

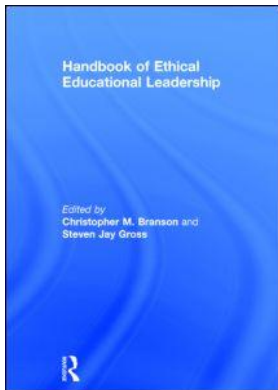
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## **Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership**

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### **The Essence of Professionalism**

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# I

## Issues and Perspectives

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# 2

## THE ESSENCE OF PROFESSIONALISM

SIGURÐUR KRISTINSSON

Educational leaders are faced with difficult and exciting challenges every day. They are responsible for the effective functioning of an institution or division and are accountable to a variety of stakeholders with different interests and priorities, including staff, students, parents, community, and government. They must constantly ask themselves what they ultimately hope to achieve and, relatedly, what values they hope to promote and serve.

Many educational leaders are school principals, but educational leadership is not restricted to that occupational role. According to Starratt (2005), educational leadership may be manifested in a person's conduct as a human being, citizen/public servant, educator, and administrator/manager, and all of these roles or "levels of ethical enactment" come into play when a school principal acts as an educational leader. Leadership has been defined as a form of social influence bringing people together to work toward a common goal (Chemers, 1997). Such influence may or may not be exerted through a position of formal authority and is not to be confused with the narrower role of the administrator/manager. But what are the common goals with which educational leaders should be concerned, and is there a distinct body of knowledge or expertise upon which educational leaders may draw in their leadership efforts? What ethical and epistemological grounds might we have for regarding educational leadership as a distinct profession?

These are examples of interesting conceptual and normative questions raised by the notion of educational leadership. The main objective of this chapter is to argue that educational leadership is an essentially ethical professional enterprise. The main focus will not be on the epistemological side of that coin but rather on the ethical one. More specifically, the aim is to establish that educational leadership should not be characterized as an activity with an ethical aspect but rather as an inherently ethical activity. Following a clarification of the meaning of that somewhat cryptic statement, the discussion moves on to defend two claims: first,

that educational leadership is a professional activity; second, that all professional activities are essentially ethical. Together, these two claims entail that educational leadership is an essentially ethical professional activity. The chapter closes with a discussion of some consequences of this conclusion for the practice of educational leadership and the training of educational leaders.

## EXPLAINING THE CLAIM

What does it mean to say that educational leadership is an essentially ethical enterprise rather than merely an activity with an ethical aspect? To say that an activity has an ethical aspect can be explained by saying that the activity may incidentally involve circumstances where moral questions arise, even though the activity as such may be fully described and understood independently of moral concepts. A good example of an activity that can be described independently of moral concepts is that of baking a cake. When recipes tell us to pour a “good” amount of this and that, or shake something “well,” or make sure the temperature is “right,” these terms are certainly not used in their moral senses. No moral purposes need to be mentioned in a recipe for a cake, and no moral concepts are used; we can quite easily describe and understand this activity without such concepts. Yet, as with any other human activity, the process of actually baking a cake may incidentally confront the baker with moral questions. He might consider whether to steal some of the ingredients, share the completed cake with others, adjust the recipe to make it more healthy (or less unhealthy) for those who will be eating it, or indeed be spending time baking a cake when he had perhaps promised not to or when he could instead perhaps be making a much more positive difference in the world. In other words, the activity of baking a particular cake on a particular occasion may reasonably prompt moral deliberation and even critical reflection by the baker and be subject to moral assessment by him or others, as regards his motives, the manner in which he proceeds, and the very fact that he is baking the cake. Nevertheless, the activity of baking a cake is not as such an inherently ethical activity because it can be described and understood independently of moral terms.

By contrast, other activities are essentially ethical, because they cannot be described or understood without reference to moral purposes and moral concepts. Consider charity and deception, for example. To describe an act as either charitable or deceitful is already to use a moral term. To take a slightly more complex example, consider the activity of ensuring that a patient, or a research participant, has given informed consent to a particular treatment or participation. Although less obviously than in the cases of charity and deceit, this activity cannot be fully understood without reference to moral purposes and concepts (Kristinsson & Árnason, 2007). To describe fully what is involved in giving or receiving informed consent, we must answer questions like the following: What information must be provided? How much information is sufficient? Under what circumstances and by whom should the information be provided and consent requested? To answer such questions, we implicitly or explicitly rely on a normative context where autonomy, rational reflection, and free choice are considered morally desirable and coercion, manipulation, and deception morally undesirable. In this way, the activity of soliciting informed consent from patients or research participants is essentially ethical in a way that baking a cake is not.

My contention that educational leadership is an essentially ethical enterprise can now be expressed by saying that it is more like soliciting informed consent than it is like baking a cake. Unlike baking, educational leadership cannot be fully characterized without reference to moral purposes and moral concepts. Just like the activity of soliciting informed consent, it has an internal action-guiding logic that necessarily involves ethical evaluative terms that are used to express educational values and dis-values. Ethical evaluation is therefore necessary in order to define the boundaries of educational leadership—that is, in order to know when an activity counts as educational leadership and when it doesn't—and by implication to know what is required of a person who wishes to exercise educational leadership.

## THE ARGUMENT

My basic argument for this claim takes the form of a simple syllogism:

- All professions are essentially ethical (premise 1).
- Educational leadership is a profession (premise 2).
- Therefore, educational leadership is essentially ethical (conclusion).

This is obviously a valid argument, i.e., the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. To accept the premises and reject the conclusion would involve a contradiction. What needs to be argued, then, is that both premises are in fact true and the argument, therefore, sound.

The second premise should be accepted without much argument. Educational leadership may reasonably be regarded as a specialized branch of the broad profession of education, a branch with a distinctive role or purpose on the one hand and a base of specialized knowledge and skills on the other. Other educational professionals include teachers, educational researchers, and specialists working within administrative government structures at municipal and state levels. It may, of course, be debated whether educational leadership involves a distinct form of professionalism, different from that of teachers, for example, or whether education as a whole should count as a single, uniform profession based on its common role and specialized knowledge. That question need not concern us here, however, because even if education were to be regarded as a single, undivided profession, educational leadership would certainly have to be seen as at least a specific instance of the profession of education, and thus a professional enterprise. Educational leaders must certainly be seen as professionals, regardless of whether their profession is regarded as independent or, instead, as a specialization within the more general profession of education.

Assuming, then, that educational leadership is a profession, let us turn to the first premise, according to which all professions are essentially ethical. Why should we agree? Aren't lawyers the stereotypical and obvious counterexample?

## PROFESSIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM

A profession consists of a collective body of professionals in an occupation for which they profess to be qualified and prepared to serve. Professions are customarily taken to have structural characteristics that include licensing, professional organization, a

code of ethics, monopoly, self-regulation, and autonomy. They are also taken to have essential characteristics that include higher education, intellectual orientation, and important service or social functions (Kultgen, 1982).

The concept of a profession must be distinguished from the related concept of professionalism. Professionalism is conduct befitting a professional, as well as the personal characteristics conducive to such conduct. By “befitting a professional,” I mean conduct that can be legitimately expected of the professional given a reasonable understanding of the proper role of professionals in society. Because of this essential reference to a reasonable understanding and the proper role of professionals in society, professionalism is a normative concept.

Once we recognize this often neglected distinction between profession and professionalism, we are able to acknowledge the rather obvious fact that professionalism can be found in occupations well beyond those that are professions in the narrow sense modeled on the “learned” or “liberal” professions of medicine, law, and the clergy. This narrow sense includes only occupations that satisfy all the structural and essential requirements just mentioned. But key elements of professionalism can be found in a much wider range of occupations—plumbing, carpentry, and hairdressing, for example (Kristinsson, 2013).

The distinction between profession and professionalism also helps us appreciate Englund’s (1996) point that it is largely a contingent matter whether professionalism is improved when an occupational group takes deliberate measures to develop its organization, entry requirements, and practice, toward satisfying conventional conditions for being recognized as a profession. Such developments in the name of professionalization may be viewed as a sociological project, whereas teacher professionalism may be viewed as a pedagogical project. Although professionalization may increase professionalism—for example, via added requirements for formal education leading to improved service—such an effect cannot be taken for granted. Steps taken in the name of professionalization might on some occasions have no positive effect on professionalism, as for example when they include the introduction of an approach based on methodological principles that do not fit the subject matter and hence do not lead to improved service. A case in point is the effort to turn the teaching profession into a technical science; such efforts are arguably more likely to hinder than help professionalism in teaching practice (Hargreaves, 2000). The same applies to early efforts to define educational leadership as an organizational science of management, while neglecting the art of leadership. The promulgation of a technical management approach may perhaps have been instrumental in earning the occupation professional status in society and yet is unlikely to engender true professionalism in educational leaders.

### **PROFESSIONALISM AS KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, AND CARE IN AN OCCUPATIONAL ROLE**

What exactly is true professionalism, then? The analysis I want to suggest is that professionalism consists of *knowledge*, *skill*, and *care* in an occupational role (Kristinsson, 2013). This tripartite set of qualities needs to be publicly certified in order

for clients and the public to be able to distinguish reliably between those who have it and others. Certification provides an assurance that service is delivered according to current standards of practice in the occupational field in question, and generally attests to the professional's requisite knowledge, skill, and care.

The knowledge component is necessary for obvious reasons: You cannot be professional if you don't know what you are doing. Some degree of insight into general principles is part of what distinguishes professionalism from mere skill or enthusiasm, even professionalism within the broad range of occupations that includes those that do not require higher education. This insight into general principles implies some ability to describe and explain underlying principles and to present customers and clients with helpful and realistic options and advice.

Skill is also a necessary component of professionalism. We would certainly and legitimately complain of lack of professionalism if a hired practitioner could merely describe and explain what needs to be done but was entirely inept at actually doing it. This component of professionalism is, of course, especially crucial in occupations that are crafts rather than professions, but there is also no profession where the element of art is entirely absent or irrelevant. Skill or art connects theory and practice, and making that connection is, of course, the constant endeavor and challenge of every profession.

Care is perhaps the most easily overlooked component of professionalism, but in the present context the most important one. We would certainly be justified in complaining of a breach of professionalism if someone we counted on for service had requisite knowledge and skill but did not care to use them unless this happened to coincide with his or her prevailing desire or self-interest at the time. Care, in this sense, implies an independent commitment to what might be called the values internal to the occupation. More specifically, the care component of professionalism may be further broken down into three elements: service, morality, and occupational standards.

First, those who care about their work in a way characteristic of professionalism take seriously the basic and foundational commitment of their occupation to a certain role, or service, to society. They are concerned to help clients and society achieve the important value around which their occupation is specifically organized. The classical professions of medicine, law, and the clergy are thus committed to the values of health, justice, and salvation, respectively, and teachers and educational leaders are committed to the value of education. However, a much wider range of occupations, far beyond those that are strictly speaking professions, have an important social function to which its practitioners are committed insofar as they approach their work in a spirit of professionalism. Carpenters are committed to the construction of houses and furniture in a safe and desired way; hairdressers to managing people's hair in a way they find comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, and socially acceptable; plumbers to installing heating and draining systems according to current standards, etc. Whatever the occupation may be, professionalism means taking its basic commitment to service seriously and being prepared to follow it even in situations where another course of action would better serve the practitioner's personal self-interest. By this I don't mean being prepared to sacrifice one's self-interest entirely, but rather to regard



the commitment to service as an independent end that is not merely a means to one's self interest and should sometimes take priority over it.

This foundational commitment to service helps the practitioner not only to think about priorities between self-interest and occupational commitments but also to think about priorities internal to the work itself. Different occupational concerns are not all equally related to the occupation's underlying purpose, and it is easy to be carried away by institutional and social forces within the workplace or occupation, without reflecting on their ultimate effect on service. Increased awareness of the occupation's foundational commitment should therefore lead to a more reflective and responsible practice in the complex, and easily confusing, social and institutional contexts of work.

Second, those who care about their work in a way characteristic of professionalism take seriously their commitment to morality generally. A craftsman shows lack of professionalism if he cuts corners in order to serve too many clients, if he overcharges his customers, gives them misleading information for the sake of his own profit, or gossips and spreads personal information about his clients. Such behavior is unprofessional because it is morally irresponsible and not worthy of trust. Because moral failures of this sort undermine trust, it is fortunately often in the craftsman's own best interest to behave morally toward his clients or customers—hence the saying that honesty is the best policy. However, our trust in professionalism demands more than this; we want to be able to trust that the craftsman's honesty toward us is not contingent on his or her belief that dealing honestly with us now happens to be in her own self-interest. We want the craftsman's honesty to be based on reliable principles, and when it is, we recognize this as part of the craftsman's professionalism. This is why professionalism necessarily includes a genuine commitment to moral behavior, including honesty, integrity, and fidelity.

This commitment to morality is necessary if professions and occupations generally are to be justifiably trusted (Koehn, 1994). It does so by assuring the public and individual clients and customers not only that the practitioner will generally be honest rather than self-serving, but also that the practitioner will not be unduly enthusiastic in the quest for effective service. A zealous defense attorney might allow or even encourage a witness to commit perjury for the sake of victory in a case (Freedman, 1966). An ambitious school principal might perhaps fabricate assessment data in hopes of improving the school's comparative standing and future funding. In fact, it has been noted that such competitive concerns may lead to the fabrication of the very identity of the school as an educational institution (Keddie, Mills, & Pendergast, 2011). The public needs to be assured that professionals resist such temptations even if what tempts them is their genuine interest in effective service rather than their personal self-interest.

The third and final element in the care component of professionalism is a commitment to standards of practice. People who care about their work want to do a good job that satisfies current standards in their occupational field. Their commitment to good occupational practice carries independent weight and provides clients and the public with an assurance that irrelevant interests or external pressure will not govern the practitioner's conduct. This commitment to occupational standards underpins

public trust in much the same way as the practitioner's general commitment to morality does. If we say, borrowing the language of Immanuel Kant's (1785/1959) moral theory, that the general commitment to morality means that the practitioner can be counted on to act out of respect for the moral law, we can add that her commitment to occupational standards means she can be counted on to act out of professional self-respect.

The care component of professionalism, with its threefold commitment to basic service, morality, and occupational standards, distinguishes professionalism from freelance work. Although actual freelance workers may, in fact, exhibit professionalism, they do so not in virtue of their being freelance workers but in virtue of their being also, to some extent, professional in their attitude and approach. Being a freelance worker does not, in itself, bring with it an ultimate commitment to anything except the worker's own desire or self-interest. The reward is the only thing that matters at the end of the day. This attitude of working only for the sake of the reward is contrary to professionalism, which entails an independent commitment to the internal values of the occupation. An occupational group that evinces the freelance attitude in its daily practice does not deserve or earn public trust. There is no guarantee that it will have a systematic tendency to serve the public interest, and every client must protect her own interests in dealing with such practitioners. As the commitment of the practitioners to the internal values of their occupation becomes weaker, detailed contracts about specific tasks, and austere external management and accountability requirements by public authorities, become more important as protections of the public interest.

All this helps to explain why a code of ethics is considered a necessary structural characteristic of a profession. A professional code of ethics provides members of the profession, and the general public, some assurance that each member is committed to the values internal to the occupation (Davis, 1991). To the members of the profession, the code should reduce worries about free riders and signal a collective concern for public service, moral behavior, and professional standards. To the public, the code promises that individual members of the occupation will not have the freelance attitude and can therefore be counted on to work honestly even when nobody is looking.

The general definition of professionalism we have arrived at can be put as follows: *Professionalism is certified knowledge, skill, and care in an occupational role. The component of care entails a commitment to the internal values of the occupation, the elements of which are a service to society, moral behavior, and occupational standards. This threefold commitment distinguishes professionalism from freelance work.*

## THE ETHICAL NATURE OF PROFESSIONS

With this definition, we have moved much closer to being able to assert that all professions are essentially ethical enterprises, where this means that they cannot be described or understood independently of moral purposes and concepts. Professionalism is conduct befitting a professional given a reasonable interpretation of the proper role of professionals in society. In order to characterize professionalism, we

have used moral concepts and made numerous references to moral purposes. To try to describe professionalism without moral concepts or any reference to moral purpose would be rather like trying to describe charity by enumerating examples of charity and not saying what these examples have in common. In both cases the concept that enables us to identify the different cases as cases of the same sort is indeed a moral concept.

It may be objected that even if we agree that *professionalism* is an essentially ethical concept, this does not mean that the concept of *a profession* is. After all, these are distinct concepts, as previously pointed out. Perhaps we could describe and understand what it is for something to be a profession without reference to any of the normative notions we used to describe professionalism. Perhaps the concept of a profession has a descriptive meaning only, referring to what a profession *is*, even though the concept of professionalism is normative, referring to how a professional *ought* to behave.

In order for this objection to be convincing, we would have to be able, in principle, to characterize the boundary that distinguishes professionals from nonprofessionals without any recourse to moral evaluation. This has, in fact, been accepted practice among sociologists studying the professions. One advocate of this value-neutral approach states: "If lawyers are, in the words of one of the earliest American writers on legal ethics, George Sharswood, 'a hord [*sic*] of pettifogging, barratrous, custom-seeking, money-making' persons, they nonetheless constitute a profession" (Bayles, 1988, p. 29). They do so in virtue of the required licensing, professional organization, code of ethics, monopoly, self-regulation, autonomy, higher education, intellectual orientation, and the fact that society generally accepts that they provide an important service. To this descriptive list, there is no need to add that members of the profession are characterized by professionalism, according to the value-neutral approach.

This value-neutral approach is untenable, however. If professionalism, with all its normative implications, were in fact completely absent from an occupational group claimed to be a profession, the claim itself would sound fraudulent. A group of skilled freelancers who otherwise satisfied the descriptive elements of the concept of a profession would certainly be an odd and unexpected discovery. They would have a professional association, code of ethics, self-regulation and autonomy, an avowed purpose that society recognized as important, and a requirement of long training with an intellectual orientation based on scholarship and research, and yet the members of the occupation would, by and large, have the attitude and approach of a freelancer and hence not deserve public trust. This would be an odd discovery because the concept of a profession arises out of a need to make sense of, and discuss, a very different social phenomenon from that of a collection of freelancers. The social phenomenon picked out by the concept of a profession is a group of individuals sharing a collective commitment to serve society in a responsible manner through the specialized skills and knowledge they possess. To describe that social phenomenon without referring to the underlying mission and moral purpose would miss what these individuals have in common. The reference to professionalism, and thus the moral purposes and commitments of the practitioners, simply makes for a better explanation of the observed phenomena relating to professions than a value-neutral explanation. The actual phenomena, of course, include a lot of observed professionalism,

and this would certainly be harder to explain based on a value-neutral explanatory framework than a framework that allows reference to moral purposes.

I want to make it clear that although I state that a lot of professionalism can actually be observed, I'm not in denial about the actual phenomenon of freelancers masquerading as professionals or, to put it conversely, professions where individual members have the attitude and approach of the freelancer. Indeed, it has been argued, and convincingly so in my view, that many professions, in fact, fail to live up to their professed moral commitments (Larson, 2003). Such arguments expose alleged professions as mere collections of freelancers who have adopted a professional ideology in order to deceive the public about their real motives and actual function in society. This is not always exclusively the profession's fault. Sometimes, the reason why the public has an unduly optimistic faith in the integrity and skill of an occupational group is the public's and politicians' own wishful thinking that professionalism exist where it doesn't, as for example in the banking world (Kanes, 2010). So, my point is not by any stretch that all claims of professionalism are true. My point is, instead, that a profession as a social phenomenon is not properly understood or explained if reference to its normative commitments is omitted.

It might be thought that the remedy for this is to allow it to be one of the defining characteristics of a profession that its members tend to agree on a common purpose, which is also considered legitimate and important by society at large. This is not my view, however. In order for something to actually be a profession, it is not enough that the professionals themselves, or even society at large, share a view about the profession's normative commitments. Instead, these commitments must actually be morally legitimate and pursued in morally legitimate ways. Imagine, for example, an occupational group that was specialized in using generalized physiological knowledge for the ultimate purpose of torturing people with maximal pain without actually killing them. This group shares the strong sentiment and belief that people ought to be tortured regularly for no particular reason, especially children. Suppose, also, that this group somehow managed to satisfy all the descriptive criteria for being a profession, including not only monopoly, self-regulation, higher education, and intellectual orientation, but also a code of ethics and being regarded by society as serving an important social function. Surely, we would hesitate to call this a profession, and rightfully so.

Admittedly, it is hard to imagine that the monstrous social movement I have just asked you to imagine would, in fact, ever satisfy all the descriptive criteria for being a profession. The reason for this is telling: In order to complete the thought experiment, we would need to do either of two things. First, we might imagine that the profession had extremely clever and effective ways of spreading dangerous and incredible propaganda, thereby manufacturing society's general assent to their twisted professional ideology despite its obvious clash with universally held core beliefs about human well-being and social justice. The second alternative would be to imagine that the society in question had a moral framework so completely different from ours that it somehow justified investing significant social resources in the arbitrary torturing of children. In either case, we would be trying to force the concept of a profession onto a phenomenon imagined to be void of the very qualities that make occupations worthy

of their title, namely their commitment to serve the public by providing a particular good in morally acceptable ways. This shows that a reference to valid normative commitments is a central characteristic of the concept of a profession.

Once this is recognized, we see that a profession in need of moral reform should not be compared to a house that just needs to be painted, but rather to a house that is so structurally damaged that it can no longer function as a house. This point is highly relevant to contemporary issues confronting various professions, many of which are, in fact, regularly criticized for not living up to their professed moral ideals. The medical profession in the United States can, for example, be criticized for not only tolerating but actually promulgating a health care system where far more is spent as a percentage of GDP than in any other industrialized country, and yet access to medical care is very unequal, and consequently public health is not particularly good. What the expensive system delivers, instead of outstanding public health, is high pay for doctors and a profitable environment for the medical insurance industry and other private interests (Larson, 2003). This criticism echoes the old phrase from a play by George Bernard Shaw (1909) that “all professions are conspiracies against the laity.” If my arguments are correct, professions deserving that label should be considered professions in name only, because they do not live up to the normative requirements of professionalism. A profession needs to live up to its name, and it does so by taking its normative commitments seriously.

One way to take them seriously is to ask what a profession needs to be like in order to deserve public trust. Koehn (1994) provides perhaps the best-argued response to this question in the literature on professional ethics: A profession deserves public trust only if the professionals, by and large, show in practice their will to serve their clients’ interest, serve that interest as effectively as possible, demonstrate competence, command responsibility and discipline from their clients, have the authority to prioritize tasks for the sake of the overall interests of the clientele, and have a strong sense of social responsibility. This can be a complicated matter, but these are at least general guideposts for professions that want to live up to their name and function.

## PROFESSIONALISM AND VALUES RESEARCH IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

My argument has been that professions and professionalism are best understood from an interpretive framework that contains normative assumptions referring to a morally legitimate foundational purpose, moral ways of pursuing it, and an independent commitment to professional standards. By arguing this, I have rejected a value-neutral understanding of the concept of a profession. What are the implications of these arguments for educational leadership, administration, and management?

There are many ways to go toward answering this question. The most obvious would be to reflect on educational leadership based on the threefold normative commitment of professionalism: (1) How should we describe the foundational commitments of educational leadership as an independent profession? (2) How can educational leaders make sure their professional conduct is true to their general commitment to moral behavior? (3) How would the professional standards for

educational leadership be best described? Each of these questions opens up a large topic for another occasion. Instead of entering these topics now, I want to conclude by pointing out, as further food for thought, how an argument, similar to the one I have presented in this chapter regarding professions and professionalism, could be applied to the question of how to conceptualize values in educational leadership research.

Values are an important topic of study in the scholarly context of professional educational leadership, administration, and management (Richmon, 2003). In that context, values are sometimes studied from an exclusively descriptive point of view rather than a partly normative one. In studies that are primarily descriptive, conceptual work serves to prepare the ground for empirical studies. For example, the general phenomenon of values is described and different types of values classified in order to facilitate valid and reliable instruments for measuring the constructs arrived at in this way. Such measurements then deliver data on the basis of which behavior can be predicted and explained. The overall aim is, presumably, to understand, and ultimately manage, behavior that is determined not only by external factors but also by highly variable internal factors like values and personality traits. The perspective in such studies is the external perspective of someone trying to figure out how other people are likely to behave based on their complicated and multifaceted motivational characteristics. It is not the first-person perspective of the valuing agent.

This approach can be criticized both from an epistemological point of view and from a moral one. To start with the epistemological worry, it seems that if values were viewed from this descriptive and external perspective only, it would in fact be difficult ever to successfully predict or manage human behavior, because we would not be making use of our sophisticated and basic capacity to understand each other through something like simulation (Gordon, 2009). To complement the external perspective, we gain much from also viewing values from the first-person point of view of the agent, who interprets her options and deliberates based on the normative assumptions that constitute her values. The internal logic of a person's deliberation is understandable to other rational agents insofar as it is minimally coherent, even if they do not as agents share exactly the same normative outlook and are therefore not motivated by values in exactly the same way. This possibility of understanding another person by trying to imagine that you are that person, faced with her particular situation, is the basis on which different rational agents can come to know each other. By stepping in one another's shoes, we can understand each other's reasons for action and come closer to seeing each other's ventures as part of a reasonable project that can be understood and interpreted from the inside, as it were, rather than a curious phenomenon to be explained, predicted, and managed.

These epistemological reservations about the external perspective on values research are analogous to the previous objections to the sociological, value-free conception of a profession. In both cases, the perspective deliberately puts quotation marks around the normative assumptions of the agents they are trying to understand. That is, no stance is taken on the reasonableness or intelligibility of particular normative assumptions that agents may be making in the context of particular deliberations and actions. Instead, motivating values are taken to be subjective and arbitrary. But in both

cases, the value-neutral approach runs the risk of resulting in a loss of understanding, insofar as a framework for explaining and predicting human behavior must make use of our ability to interpret behavior as an intelligible or reasonable consequence of embracing certain normative assumptions. By leaving normative assumptions out on principle, and avoiding all reflection on values *qua* normative assumptions, the researcher may have imposed an unnecessary handicap even if his or her only goal is to explain and predict. Hence the epistemological worry.

The moral worry is perhaps more fundamental than the epistemological one, however. The moral reservation about the descriptive approach to values research is that if educational leaders, administrators, and managers are trained to think about values from this perspective, they may as a result develop a questionable attitude to their coworkers, clients, and constituents, such as teachers, students, and parents. They may come to view them as vehicles of behavior to be managed rather than persons to be respected. What is worse, they may come to think that professional standards require them to take this attitude of external manipulation to other people—that such an attitude marks their professional approach and expertise, because of its aura of scientific objectivity and technical effectiveness.

There is something deeply disturbing about such an approach to other human beings. Immanuel Kant (1785/1959) argued that insofar as we view ourselves as rational agents, we must necessarily adopt the principle of never treating humanity as a mere means but always as an end in itself. When a leader, administrator, or manager adopts the external perspective, he or she must be careful not to fall into the role of a puppet master who disregards this very basic moral injunction.

It is telling that what used to be called educational administration and management is now usually referred to as educational leadership. This signals a change from the external perspective of managing people based on an alleged scientific understanding of the law-like determinants of human behavior to an internal perspective of leading fellow human beings on a meaningful quest toward shared goals that are actually worthwhile and important. If the arguments I have presented in this chapter are on the right track, this is indeed a fortunate development that needs to be continued.

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