ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN DICKENS' *A TALE OF TWO CITIES* AND ORWELL'S *1984* AND *ANIMAL FARM*

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Abstract

This paper studies leadership and totalitarianism in Orwell's 1984 and Animal Farm, and Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities. It identifies the various types of leaderships through characters and themes, shows how totalitarianism can be a hindrance to human beings' thinking abilities, dignity, freedom and rights, through the different methods used to keep citizens under strict control. It specifically analyses ethical leadership through the lenses of universalism and utilitarianism. To analyze the aspects mentioned above, the following theoretical approaches are used: The Marxist literary theory, the psychoanalytical theory, and semiotics. This work, as a result, warns about totalitarian methods of leadership, it teaches its readership the appropriate moral standards and conducts to fix and apply during decision makings. It finally proves how ethical leadership is essential to promote development in society.

Key words: *totalitarianism, leadership, universalism, utilitarianism; language.*

Résumé

Cet article étudie le leadership et le totalitarisme dans 1984 et Animal Farm d'Orwell, ainsi que A Tale of Two Cities de Dickens. Il identifie les différents types de leadership à travers des personnages et thèmes, montre comment le totalitarisme peut être une entrave aux capacités de réflexion, à la dignité, à la liberté et aux droits des êtres humains, à travers les différentes méthodes utilisées pour maintenir les citoyens sous un contrôle strict. Il analyse spécifiquement le leadership éthique sous l'angle de l'universalisme et de l'utilitarisme. Pour analyser les aspects mentionnés ci-dessus, les approches théoriques suivantes sont utilisées : La théorie littéraire marxiste, la théorie psychanalytique et la sémiotique. Ce travail, en conséquence, met en garde contre les méthodes totalitaires de leadership, il enseigne à ses lecteurs les normes morales et les conduites appropriées à fixer et à appliquer lors des prises de décisions. Enfin, il prouve que le leadership éthique est essentiel pour promouvoir le développement de la société.

Mots-clés : *totalitarisme, leadership, universalisme, utilitarisme, langue.*

Introduction

Some of the most perceptive works on leadership and ethics come from old texts and is out there waiting to be rediscovered and reapplied. History is filled with wisdom and case studies on the morality of leaders and leadership. History and philosophy provide perspective on the subject and reveal certain patterns of leadership behavior and themes about leadership and morality that have existed over time. Through moral theories, history and philosophy remind us that some of the basic issues concerning the nature of leadership are inextricably tied to the human condition. And these moral theories remain a topic of interest, not just to moral philosophers, but increasingly in literature circles as well. These moral theories are: Immanuel Kant's Universalism and Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism. There exist other theories, regardless, they all make sense when perceived against certain backgrounds, circumstances, and mindsets. However, the above-mentioned will indicate that moral theories, and the decisions made with these theories as guidelines are feasible, and equally reflected in the corpus texts.

This work, entitled *Ethical Leadership in Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities and Orwell's 1984 and Animal Farm*, analyses and interprets socio-political realities of leadership in all its forms. It puts forward the influences of leadership theories on characters' social values, actions, thoughts, feelings and decisions in the novels. It brings to light the importance of the application of Universalism and Utilitarianism in decision making, and evaluates their strengths, weaknesses, and common factors. It equally highlights ethical leadership, through the lenses of Universalism and Utilitarianism, and pinpoints the possibilities and complexity of making moral decisions under these two theories.

Theories like semiotics, the psychoanalytical and Marxist literary theories are used to conduct this analysis. The Marxist literary theory seeks to expose the dominant class, shows how its ideology controls and oppresses all actions of the working class, and finally, highlights these elements of society that are mostly affected by such oppression. This theory in my work, helps to discuss the class differences among characters, by revealing the political and economic differences that exist between them. The psychoanalytical literary theory enables to explore

the impacts of the social conditions and cultural institutions on characters' inner lives in the fiction. In other terms, it shows how the author makes mind works throughout the fiction to uncover characters' conscious individual personality and emotions as thoughts, feelings, as well as the unconscious elements and symbolic meanings within literary corpus. Semiotics emphasizes its analysis on how symbols, gestures, words and actions clarify certain aspects of cultural life and the way characters communicate through sign acts to help the reader in the understanding of the characters' social identities, experiences and interactions in the text.

This work is subdivided into two parts; the first one analyses the universalist moral approach to leadership in Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*. It tries to discuss characters' behaviors, inner thoughts, experiences and decision makings in the light of universalism as a moral approach. The second part is Utilitarian Approach to leadership in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. It evaluates Characters' both conscious and unconscious decision makings and behaviors, shaped by social norms and expectations, in the light of utilitarianism as another type of moral approach to leadership.

1. The Universalist Moral Approach to Leadership in *1984* and *Animal Farm*

The Universalist approach, was mainly developed by Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher who lived in the 18th century (1724 - 1804). Also known as the deontological and teleological approach to leadership, Kant's philosophy was centered only on moral values and human autonomy. The notion of autonomy should be interpreted here as formulating our own law on basis of our understanding and the framework of our experiences. Being self-conscious, and aware of the reasons behind our actions. This is mainly the highest principles of Kant's theoretical philosophy (Rohlf, 2010: 32). According to Johnson, "Kant also emphasized the importance of respecting other persons, which has become a key principle in modern leadership philosophy. According to Kant, a good leader needs to act so that he/she treats humanity, whether his own person or that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (Johnson, 2012: 159). This simply means that

the categorical imperative focuses on two main actions or behaviors: First one is to only choose for an act if we would want every person on earth, being in the same situation as we currently are, to act in exactly the same way; and secondly, to always act in a way that demonstrates respect to others and treats them as ends onto themselves rather than as means toward an end. A swift and effective way to measure the moral degree of our maxims is to consider others as ourselves or dearly loved ones. To Kant the good will is present when acting for the sake of duty with respect for humanity. A duty is an action, which we are obligated to perform out of respect for the moral law in which every rational agent is a self-legislating member (Kant, 1994: 400).

As said before, Universalism focuses mainly on the deontological and teleological assessments of things, which means it only considers moral values in everything. From the deontological point of view, intentions are the morally relevant aspects of an act. As long as the leader acts according to his or her duty or his moral principles, then the leader acts ethically, regardless of the consequences, as was the case in the first example. From the teleological perspective, what really matters is that the leader's actions result in bringing about something morally good or "the greatest good" (Ciulla, 2003: 132). Universalism, as Kant defined it, is void of compassion, as it mainly focuses on fulfilling a responsibility. It is rigid and consistent at its core; the Universalist approach does not leave room for flexibility. What is right is right and what is wrong is wrong: no negotiation is possible. With this moral approach, there is no question about the decision to be made: what is right for one, is right for all, and this is naturally unanimous to everyone. There are no emotional considerations, and this guarantees a clearly outlined modus operandi.

When we apply these Universalist approach principles to Orwell and Dickens' works, it becomes really hard to find a good leader, an ethical one.

In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is important to note that the modus operandi here is not the one set by Kant, this is another level, because what Orwell is portraying is beyond just decision making, it is totalitarianism. Here people and their use of language are being controlled. They are controlled in how to think, how to talk. The

population should only think and behave the way their government requires them to. Propaganda and mass surveillance are being used by leaders. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, moral values are a great sin to be punished for. People are being tortured for standing for the truth, or in trying to change the status-quo set by the Party and the Party members such as O'Brien, Syme, Emmanuel Goldstein. The idea that truth can be defined by groups in possession of political power is one of the central themes of *1984*. Throughout the novel, the Party is described as being in full control of what should be perceived as truth. This is made possible by the Ministry of Truth's steady flow of propaganda and the erasure of all records of information that contradict the Party's current agenda. Ultimately, this means that the Party has the ability to independently determine what is true and thereby to control how the citizens of Oceania perceive reality. As the character O'Brien states as he is torturing protagonist Winston Smith at the Ministry of Love:

> But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes: only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be the truth, *is* truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party. (Orwell, 1949: 200)

The same moral values to which leaders needed to hold on to in their duty of leading is being punished for here in *1984*. According to David Dwan, one of Orwell's biggest fears was the possibility for political leaders to completely rely on a relativistic view of reality to support their arguments (Dwan, 2010: 383). In other words, if there is no ultimate sense of truth or reality, political leaders are free to present falsehoods as facts, as long as they themselves perceive them to be true. The idea of believing in obvious falsehoods is reflected in one of the central concepts of the novel: doublethink. Doublethink, or reality control as it is also called, is described as the act of "holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (Orwell, 1949: 171), and is one of the primary strategies that the Party uses to control

both the citizens of Oceania as well as fellow party members. A more detailed description of doublethink is given in the following passage:

> To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies—all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth. (Orwell, 1949: 171)

Perhaps the most direct examples of doublethink given in the novel are three slogans of the Party: "War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength" (Orwell, 1949: 7). The Party and the Party members control the truth, they determine what can be identified as truth and what cannot.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is on another level that even the Kantian approach does not fit to evaluate. Because, there is totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and totalitarianism is nothing but slavery, because it controls even your thoughts and beliefs. Thoughts and beliefs are so important in the application of moral values, and in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* moral values do not exist, they exist only when they favor the party. So, this means that the moral values to which the Party and the Party members could have held on to in order to rule ethically has been banned and breached. And the banning of these moral values was so important to the party to the extent that they are ready to destroy whoever tries to rekindle the lights of moral values in Oceania. So, this means that the Kantian Universalist approach which has its basic principle as "What's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong, there's no negotiation or debate about it", is a failure here. Because in Oceania, according to the Party and the Party members, the basic principle is 'what the Party says to be right is right, and there's nothing to do about it'. This ironically simply means that if Immanuel Kant himself lived under a totalitarian regime,

there should not have been an existence of his Universalist Approach. All this is to prove that totalitarian leaders, not only do not consider moral values for them to be ashamed when they take bad decisions or leading badly, they also even want, if possible, to psychologically corrupt their population to think the same way. This is why characters like O'Brien end up being accomplice to the Party's will, and work hard to eliminate or psychologically corrupt every single person that tries to behave and think straight against the Party, in order to keep the status-quo already established by the Party.

Nonetheless, with a more critical look towards Kant's Universalism, it is importantly realistic to argue that it is sometimes very difficult, even unethical to demand perfect moral intentions, by requesting for both deontological and teleological theories to account for ethical leadership, which only focuses on moral values.

Leaders are said to be held to "a higher moral standard," but, few questions to ask are: does that make sense, and how possible is it? Would it then be acceptable for everyone else to live by lower moral standards? The curious thing about morality is that if you set the moral standards for leaders too high, requiring something close to moral perfection, then few people will be qualified to be leaders or will want to be leaders. For example, how many of us could live up to the standard of having never lied, said an unkind word, or reneged on a promise? Ironically, when we set moral standards for leaders too high, we become even more dissatisfied with our leaders because few are able to live up to such expectations. And when we set moral standards for leaders too low, when we reduce them to nothing more than following the law, it's worse, simply because they will end up being as unethical as their predecessors. A leader may follow all laws and yet be highly immoral in the way he/she leads. Laws are moral minimums that cannot capture the scope and complexity of morality. For example, an elected official may be law abiding, but have little concern for the disadvantaged. Not caring about the poor and the sick is not against the law, but is such a leader ethical?

So, where does this leave us? On the one hand, it is admirable to aspire to high moral standards, but on the other hand, if the standards are unreachable, then people give up trying to reach them (Ciulla, 2003:

313). If the standards are too high, we may become more disillusioned with our leaders for failing to reach them. We might also end up with a shortage of competent people who are willing to take on leadership positions because we expect too much from them ethically. Some highly qualified people stay out of politics because they do not want their private lives aired in public. If the standards are too low, we become cynical about our leaders because we have lost faith in their ability to rise above the moral minimum. This might be the reason why some leaders after they have access to power, end up becoming dictators and totalitarian, because they end up realizing how some of the moral values they believe in, and moral standards set to them are totally unrealistic, and difficult to be implemented as means to achieve good ends. These standards being unrealistic now sends an image of a bad leader back to the population that set these standards to him, and then the reputation of that leader will become tarnished by that same population.

The leader, to react back to these situations will do three (03) things: Break the existing moral values, and moral standards set to him and start creating his own; Seize control of the medias that tarnish his reputation in order to change and impose his new narrative; and then Apply high surveillance in order to control his population and silence those that revolt against his new system. These three (03) things put together is exactly totalitarianism. And the perfect example of it is Napoleon in *Animal Farm*.

Napoleon, during the rebellion was the one who proposed the seven commandments as rules and moral standards to any eventual new leadership in concordance to the willingness of the mass. After Napoleon got access to power, other animals started realizing his regime is steadily turning into a dictatorship. There are changes of rules, and new declarations are being pronounced. Declarations like, "If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right". And from then on, he adopted the maxim, "Napoleon is always right," (Orwell, 1944: 66). His regime started using all ways possible to control all people by forcing and repressing the people. He went on to sentencing those who want to try to oppose him as the power holder. He says "Comrades, here and now I pronounce the death sentence upon Snowball." (Orwell, 1944: 77). Napoleon has the rights and privileges. He says, "the pigs, who were the brains of the farm, should have a quiet place to work in. It was also more

suited to the dignity of the Leader (for of late he had taken to speaking of Napoleon under the title of "Leader") to live in a house than in a mere sty." (Orwell, 1944: 74).

How did we move from, Napoleon setting the new rules, serving as moral values, and setting as moral standards to himself, to Napoleon becoming a furious dictator towards his own people? Were the seven commandments too high for him as moral values and moral standards? The answer to these questions is 'yes'. And the answer is in the seven commandments itself. The last commandment for example says: "All animals are equal". The reality is that all animals cannot be equal when Napoleon is only a pig. So, pigs must be given more privileges and credibility at the expense of other animals. Which is the reason why he has to change the statement later to "Not All animals are equal; some are equal than others". We have also a change from the original " Four legs good, two legs bad." (Orwell, 1944: 22), to "four legs good, two legs better." (Orwell, 1944: 87).

So, the reality is that, when the moral values serving as moral standards to the leader is too high for him, things become too difficult for him to handle, his way of leading becomes bad, the results will only be worsening, and to preserve his reputation back, he/she will turn against his own people and subsequently becomes a dictator or a totalitarian leader. This is the reason why the utilitarians Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill, seeing this split between the ethics of the person and the ethics of his/her actions, created Utilitarianism as another approach to leadership. They said the intentions or reasons for an act tell us something about the morality of the person, but the ends of an act tell us about the morality of the action.

2. The Utilitarian Moral Approach to Leadership in *A Tale of Two Cities*

Utilitarianism, also known as consequentialism, advocated by Jeremy Bentham (1748 -1832), and John Stuart Mill (1806 - 1873; a follower of Bentham), entails that the end result (the consequence) should be the most important consideration in any act implemented. The Utilitarian approach, therefore, forms a stark contrast with the

Universalist (deontological) approach discussed earlier. Universalism focuses on intentions rather than results, while Utilitarianism focuses on results rather than intentions.

Utilitarianism, generally, holds the view that the action that produces the greatest wellbeing for the largest number is the morally right one. Julia Driver specifies on this by saying that: "On the Utilitarian view one ought to maximize the overall good, that is, consider the good of others as well as one's own good" (Driver, 2009: 2). Using more economic-oriented terms, M. Robertson, K. Morris, and G. Walter define Utilitarianism as "a measure of the relative happiness or satisfaction of a group, usually considered in questions of the allocation of limited resources to a population" (Robertson, Morris, & Walter, 2007: 403). Bentham and Mill, felt that 'the good' needed to be maximized to benefit as many stakeholders as possible. They were the major proponents of constructive reforms in the legal and social realm which explains why they promoted the stance of "the greatest amount of good for the greatest number" (Driver, 2009: 3). Bentham, for instance, was convinced that some laws were bad due to their lack of utility which gave rise to mounting societal despondency without any compensating happiness. He felt, much to the surprise of many of his contemporaries, that the quality of any act should be measured by its outcomes. This was, of course, a very instrumental-based mindset, as it was mainly concerned with tangible results. Due to Bentham's focus on the happiness levels of the largest group, there was a significant degree of flexibility embedded in his Utilitarian approach. After all, whatever is considered a cause for general happiness today may not be seen as such tomorrow. Tastes, perceptions, needs, and social constructs change, and "the greatest good for the greatest number" may look entirely different tomorrow than it does today. This is the reason why Johnson identifies four steps to conduct a thorough Utilitarian analysis of an ethical problem: "Identifying the issue at hand; Considering all groups, immediate and non-immediate, that may be affected by this issue; Determining the good and bad consequences for those involved; and Summing the good and bad consequences and selecting the option of which the benefits outweigh the costs (Johnson, 2012: 46).

When we refer back to Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, the scenes in revolutionary France led us to one point to be emphasized at the outset. The revolution presented by Dickens is morally bad as a means used by Madame Defarge and other revolutionaries to achieve their goal, however it was the inevitable consequence of aristocratic oppression within a diseased social system. At least, at the end of the day, the revolution in France prompted the question of whether the corruption within the system of mid-Victorian England will inevitably produce the same revolutionary holocaust. The revolution became a symbolic end to prisons like La Force. "Two score and twelve were told off. From the farmer-general of seventy, whose riches couldn't buy his life, to the seamstress of twenty, whose poverty and obscurity could not save her." (Dickens, 1859: 376). So, the physical struggle between Miss Pross and Madame Defarge, and use of violence as means is truly an opposition of moral values. But it is also an only alternative method for an overall good, such as social change, moral redemption, and change of the system. This sentimental concession to the 'happy ending' prompts Dickens to add, "It was in vain for Madame Defarge to struggle and to strike; Miss Pross, with the vigorous tenacity of love, always so much stronger than hate, clasped her tight, and even lifted her from the floor in the struggle that they had" (Dickens, 1859: 397). Bringing back one of Orwell's comments on the French Revolution which says:

> In other words, the French aristocracy had dug their own graves. But there is no perception here of what is now called historic necessity. Dickens sees that the results are inevitable, given the causes, but he thinks that the causes might have been avoided. The Revolution is something that happens because centuries of oppression have made the French peasantry sub-human. If the wicked nobleman could somehow have turned over a new leaf, like Scrooge, there would have been no Revolution, no jacquerie, no guillotine (Orwell, 1940: 65).

In this comment, Orwell refuses to criticize the use of violence by the revolutionaries during the French Revolution, he rather justifies this action as a result of centuries of oppression towards the peasant

population, and the only way to fight and bring back justice in the French society. So, systemically, he sees it as an act-based utilitarian method in the fight for justice, rather than a morally punishable act, as Kant's Universalism might have considered it to be. Subsequently, the revolutionaries got no choice to use a morally bad means to achieve a globally good end. So, this can be considered as an act-based utilitarian method.

Importantly, the Utilitarianism focuses on the wellbeing of the majority, thus ensures a broadminded, social approach to problems. It overrules selfish considerations and requires caution in decision-making processes with a meticulous focus on the possible outcomes. In a world of flexibility, Utilitarianism ensures that needs are met with consideration to the needs and desires of all stakeholders. Robertson, Morris, and Walter underscore this as follows: "The advantages of Utilitarianism as an ethical theory lie in its intuitive appeal, particularly in the case of 'act Utilitarianism,' and its apparent scientific approach to ethical reasoning" (Robertson, Morris, and Walter, 2007: 404).

However, within the Utilitarian approach, ethical/moral dilemma can lead to, letting the general welfare prevail, and thus making decisions based on moral beliefs, become problematic. Moral dilemma raises the problem of replaceability between a questionable 'common good' and a compromising fair result. Because, within the Utilitarian mindset, it would be preferable to kill one healthy person in order to provide transplant organs for six others, or to kill one man in order to save dozens of others. This gradually eliminates moral values. Because, "the greatest good for the greatest number" (Driver, 2009: 3) is not as a generally established common value as it may seem. It is a very personal perspective, compared to the moral values that are generally and commonly inclined. Moral values will definitely end up not being considered in critical decision makings, which sends us back to dictatorship.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Universalist and the Utilitarian approaches are each other's opposites in many regards. Where the Universalist approach

focuses on good intentions and discourages using anyone as a means toward our ends, the Utilitarian approach focuses on good outcomes. This signifies that others may have to be used as a means toward the desired end. While the Universalist approach emphasizes consistency at all times through its universalizability underpinning, the Utilitarian approach supports flexibility and thus, different decisions are based on the needs and circumstances at hand. Yet, there are some foundational similarities in these two theories as well. Both aim to eliminate selfish decision-making: the Universalist approach does so by refraining from considering others as a means toward our selfish ends while the Utilitarian approach does so by considering the greatest good for the greatest number of people involved. Both theories perceive an attitude of universal impartiality as a foundational requirement. On a less positive note, both theories share the weakness of undesirable outcomes. The Universalist approach does so by being intention-based, and good intentions do not necessarily lead to good outcomes. The Utilitarian approach does so by focusing on outcomes that may nonetheless turn out to be different from what was planned due to insufficient data, unexpected turns in the circumstances, or the uncertainty of life.

Napoleon, in *Animal Farm*, setting up the rules with the other animals, to serve as moral guidance to the new leader, was doing it in order to free themselves from the leadership of Mr. Jones, which means he was trying to eliminate selfish decision-making. This shows he was an intention-based leader, but as intentions do not forcefully lead to good results, and the moral standards set for him were unrealistic, he ended up becoming a dictator. So, here, Napoleon is the representation of a leader with a Universalist Approach. Madame Defarge and other revolutionaries, in *A Tale of Two cities*, choosing the morally bad act 'Revolution' (violence), as a means to overthrow Aristocracy in France, fight injustice and corruption, were doing it in order bring back the 'common good' (Justice); which means they were also trying to eliminate selfish decision-making. This shows they were result-oriented leaders, because they did not care about the nature of the means they will use to achieve their aim, provided that the aim is achieved. But, with this method, things might turn out otherwise than planned, and moral values will be more and more corrupt. So, here, Madame Defarge and co are the representation of leaders with Utilitarian Approach.

Both theories remain prominent, regardless of their weaknesses, and both have the potential of gaining even more appeal due to the trend of globalization and thus an increasingly interwoven world: the Universalist approach due to its "universalizability" test, which may not seem so far-fetched as the world continues to become a global village, and the Utilitarian approach due to its flexibility, which may continue to gain attraction in diversifying environments.

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