law in general" (p. 34). This means that, in Kant's view, the person's free will, the core component in moral decision making, is not considered to be empirical, or knowable through reason. Thus, the concept of free will cannot be used to judge the worthiness of the moral decision. Rather, the moral decision can be judged only from the degree of alignment of the resultant action with a universally accepted moral rule. In other words, questions about how people were to make appropriate moral decisions were irrelevant, and the only concern in morality was being able to rationally explain how your behavior met some predetermined social expectation.

However, a third important perspective on the nature of moral integrity is that of utilitarianism as proffered by John Stuart Mill in 1861. Mill argues that the level of moral integrity of an act depends not on any intrinsic worth, as had been promoted by Kant, but on the amount of goodness or happiness it produces or tends to produce (Ferrè, 2001; Hamilton, 2008). The standard of happiness inherent within a moral act is referred to as its utility. Moreover, an action's relative level of utility is directly proportional to the amount of happiness that it generated. This has been referred to as the *greatest happiness principle*: Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, but wrong if they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. Mill also took pains to point out that a utilitarian does not try to make each individual decision by direct reference to this greatest happiness principle but instead will stick to rules or guidelines based on past experience of the kind of conduct that tended to maximize his or her happiness. This understanding later became known as indirect, or rule, utilitarianism and enabled Mill's philosophy to have a strong influence over what was perceived as appropriate moral behavior for market economics and accepted organizational behavior. In sum, utilitarianism asserts that an action is morally right or wrong according to its consequences, rather than because of any intrinsic features such as being based on honesty, truthfulness, or compassion.

In essence, these two moral philosophies that have dominated our moral understandings—Kantianism and utilitarianism—share the common trait of being consequentialist philosophies. That is to say, each of these philosophies, in its own way,

proposes that the consequence of an action determines its relative adherence to moral acceptability. It is the perceived consequences of the action that motivates the person to act with moral integrity. For Kantianism, if the consequence, or the outcome, of an action can be seen to abide by a universally accepted principle or rule, then it is deemed to be a suitably moral action. Similarly, utilitarianism also asserts that an action is morally acceptable according to its consequences, but in this instance its degree of moral acceptability is not determined by how closely it abides by a universal rule but by how able it is in bringing about goodness and happiness for the most people.

Ultimately, though, as Ferré (2001) so rightly points out, a moral philosophy is only as good as the level of motivation it provides to the person to act morally. Batson (2008) discusses some recent moral motivation research that sheds interesting light on this issue. Data from this research support the view that, by and large, people are not really motivated to act morally. Rather, most people are moral hypocrites because “they try to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of being moral” (p. 51). Batson (p. 52) makes clear the link between this apparent lack of moral integrity and moral motivation:

In moral motivation, generality and abstractness can be an Achilles’ heel. The more general and abstract a principle is, the more vulnerable it is to rationalization. Most people are adept at moral rationalization, at justifying to themselves—if not to others—why a situation that benefits them or those they care about does not violate their principles. . . . The abstractness of most moral principles makes such rationalization especially easy. Principles may be used more reactively than proactively, more to justify or condemn action than to motivate it.

This observation of moral hypocrisy is similar to that formulated by economist Robert Frank in 1988, which included insights into reciprocal altruism previously presented by Trivers in 1971. Frank posited that people are motivated to present themselves as passionately committed to moral principles in order to gain the self-benefits that the ensuing trust provides. However, the key to success in this endeavor is in having the ability to appear as being committed to a genuine moral purpose. To this end, Batson (2008) adds that if people can convince themselves that serving their own interests does not violate their moral principles, then they can honestly appear moral and so avoid detection without paying the price of actually upholding the principles. In this form of moral masquerade, self-deception may be an asset, making it easier to look genuine while actually deceiving others.

But if moral masquerading is a natural and prevalent human trait, then the development of moral integrity and, thereby, ethical leadership is an unrealistic expectation. If moral integrity cannot be realistically nurtured and developed, then the achievement of ethical leadership is merely a tantalizing dream. Conversely, if we hope to be able to enhance moral integrity and develop ethical leadership, then we need to know how to reduce the prevalence of moral masquerading.

Hence, the difficulty is in finding an alternative source for moral motivation. There is no point in aligning ethical leadership with moral integrity if we cannot

point to what it means to be moral and why people should aspire to it. Today, it is still held to be true that people need some form of strong persuasion or incentive in order to personally commit to adopting a particular moral point of view. Generally, a commitment to moral integrity won't happen automatically. It is true that under particularly dangerous, life-threatening circumstances certain individuals will act with extraordinary selflessness for the benefit of another. While this clearly shows that humans are not adverse toward embracing moral behavior, it does not prove that every person is committed to acting with moral integrity. Our task is to determine how it is possible to bring out this commitment to moral integrity in not just the exceptional person, the hero, but in each of our leaders. If our natural processes of reasoning and rationality tend to automatically undermine our moral integrity, how can it remain as a viable and credible part of ethical leadership?

## UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF MORAL INTEGRITY

Arguably, these difficulties associated with moral integrity theorizing have arisen from seeing it as a primary rather than as a secondary phenomenon. We have concentrated on the phenomenon of moral integrity as a stand-alone entity and not as one that is constituted from other more primary or fundamental phenomena. This section seeks to extend our theoretical understanding of the nature of personal moral integrity by exploring how it is constituted. Once we are more aware of how moral integrity is constituted, then it becomes possible to describe a means for developing it. Again, a more comprehensive explanation is provided in my 2009 text, *Leadership for an Age of Wisdom*.

In further considering the concept of moral masquerades, it is interesting to note the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's famous claim in his 1886 moral treatise in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that "there are no facts, only interpretations" (see Solomon, 1999, p. 196). Nietzsche was an early critic of modernity's overreliance on reason and rationality and pressed for the acknowledgment of the integral role of perspective in human affairs. Here, Nietzsche was not suggesting that all moral decisions are merely individualized viewpoints. Rather, he is arguing that the decision-making process, by necessity, involves the interpretation of reality as formed by the person making the decision.

This does not mean that Nietzsche advocated complete autonomy and therefore adhocism in the moral decision-making process. On the contrary, he held a dual understanding of the concept of perspective. First, he acknowledged that a moral decision is made from the perspective of the person making the decision. However, secondly, he also acknowledged that the person making the decision is also aware that the outcome from the decision will be morally judged from the perspective of those observing the outcome. Each of these perspectives is subject to individual interpretation by the person making the decision, and reasoning helps the person to balance his or her own desires with the perceived moral expectations of others. Achieving this balance between his or her own desires and the perceived expectations of others does not mean that the person's moral commitment was directly aligned with the moral expectations of those observing the behavior; it just means

that they appeared so. In this way, Nietzsche pointed to the unreliability of reasoning within moral integrity and pressed for the need to use whatever means possible to better understand the way humans make interpretations so as to reduce the prevalence of moral masquerades and, thereby, enhance moral integrity.

I argue that this call by Nietzsche for each of us to better understand the way we make interpretations begins with exploring the nature of our free will. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, people want others to act morally even though their own moral integrity might be questionable. This clearly indicates that acting morally is a choice. People want others to choose to act morally while they, themselves, might choose not to act as morally. Freedom of choice is integral to moral integrity. So, a way to deepen our understanding of moral integrity is to examine our freedom to choose what is truly best when making an ethical decision. Von Hayek (1960) refers to this as the person's inner freedom or metaphysical liberty, which he described as

the extent to which a person is guided in his actions by his own considered will, by his reasoning or lasting conviction, rather than by momentary impulse or circumstance. But the opposite of inner freedom is not coercion by others but the influence of temporary emotions, or moral or intellectual weakness. If a person does not succeed in doing what, after sober reflection, he decides to do, if his intentions or strength desert him at the decisive moment and he fails to do what he somehow wishes to do, we may say that he is 'unfree', the slave of his passions.

(p. 15)

However, it must be acknowledged that von Hayek was not the first to raise the possibility of the existence of inner freedom in people. Indeed, Kant had previously suggested that "free will" could play a pivotal part in moral behavior. Unfortunately, he never really expanded upon his views of the nature of free will. Consequently, as later philosophers extended and refined his philosophies, the existence of free will was challenged. For example, in 1819 the French mathematician and philosopher Pierre Simon de Laplace published an essay arguing that all events are connected with previous ones by the tie of universal causation. His argument gained much support because of the apparent success of Newtonian physics in not only being able to find some of these predetermined natural universal causations but also in being able to describe them in mathematical equations. Laplace concluded that human actions, too, were part of this same natural deterministic system. He insisted that it was an absurd belief that people had free will. Rather, he proposed that when people believe they are able to apply their free will, this is due to their ignorance of the hidden universal causes, which are in fact moving them to select one rather than the other outcome.

This view of free will being absent from human nature became known as determinism. The rise in support for determinism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a key factor in the undermining of beliefs about the importance of moral behavior in society. It seems most fitting that to be moral, a person must choose to act in the best interests of others, and choosing to act implies a degree of

freedom or the application of free will. Conversely, if people have no free will, then their behavior is not chosen but determined by some other cause beyond their selves. If their behavior is determined for them, then they cannot be held responsible or accountable for it, which means that moral behavior is an illusion.

Thus, attempting to understand the concept of inner freedom, or free will, has been a lingering philosophical conundrum. For example, in 1986 Thomas Nagel, in his publication *The View From Nowhere*, finds himself in two minds on the issue of free will and writes: “I change my mind about the problem of free will every time I think about it” (p. 110). On the one hand, Nagel can find no way to give a coherent explanation for the nature of freedom but, on the other hand, he cannot help presupposing freedom in practice. Similarly, in 1984 John Searle wrote that he acknowledges people’s conception of themselves as free agents such that it is “impossible for us to abandon the belief in the freedom of the will” but asserts that “science allows no place for the freedom of the will” (p. 92). Thus, on the issue of free will, our current dominant philosophies seem incapable of providing a credible explanation for its existence—something I address in the text *Leadership for an Age of Wisdom* (Branson, 2009). So, despite our everyday experiences that promote the conviction that we possess free will, its existence remains questionable and, thus, confusing because it cannot be explained.

While I truly believe that there is a great deal of similarity between von Hayek’s concept of inner freedom and Kant’s concept of free will, I prefer to use the term *inner freedom*. To me, free will sounds too definitive, too concrete, and too inflexible. It conjures up an image of having the freedom to decide right from wrong, true from false, good from bad, with some determined sense of certainty and confidence. Self-willed people act in a headstrong way; they can be perversely obstinate or intractable. Hence, I prefer *inner freedom* because it is able to remain faithful to my conviction that freedom is a variable. The particular level of freedom a person has lies somewhere along a continuum and this means it can be increased or decreased.

Hamilton (2008) describes the ideal of inner freedom as “the freedom to act according to one’s own considered consciousness, by the full consideration of one’s objective and subjective reasoning” (p. 25). Inner freedom is one’s ability to use consciousness and a sense of what is right to stave off influences that would prevent one from behaving or living in keeping with one’s considered judgment. It is an integral part of our everyday thinking and decision making. Our inner freedom does not depend on external authority; instead, it ultimately depends on how we defend ourselves. It is the freedom we gain by repelling interference, manipulation, temptation, and social pressure. It is the freedom that, though often hard won, is nevertheless there to be won. Furthermore, in the absence of inner freedom we might act in a manner contrary to our own interests. Despite the benefits that inner freedom provides, few among us would doubt that we can, and often do, act in a manner contrary to our own interests.

The obvious question then becomes—how is our inner freedom related to our moral integrity? The first thing to see is that our moral integrity is directly influenced by how we see ourselves as individuals and as active members of society. Moreover, this “seeing” is at the second level of our consciousness. Seeing ourselves with



respect to our physical characteristics and actions and how we relate to others are examples of the first level of our consciousness. At the second level of consciousness we are making critical observations, interpretations, and judgments about ourselves in relation to what we have noticed at the first level of consciousness. Our second level of consciousness utilizes subjective and objective reasoning in order to inform ourselves about ourselves so as to create a self-image. It is our capacity to create self-images that distinguishes us from other, nonhuman living things. Furthermore, it is this possibility of understanding ourselves as both an image and as an object of our own consciousness that engenders our moral sensibilities. The degree to which we are willing to act morally depends on the extent to which we live according to our self-image and our understanding that we have an existence beyond merely our appearance. In other words, when we adopt a moral attitude to other people, we relate to them through our second level of consciousness rather than our first level. However, we are most likely unaware of our moral decision making because it is occurring within our second level of consciousness, which happens automatically and often beyond our awareness unless we make a special effort to attend to it. Nevertheless, it still determines our moral behavior.

If our moral attitude arises out of our second level of consciousness, then this means that we are attending to not just objective features but also subjective features as well. If we are making critical observations, interpretations, and judgments about ourselves, then we are activating our subjectivity. Subjectivity involves potentialities, possibilities, relativities, comparisons, and the like. But if we are subjectively thinking about ourselves, from where do we find another to compare with? It can only be from what we see in others. We can see ourselves in others. We can see that in our opinion, we are better than others or worse than others. Or, we can want to be more like the good we see in another. Thus, if we can see ourselves in others, this means we assume we share a common unitary nature. Through a form of intuition, we are able to understand that the inner nature of each of us is identical. We automatically accept that human nature is universal—the universal self. So, in opposition to our everyday consciousness, in which we identify with our own bodies and egos, convinced that we are real and distinct, we are also capable of ontological identification with the being of all or the universal self.

When we identify with the universal self, the illusion of our independent existence falls away and the personal self merges with the universal self, which is shared by all. We recognize in another our own inner nature. Abolition of the distinction between subject and object and the participation of self in others give rise to what can be called “metaphysical empathy” (Hamilton, 2008, p. 146), and it is this that forms the grounds of morality and the basis for our moral integrity.

Metaphysical empathy is the awareness of participation in the being of others that arises from identification of the self with the universal self. If the universal self is the subtle essence of each of us, the moral self is the most personal expression of that universal self as experienced in the everyday, physical world. Metaphysical empathy is the innermost voice within our second level of consciousness, where all personal interests, social conventions, duties, and obligations are left behind. Furthermore, responding to the demands of this innermost voice provides the reason for taking

the moral path. The moral self is the arbiter, the inner judge, who speaks to us with an immediacy and authority no external legislation or contract can possess. Our moral integrity is the tangible outer sign of the degree to which we have embraced our moral self.

The basis of morality cannot be found embedded in a categorical imperative, enshrined in principles of justice worked out behind a veil of religious dogma, or inscribed in a social contract that is beyond our comprehension. Nor can it be found in the library of rules that have evolved as a means of creating a rational social order. The basis of morality lies in identification of the self with the universal self, and the moral self that emanates from there. The grounds for morality lie in being able to intuitively identify one's self with a universal self. It is this intuition that offers the possibility of moral integrity. Our moral integrity finds expression in our moral self, the locus of ethical impulses that prefigures all social conditions and rational deliberations.

The moral self connects our everyday life experiences with our very essence through our consciousness. Our moral self is at the heart of our existence, it is uniquely our own, yet it links us to everybody. Using our inner freedom, then, involves allowing our self to be guided by our moral self. Thus freedom is always first in our being rather than in our doing. Our inner freedom is acting according to our own considered will only if our will is understood as our inner guide that is provided by our moral self. In this way, virtue and freedom form an inseparable pair.

In more recent times, being able to apply our free will has meant being able to do whatever one wants, following one's own wishes unconstrained by rules or external authority. Yet this cannot be true freedom, inner freedom. Even if we are free to do as we will, we are not free to choose what it is that we will. If we have to exercise free will, we must be responding to no inducements, preferences, pressures, or predispositions. Our actions must be independent of influences. We are autonomous, and thus free, only when we act entirely volitionally, according to our own will. We are free only when we act according to goals and principles that we have given ourselves. In other words, we must initiate our own actions, free of attachments, yearnings, social pressures, and impulses and without regard to the influence of peers, parents, churches, or fashions. At the deepest level, our very subjectivity arises in relation to other things, through the resistance to or effects from outside influences, and true personal authenticity must lie beyond all these courses of actions.

Having real freedom is having the ability to begin an event by one's self. But what is the self we are referring to? In people who are truly free, the will that guides their actions must belong to the self that owes its origin to its own consciousness—its moral self. Thus, it is only by acting according to the lessons of our moral selves that we can achieve authenticity. So the basis of inner freedom is our life lived in accordance with our discerned consciousness. And it is only when our personal selves act in accordance with the will of our moral selves that we rid ourselves of all influences and coercions, all determinations, and all other external laws, secular or divine. Moreover, the degree to which our personal selves act in accordance with the will of our moral selves defines the level of our moral integrity. In this way, our moral integrity is what liberates us from behaving unethically and endangering the well-being of others.

The idea that individuals find liberation through their own moral integrity represents a profound break from modern ethical systems. It repudiates all external forms of ethical authority and invests moral authority in the individual. As Hamilton (2008) explains, if we ask why we should not lie, Aristotle would say we should not lie because lying is not part of a good character; Kant would say we should not lie because we have a duty to be truthful; Mill would say we should not lie because it reduces the social good. In truth, we should not lie because it is contrary to our moral selves. Each of us must decide what is right. We must accept that we are lawgivers and only then decide to be law followers. There is no need for God to give us laws or injunctions that must always be mediated by those who claim to represent God on Earth. Being free individuals, we do not need any rulebooks as ethical guides. Nor do we need to appeal to duties derived from the principle of non-contradiction or intellectual constructions that prove the mutual benefit of social justice or contracts that are often beyond our comprehension. These rob us of our true authenticity as moral agents. They coerce us to act according to an external understanding of what it means for us to be moral. In fact, all we have ever needed to become moral agents was a greater awareness of our own moral integrity. All we need to be able to do is to exercise our inner freedom in a deliberate and considered way.

Exercising inner freedom in order to maintain our moral integrity means acting according to our considered consciousness and lasting conviction. To do this, we must reflect on what is in our interests and then have the conviction to act on that judgment. However, in keeping with our understanding of freedom as a variable rather than as a constant, this means that our level of commitment to maximizing our inner freedom has the potential to not always be as we would wish it to be. Hence, our level of moral integrity can be diminished accordingly. There are three factors that have the potential to adversely affect our level of commitment to maximizing our inner freedom: self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control.

There is a considerable amount of philosophical literature on the idea of self-deception (see for instance Ferrè, 2001; Hamilton, 2008; Lennick & Kiel, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992; Taylor, 2003; Terry, 1993; Trilling, 1972). Some have argued that self-deception is impossible because it involves forming the intention to deceive oneself. Others have posited various ways of partitioning the mind and operating as if there were two people inhabiting it. In this case, knowledge of the plans, intentions, and motives of one is, one way or another, denied the other; we can imagine a deceiver and a deceived. On the other hand, psychology offers a less radical construction by supposing that instead of two contradictory beliefs being held, our true beliefs can be held unconsciously while we act on a consciously held but false belief.

Extending this latter view of self-deception further, psychology also proposes that these unconscious processes also involve techniques we use to manage our attention in ways that exclude from our decision making uncomfortable or subversive facts and feelings. We unconsciously, but deliberately, edit what our senses detect in order to maintain our preconceptions. As Mele (see Edward, 1998, p. 630) noted, “The fundamental strategy in self-deception is to distort the standards of rationality for belief by exaggerating favourable evidence for what we want to believe, disregarding contrary evidence, and resting content with minimal evidence for pleasing beliefs.” As

long as we are deceiving ourselves, we are not being true to ourselves and so are not authentic; we have closed ourselves off from the knowledge of what is in our long-term best interests. Ultimately, self-deception damages our own interests. Although ubiquitous in everyday life, self-deception is inconsistent with the exercise of inner freedom and the enhancement of our moral integrity.

Impulsiveness is also inconsistent with the exercise of inner freedom. However, we must distinguish between impulsiveness and spontaneity, for there is no doubt that there are pleasures in spontaneity, and a life ruled by planning would be dull and would probably reflect a degree of neuroticism. The nature of spontaneity is aligned with other essential human qualities, such as intuition, creativity, and instinct, while the nature of impulsiveness is aligned with a lack of awareness, consideration, and self-control. It is difficult to imagine people living a life of inner freedom unless they repeatedly exercise a deep and genuine capacity for being fully aware of what is happening around them and being able to rationally consider all aspects of the situation. In this way, they are able to resist the daily inducements to impulsiveness.

Finally, a lack of self-control is similar to impulsiveness because it also allows people to act without restraint. This occurs when people act in a way that is contrary to their considered judgment. This should not be taken to imply a sharp distinction between reason and emotions, since our desires are naturally included when we make considered judgments. A lack of self-control occurs when we hold particular convictions but, instead of weighing them against our private best interests, we allow our personal desires to overwhelm the decision because we are too weak to prevent this. There are times in our lives when we are more prone to this sort of behavior—when we feel alone, vulnerable, upset, or ill-treated. We might feel a need to comfort ourselves as a result of grief over a loss or a rebuff from friends or our boss. We might feel resentful and want to punish others for transgressing ethical rules, or we might persuade ourselves that moral rules are all well and good when we can afford them emotionally or financially.

Our moral integrity is directly linked to the relative level of our self-control toward living up to our sincerely expressed beliefs about what it would be morally best to do. It depends on the degree to which we decide to act against our better judgment due to self-deception or impulsiveness. Every time our consciousness is influenced by a lack of self-control, or by self-deception, or by impulsiveness, our moral integrity is compromised and our selfish desires outweigh our moral arguments. When we succumb to these, we sacrifice our inner freedom because outside forces have led us to do something we feel is wrong. These outside forces are not only other people or the state; they are also forces that we create ourselves through our beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and values. Forces we are not always conscious of yet are powerful enough to cause us to disregard our true selves and to compromise, to some degree, our moral integrity. We relinquish part of our inner freedom to such forces and, in so doing, we adversely affect our moral integrity. It is in this way that we can say our moral integrity resides in the realm of our inner freedom and its role is to adjudicate on the best course of action, taking account of our own interests and those of others represented by our moral values or commitments. These moral interests can include the personal standards of integrity we set for ourselves.

If our level of moral integrity is directly related to the degree to which we exercise our inner freedom, this means that any improvement in how we exercise our inner freedom will, simultaneously, enhance our moral integrity. If it is possible to reduce a leader's tendency to be influenced by self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control, then not only is the leader's inner freedom reinforced but also his moral integrity is consolidated. The leader's capacity to act morally is improved. The critical importance of being able to achieve this outcome is echoed in the words of Storr (2004, p. 415), who writes

Leadership is not a person or a position . . . it is a complex, paradoxical and moral relationship between people, which can cause harm between some groups, accompanied by benefits to others . . . and is based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion and a shared vision of the good—no one can be a leader without willing followers.

In a diverse and chaotic world, moral integrity has to be at the very heart of leadership. In times of chaos, people expect leaders to bring certainty and order to their world. While leaders cannot offer control over the seemingly chaotic external world that is affecting their organization, they can fill the need of their followers for stability by having moral integrity. A leader's moral integrity allows people to feel that there is order in their relationship with others. It provides a kind of internal order even when there is no external order. This is why there is so much concern over the moral integrity of leaders in all walks of life. We want to know and trust our leaders, rather than be dazzled by their charisma. We want our leaders to have moral integrity. Thus, it is imperative that we are able to enhance a leader's moral integrity.

To this end, Hamilton's (2008) claim that the foremost capacity that allows us to exercise inner freedom is conscious deliberation is noted. What is implied is a particular type of introspection in which all self-interests, all pressures, and all rational considerations are cast aside and moral judgment occurs spontaneously. Similarly, von Hayek (1960, p. 15) refers to one's considered will or lasting conviction and says that "to assert this will, as opposed to the caprice of passion or desire, requires no more than sober reflection and the courage to see one's actions governed by the conviction formed by it." Of course, it is not reason alone that provides the basis of our moral integrity. Instead, it is a full awareness of our ethical standards and an understanding of what contributes to our welfare in the longer term. What is required is an unambiguous process of honest, deliberative self-reflection and self-inquiry that requires us to be under no misconceptions as to what we really want, so that when we achieve our aims we do not decide we were mistaken and want something else. In other words, this process of honest, deliberative self-reflection and self-inquiry is able to ensure that we are fully informed and have clear, unambiguous preferences. Leaders' moral integrity can be enhanced by means of a coherent and comprehensive self-reflective process, which allows them to avoid falling victim to short-term urges and inappropriate manipulation of their desires.

Some may refer to this process of conscious deliberation as introspection. I personally prefer to use *self-reflection*, but I acknowledge that in the minds of some, the

two terms could be interchangeable. For me, introspection is too close to the concept of inspection. Inspection conjures up an image of objective judgment—right/wrong, good/bad, true/false type of thinking. This is not what is being proposed. As leaders reflect on their thinking, they are endeavoring to see where and why their thinking has led to misunderstanding and unhelpful actions. They are not judging themselves; they are analyzing and interpreting their thinking. This is neither a natural or easy task because it takes effort, commitment, and practice. To access our consciousness, we must deliberately exercise our consciousness.

The opportunity for us to engage in conscious deliberation through self-reflection and self-inquiry is always present, but the voice of the moral self is usually drowned out by the thoughts and inclinations that continually occupy our minds. Rawls (1972) acknowledges that in practice we are rarely fully informed about the likely consequences of our actions but we do the best with the information that is readily available, so that the plan we then follow can be said to be subjectively rational. Gathering information and consciously deliberating involves effort, and the amount of effort to be expended on each decision is itself the subject of a decision. In this rational mode, at some point we decide that the possible benefit of more information and more deliberation is less than the cost of the additional effort required. If we make the wrong decision and regret it under these conditions, it is not because we acted impulsively or with a cavalier attitude toward the facts: It is because we made the decision not to make the effort to gather more information. This is why we are harder on ourselves when things go wrong because we failed to think the situation through rather than for reasons that could not be foreseen.

The good news is that we can easily redress any preexisting limitations on our ability to fully engage in conscious deliberation. We can readily learn self-reflective techniques that enable us to become more aware of any sources of self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control. Also, such self-reflective processes help to illuminate situations in which our inner freedom is being suppressed by some form of coercion or deception. Coercion occurs when our actions are made to serve another's will, not for our own best interests but for the other person's purpose. Deception, like coercion, is a form of manipulating the data on which a person counts, in order to make that person do what the deceiver wants. As previously discussed, we can be the cause of our own deception in order to gain self-centered outcomes. Both coercion and deception take the form of unreasonable attempts to influence people to act in ways that are contrary to their considered interests. The reality of coercion and deception is to deprive us of our inner freedom, to induce us to act on impulse or from our weaknesses, even though we might willingly comply. Importantly, von Hayek (1960, p. 139) says that "since coercion is the control of the essential data of an individual's action by another, it can be prevented only by enabling the individual to secure for himself some private sphere where he is protected against such interference. This private sphere is one in which an individual can weigh up the consequences of their actions, being confident that the facts on which they make an assessment are not shaped by another." Self-reflection and self-inquiry provide this private sphere.

As Christian de Quincey (2002) reminds us, we can train people's brains in order to change their behavior, but we need to dialogue with their consciousness, their

minds, if we want them to change their beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and perceptions. Until leaders are capable of deeply and honestly exploring their own physical and cognitive reactions to their experiences, they will still be prone to self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control. That is, they will be prone to external or internal coercion or deception. It is essential that leaders can become aware of any personal or external modes of deception or coercion limiting their inner freedom. They need to learn how to challenge their usual and natural ways of thinking and to get in touch with their habitual ways of reacting. Rather than noting their thoughts, they need to understand and critique their own thinking. They need to understand how and why they are constructing their reality as they are doing. This is not a natural or simple task. For leaders to be able to gain such deep and genuine self-knowledge depends solely on their avoiding being false to their real selves, and this requires deep personal honesty and arduous effort and may not be possible, in the first instance, without the critical input from another person, a mentor (see Branson, 2009).

In summary, then, this chapter has argued that not only does moral behavior remain a deeply desired character trait in today's society; it is an essential component of ethical leadership. Moral integrity is a fundamental prerequisite of ethical leadership. However, moral integrity is not, necessarily, a natural human trait—but it can be nurtured and enhanced. Hence ethical leadership founded upon personal moral integrity can be developed. Thus, the key to developing ethical leadership is to improve the moral integrity of leaders by strengthening their inner freedom. An ethical leader's inner freedom needs to be exercised in order for it to become truly effective. Moreover, leaders learn how to better exercise their inner freedom and, thereby, enhance their moral integrity through self-reflection. Self-reflection illuminates their habitual ways of thinking that naturally restrict their inner freedom. Self-reflection is the way leaders can examine and change their second level of consciousness; their way of thinking about how they are thinking. Thus it can be seen that the leader's second level of consciousness is both the arbiter and the creator of ethical leadership.

However, this description of how moral integrity plays an integral role in ethical leadership means absolutely nothing unless it can be explained how this process could actually happen inside the human person. In other words, the credibility and viability of ethical leadership depends on being able to present a coherent and achievable explanation of how leaders can exercise their inner freedom and, thereby, enhance their moral integrity. The next section of this chapter provides a simple way in which this can be accomplished.

## **DEVELOPING PERSONAL MORAL INTEGRITY**

What is being proposed here is not a single, stand-alone process but rather the final or additional stage of a comprehensive ethical decision-making process. This assumption is reflected by means of this particular chapter's placement within this handbook's order of chapters. In other words, before commencing the following proposed self-reflection process for guiding personal moral integrity thinking and deciding, it is assumed that you will have completed an explicit ethical decision-making process

similar to those offered in the previous three chapters. Having completed such a process, whichever is preferred, it can then be assumed that you are consciously “exposed to differing paradigms and diverse voices—of justice, rights, and law; care, concern, and connectedness; critique and possibility; and [where applicable] professionalism” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 29). Moreover, participation in such a process has “not only [led] to stimulating conversations, but they will also encourage reflection and guidance for wise [and ethical] decision-making in the future” (p. 30). Essentially, such descriptive ethical decision-making processes enable you to not only reach a decision but also, and perhaps just as importantly, know the reasons as to why the preferred decision has been chosen.

The introduction of the self-reflection process for guiding personal moral integrity thinking and deciding acknowledges the awareness that the application of any of the ethical decision-making processes is more likely to provide a multiplicity of alternative actions rather than precipitate a singular best solution to the ethical dilemma. In other words, the leader still has to make a choice from all of the alternative insights, options, and possibilities provided by each of the different ethical perspectives. Arguably, the leader is more informed but not necessarily more able to make the appropriate ethical decision. To fully complete the ethical decision-making process, the leader is still required to make an ethically appropriate choice based on all of the information he or she now possesses. Moreover, for this to be an ethically appropriate choice, it necessitates that the leader act with moral integrity.

As has been previously described, moral integrity is about instinctively and consistently doing what is right for the good of others in the absence of incentives or sanctions. Thus, ethical leadership is made manifest in acts carried out for their own sake and not because the leader expects any personal or professional benefit. Hence, possessing moral integrity for a leader is about achieving a commitment where the interests of others, rather self-interests, are the spontaneous motivation. To this end, Branson (2006) published a model for guiding structured self-reflection, which utilizes the understanding that a deeper awareness of one’s self can be gleaned from a self-directed inquiry into one’s self-concept, self-esteem, motives, values, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors associated with a particular situation. Adapting this framework to the exploration of a particular ethical dilemma would produce the framework in Table 17.1.

## CONCLUSION

While the benefits to be gained in ethical decision making from such self-reflection can only really be assessed in their actual application to a real situation, Starratt’s (2004) insights are noteworthy and encouraging. Here, in his analysis of what constitutes ethical leadership, he claims that there are three qualities of a truly ethical leader—autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence. First, he explains that striving for autonomy as a means of enhancing one’s moral integrity is about developing “self-truth” or, in Taylor’s (2003, p. 27) words, “self-determining freedom” or inner freedom (Branson, 2009). As people become more conscious of all the factors impacting on their moral judgments, they are less controlled by their self-centered



**Table 17.1** Questions to guide a self-reflection process toward the achievement of personal moral integrity

COMPONENT OF SELF	QUESTIONS FOR SELF-REFLECTION
Self-concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I be affected by the likely outcome generated by all of the other ethical perspectives?</li> <li>• What are my desires, hopes, or preferences about this issue? Are these realistic or idealistic? Why? How might these influence my decision?</li> <li>• Am I avoiding anything in what I have considered to be relevant information? If so, why?</li> </ul>
Self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strengths or previous knowledge do I bring to this issue? Has this influenced my thinking and analyzing? Is this strength or knowledge truly relevant?</li> <li>• What weaknesses or lack of knowledge do I bring to this issue? Has this influenced my thinking and analyzing? Is this perceived weakness or lack of knowledge truly relevant?</li> </ul>
Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is my primary motive in resolving this issue?</li> <li>• Is my thinking unquestionably aligned with this motive?</li> <li>• What outcome do I personally prefer? Why?</li> <li>• What outcome do I personally dislike? Why?</li> <li>• Are my actions reflecting a commitment to self-control?</li> <li>• Are the decisions about what I have considered to be irrelevant information justified?</li> </ul>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I personally benefit in any way from a particular outcome?</li> <li>• Which values or principles do I want guiding my decision? Are they?</li> <li>• Is my thinking free from self-interest, self-deception, and impulsiveness?</li> </ul>
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What personal biases do I bring to this issue?</li> <li>• What is my regular outlook toward those who will benefit most from each possible outcome? Has this influenced my thinking?</li> <li>• What is my regular outlook toward those who will be adversely affected by each possible outcome? Has this influenced my thinking? How could these adverse effects be minimized or negated?</li> <li>• Is my thinking more influenced by personal beliefs rather than an unbiased assessment of the knowledge gained from each of the other ethical perspectives?</li> </ul>
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are my fears about resolving this issue? Are these realistic or idealistic? Why?</li> <li>• Am I aware of my emotions in relation to this issue? What does this say about my involvement in this issue?</li> <li>• What are my true feelings about the preferred outcome?</li> <li>• What is the source of these feelings?</li> <li>• Are these feelings based on the immediate issue, from past experiences, or from perceived consequences of the anticipated decision?</li> </ul>
Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has my analysis of each ethical perspective been influenced by my previous actions and decisions?</li> <li>• How can the outcome be implemented in the most ethical, respectful, and empathic way?</li> <li>• Will the implementation of the intended outcome reflect all of the values and principles that I want guiding my decision-making process?</li> <li>• What do I need to do to best prepare myself to implement the chosen decision in the best possible way?</li> </ul>

desires and have more possibility of making an autonomous conscious moral choice. People become free to direct their lives from their self-reflective moral consciousness because they are freed from self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control. O'Murchu (1997) claims that the greatest source of influence over the behavior of people comes from their inner selves where unconscious motives, values, and beliefs influence at least 70% of their daily behavior. A person's will is not free when it is being largely controlled by unconscious influences. This is manipulated will rather than free will. Hence, the development of a leader's autonomy is dependent upon bringing these normally powerful unconscious instinctual influences into consciousness and under direct control. This is about nurturing inner freedom through self-reflection.

Secondly, the pivotal role of connectedness in personal moral integrity, claims Harris (2002, p. 215), can be clearly seen by examining the roots of the word "consciousness," the source of our ethical decision-making processes. Here it is found that "consciousness" comes from the Latin *con*, which means "with," and *scio*, which means "to know." Consciousness is "knowing with" and this makes it a relational activity. Consciousness requires an "I" and a "we"—two distinct entities capable of forming a relationship. Developing personal moral integrity is not only about coming to know ourselves, but it is also about knowing how to relate to others in a more mutually beneficial and rewarding way. A person's morality, urges Taylor (2003), crucially depends on dialogical relations with others. In particular, developing moral integrity is about realizing that we all create self-fulfilling prophecies in our interactions with others. "We expect people to behave according to our projective expectations, and without intending it, we elicit in them reactions that confirm those expectations," writes Frattaroli (2001, p. 231). Hence, an important aspect of nurturing an ethic of personal moral integrity is about recognizing personal, unconscious, self-imposed relationship inhibitors. Once these are made conscious, they can be removed in order to expand the range of people with whom we can empathize and whom we can recognize as part of our moral responsibility. The process of self-reflection, as presented above, enables the leader to become aware of, and strive to overcome, any personal, unconscious, self-imposed relationship inhibitors.

Finally, the concept of transcendence within the context of personal moral integrity encapsulates the essential commitment to continually strive to be a better person. To this end, Wilber (2000, p. 264) proposes that "increasing interiorization = increasing autonomy = decreasing narcissism." In other words, the more self-knowledge people have of their inner selves, then the more detached from those selves they become, the more they can rise above the limited perspectives of those selves, and so the less self-centered they become. The more clearly and faithfully people can subjectively reflect on their selves, the more they can transcend their innate personal desires in order to consider what is in the best interests of others. This is supported by Taylor's (2003, p. 39) concept of "horizons of importance," where he suggests that

[t]he ideal of self-choice supposes that there are other issues of significance beyond self-choice. The ideal couldn't stand alone, because it requires a horizon of importance, which help[s] define the respects in which self-making is

significant. Unless some options are more significant than others, the very idea of self-choice falls into triviality and hence incoherence. Self-choice as an ideal makes sense only because some issues are more significant than others.

As long as most of the inner influences on our behavior remain within our unconscious, there is little choice in how we respond to ethical dilemmas. However, by making these inner influences part of our consciousness, then we do have self-choice in regard to whether or not they are appropriate. As unconscious influences, our inner influences automatically seek largely self-interests. On the other hand, as conscious influences, our inner influences can be controlled and directed toward seeking horizons of greater importance where consideration is given to what is ultimately in the best interest of all. In this way, such transcended behavior achieves moral outcomes. When applied to educational leadership, this understanding necessitates that ethical leaders need to become conscious of how their inner dimensions of their selves can be controlled and redirected toward achieving better, more transcendental, consequences. Moreover, it is only through a commitment to self-reflection that such conscious awareness can be nurtured and enhanced.

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