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# **Chapter 1: ‘Laying the table’ – responsible leadership, realism and romanticism**

Steve Kempster and Brigid Carroll

If you have followed leadership scholarship to any degree and are well acquainted with the tendency of leadership to arrive with new adjectives before it - transformational, authentic, ethical, relational leadership all being examples – it would be understandable that such a new descriptor heralds a whole new school of leadership thinking. That’s not what this book is about. We would prefer that responsible leadership inserts itself as a critical stimulant to supply enough grit and intrigue to catalyse some new questions about the state of leadership thinking through its myriad forms. After all, responsibility is surely axiomatic with almost any variation of leadership theory, to the point it is referenced constantly but almost never theorised or explored in its own right. If this book creates a critical engagement with responsibility in leadership – what it means to be responsible, who is responsible and the relationships, dynamics and networks that form and reform that ‘who’, what leadership is responsible for, what responsibility looks and feels like for the different actors involved, how responsibility is constructed, deconstructed and identified – then this book will achieve something of value.

We will be open right up front about the drivers for this book. Responsible leadership theory has been largely driven by our colleagues in the corporate social responsibility space who quite naturally looked across to leadership research to help the progression of corporate social responsibility thinking and found precious little to work with. To be blunt, they found a body of thinking on leadership that didn’t appear to be interested in the big, pressing challenges facing the world; that seemed to be narrowly focused on the dynamics between people in positions and their direct reports to meet organisational performance expectations, and that seems over-disposed to view leadership as an offshoot of personality, character or psychological traits and their development. Yes we are being provocative here but we are inviting just a glimpse of the leadership body of work and community from another field who were disappointed and not satisfied with what they saw. Responsible leadership theory grew directly out of this lack and gap between a society facing challenges that require a big picture, multiple party, long term process, and what we know about how influence, change, and movement happen in the patterns of leading and following that occur between people with different and unequal positions, power, and passion.

It is important to say this thinking on responsible leadership is very much in its infancy. We call it a theory and can point to strong starting scholarly contributions; and there has been an enthusiastic embrace of it by those who want to support corporates, particularly to engage with issues that go beyond

a traditional focus on financial bottom lines. However in truth there is much we don't know in this intersection of leadership, responsibility, and whole world challenges. In reading this book we can guarantee that you will be drawn in to the very largest of leadership questions, will meet all kinds of assumptions about leaders and leadership given the ferment and contestation intrinsic to the field, and you'll be drawn in by cases, stories, and examples of how responsibility is both understood and practised. Our wish is you leave with questions and real vigour to not take responsibility too lightly and not let it lie largely unexamined as it has done to date.

To aid us in this enterprise we have inserted responsible leadership between two other movements if you like – between romanticism and realism. We will pick up what we mean by these in a later section but for now, we'll invite you to have a feel or experience of them in this terrain of leadership and responsibility. Please read the following from Derick de Jongh, Director of the Centre for Responsible Leadership (2005):

*'Just Imagine. Imagine a world where harmony, equity, social cohesion, ethical conduct, a sustainable environment and a just society dominate the thoughts and minds of all leaders, business, government and civil society...Imagine leaders who translate these personal ideals into standard business practice...Imagine leaders who take personal interest and commit themselves emotionally to the real world we want to create...'*

Pause a moment, not to reflect on that passage exactly, but your response to that passage. Of course there will be a whole raft of responses to such words but we think they'll be two strong clusters of responses that loosely translate to our terms of romanticism and realism. The first would be characterised by an excitement and idealism on reading those words. Strong in such an idealism would be notions of possibility, a sense of values or morals or ethics and something we could call belief or hope that is associated with seeing something other than what is. We want to call that romanticism. Another response though looks roughly the opposite and could feel like a sense of déjà vu or cynicism which is coloured by disbelief, experience or what we might call a reality check. Strong in that is a desire to see more than powerful words and statements and an understanding that profound shifts and changes belie enormous complexity and the navigation through difference, conflict, and clashing assumptions. We would like to call this realism. We argue that, not only does responsible leadership inherently risk these two responses, but it needs them as vital points of reference in its quest to engage leadership in larger more meaningful issues at the same time as bringing the complexity of collective and collaborative dynamics in the pursuit of solving them. In this introductory chapter we work on 'laying the table' of responsible leadership amidst the settings, flavours and 'tools' of romanticism and realism.

So much discussion on the theme of responsible leadership assumes, rightly in our view, that great change is required in the practices and responsibilities associated with leadership. Calls for leadership to embrace a broader and deeper kind of responsibility should set in motion a real examination of the shortfalls of traditional ways of thinking about leadership, alongside new possibilities for its redefinition and redevelopment. Working this between our poles of romanticism and realism should result in a treatment of responsible leadership as not simply ‘utopian’ but, ‘realistic utopian’ (Rawls, 1999, p. 127). We need to remember Meindl’s seminal work on the ‘romance of leadership’ as an exploration of the tendency (both within the literature and in organisational settings) to overestimate the significance of leadership and its impact on organisational success. Developed by Meindl (1995), the phrase itself refers to the follower tendency to attribute responsibility for company performance to organisational leaders. We have much sympathy with this view when seen through a narrow, heroic, and individualistic lens. We would wish, however, to re-introduce the romanticised rhetoric to situate it within current leadership discourses regarding authentic, distributed, and ethical leadership where the societal, economic, and environmental challenges do require us to collectively take the lead in moving forward towards doing good and growing well. In this way, we see the need for both perspectives of realism and romanticism to be embraced.

In the remainder of this chapter we wish to sketch out responsible leadership, romanticism, and realism in turn in very broad brushstrokes as a way of representing the central concerns, questions and discourses of the turns and twists that each chapter will provide. We then briefly introduce the chapters that follow and attempt to represent some of the remaining trajectory of this book.

## **Responsibility in leadership?**

Whilst responsible leadership is termed a theory, we don’t wish to present it as a body of thinking that has gained any real closure yet. Rather we view this as a perspective or lens that is very much work in progress, that enables another way in which to debate and examine leadership. Our perspective is to assume that responsibility is axiomatic to leadership. The emphasis then is on the nature and manifestation of such responsibility (or irresponsibility) within the practice of leading that requires attention. Attention in the sense of developing insight, understanding, explanation, and theorising in order to have impact on responsibility in leading. That is the broader objective of this volume.

Placing orientation on responsibility within leading rather than the development of the theory of responsible leadership is not to devalue the very helpful arguments and expositions of theories of ‘responsible leadership’ that will be explored by authors in this volume. This work provides many useful frames to examine the context, antecedents, processes, and outcomes of what enables/disables the manifestation of responsibility in the practice of leading. It offers up helpful guidance towards an appreciation of a variety of dimensions of responsibility in leadership. However, in itself it doesn’t bring

enough theoretical and empirical weight to the construct of responsibility which like all constructs has a legacy of psychological, sociological, philosophical, historical, and literary thinking that can only enrich our understanding and practice of leadership. Hence we welcome an engagement with responsibility in its fullest form. To this end, we offer here 10 propositions alongside 10 questions that we see as shaping the development of responsible leadership at and beyond the present time:

**First**, is its attention and even commitment to social responsibility and the related field of CSR (Waldman & Balven, 2014).

*What assumptions have driven the definition and meaning of responsibility in the social responsibility and CSR fields, and how do these confront, clash with, and extend responsibility in leadership?*

**Second**, it seems willing to assume applicability to multiple levels of responsibility – the individual, the team, the department, the organisation, and broadly societal (Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012; Doh & Quigley, 2014).

*Given that leadership tends to operate between levels, then what processes and practices are required to enact responsibility between people and groups with different power, position, and privilege? What paradoxes, insights, or mysteries arise when the each of these levels becomes the focal point for responsible leadership?*

**Third**, it seeks to go beyond a shareholder perspective to embrace a stakeholder perspective (Maak & Pless, 2006a, Waldman & Galvin, 2008).

*Given the less direct and more networked relationship between stakeholders then what kind of leadership engages and mobilises parties with very different interests, agendas, and institutional narratives? What assumptions, discourses, and histories shape the priorities given to competing stakeholders? Why, how, and where does responsible leadership challenge and unsettle these priorities?*

**Fourth**, is its reliance on ethical assumptions to do no harm and do good (Ciulla, 2006; Stahl & Sully de Luque, 2014) connected with notions of duty – duty of care, duty of assistance, and duty of justice (Maak & Pless, 2009).

*What kind of relationship exists between leadership, responsibility, and ethics? What kinds of questions, practices, and identities would help those in leadership hold the kind of conversations where competing ethical principles could be aired? What assumptions, discourses, and histories have driven the notions of duty and ethics within organisations and how do they shape what it means to lead responsibly?*

**Fifth**, it tries to be sensitive to global inter-cultural sensitivity (Miska, Stahl, & Mendenhall, 2013), a global citizen orientation and a call to cosmopolitanism (Maak & Pless, 2009), as well as Turnbull, Case, Edwards, Schedlitzki and Simpson's (2011) notion of 'worldly' leadership.

*What tensions and paradoxes arise in a globalised world, and what does it mean to lead responsibly amid these? How is leadership challenged and stretched by responsible global citizenship, and what does it mean to lead in such a dispersed, diverse, and distributed context?*

**Sixth**, it pursues an outcome orientation to responsibility that, for example, addresses Elkington's (1997) notion of the triple bottom line but additional to the economic, societal, and ecological it encourages a humanitarian perspective (Maak & Pless 2009).

*What tensions, conflicts, and paradoxes do corporates particularly encounter when they attempt to 'balance' financial, environmental, social, and humanitarian possibilities?*

**Seventh**, it engages with processes of sensemaking and sensegiving strongly linked with questions of purpose (Kempster, Jackson, & Conroy, 2011).

*If responsibility emerges between people in interactions (as opposed to being intrinsic to someone a priori any situation) then how do moments of giving and making sense co-create what it means to be responsible? What is the role of purpose in sustaining, driving, and connecting responsible leadership across time and boundaries?*

**Eighth**, responsible leadership implies a shared orientation (Pearce, Wassenaar, & Manz, 2104); a collaborative and relational approach to leading that connects stakeholders together (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Maak & Pless, 2006b; Pless, Maak & Waldman, 2012).

*Why does responsible leadership imply a shared orientation? What are the limits and blindspots when approaching it with an individual orientation? What is opened up by bringing the collective into the picture of responsible leadership?*

**Ninth**, and perhaps fundamentally, responsibility embraces notions of the use of resources: notably material, human, and financial (see for example Orlitzky, Schmidt & Rynes, 2003; for a useful typology see Voegtlin, 2015, p. 14-15).

*What types of spaces, artefacts, discourses, and technologies facilitate responsible leadership and how do they do so? What assumptions, discourses, and histories enable and constrain the use of resources, where do these need to be disrupted and what might disruption look like?*

**Tenth**, and finally, how responsibility is framed within short- or long-term perspectives; in a sense a focus on shareholder value has been historically short-term, while achieving stakeholder value is over the long-term (Waldman & Galvin, 2008).

*How do collectives work between short term or immediate responsibilities and long term or more distant responsibilities? What tensions, conflicts, and processes mediate between these different levels of responsibilities?*

For the purposes of this introduction, we have attempted to capture this extensive range of dimensions and questions into an image or metaphor; in part to help understanding, but also to illustrate the sheer scope of the nature of leadership responsibilities. While we don't want to package responsible leadership theory as a matter of chance, we do want to indicate the multiple ways that responsibility crosses and connects multiple levels of analysis. The convergence and integration of multiple stakeholders to examine, make decisions and take action on challenges that systemically impact all is a vital process and one which advocates of responsible leadership suggest is an approach that has unique applicability (Waldman & Balven, 2014, p. 224). If responsible leadership theory is to redefine the kind of leadership required to sustain movement on challenges that belong to no-one, but impact many if not all of us, then it does need the capacity to track with multiple, concurrent, and mutually constructed responsibilities between individuals, groups, institutions, and networks and we hope this image conveys something of the multi-dimensional nature of this.

We seek to illustrate such systemic interaction linked to multiple levels of analysis in Figure 1 (which draws on a suggestion of Kempster and Watton, 2014, Voegtlin et al.'s levels of analysis, 2012, p. 5, and the kaleidoscope model of change from Balogun and Hope-Hailey, 2008):

Drawing on Balogun and Hope-Hailey's insightful use of the kaleidoscope metaphor (in the context of change management) Figure 1 seeks to represent a dynamic of issues configuring to generate distinctive and unique combinations for each institutional context. The outer ring represents levels of analysis while the inner ring represents the dimensions of responsibilities in leadership. Unique combinations come together each time the wheel is spun and a card selected. Now imagine that the kaleidoscope is not working properly and each turn does shift the dimensions but not seamlessly so that gaps and un-configured areas are present in the midst of each configuration. To us the questions underneath each of the dimensions points to places that the kaleidoscope can't yet assemble. Our incomplete kaleidoscope points to a body of work that is partial, ill-formed and very much emergent in terms of understanding. In many ways we suggest it is a beginning that points to depth and complexity but not yet with enough of the pieces to create full configurations; far from a complete theory.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.1 ABOUT HERE]

The image, in a novel way, speaks to Voegtlin's (2015) notion of developing a responsibility orientation. So, taking our lead from Balogun and Hope-Hailey, we suggest approaches to researching and developing responsibility in leadership would anticipate complexity through situational variety and a focus on critical reflection that seeks to develop responsible judgment to leadership decisions and action. In this way we anticipate that theory development that generates normative ideal models of the responsible leader will be at best provide useful if limited stimulus to the practising 'leader'; but at worse an idealised myth akin to becoming the 'romance' of responsible leadership. The assumption through this volume is more associated with seeing the critically rich complexity of context and contingency of outcomes.

For us then, the tension between individual and collective understandings of leadership are most salient here. Recent research and subsequent commentaries on leadership give voice to an orientation away from essentialist qualities of an individual, and toward relational, contextual and processual perspectives of leadership. Brigid's work (Carroll, Levy, & Richmond, 2008) on leadership-as-practice most helpfully gives structure to this situated orientation of leadership. From a leadership-as-practice ontology, the focus is meaning and activity informed through participative engagement between individuals. It allows additional dimensions of materiality and history to inform meaning and action (Chia & McKay, 2007). We also are drawn to Drath and colleagues' (Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor, & McGuire, 2008) notion of leadership as an outcome. They speak of direction, alignment, and commitment as generating leadership from a range of activities. This may be the prominent person in the accepted role as 'leader'; but also may be the relational outcome of collective, shared, and distributed activity. It may also be in part the consequence of activity shaped by materiality and activity shaped by discourse. In addition Parry and Hansen have offered up a convincing and highly plausible case for leadership as a narrative 'where people follow the story as much as they follow the story-teller' (2007, p. 281). Taken together, notions of leadership as process and leadership as outcomes should greatly extend the scope of responsibility for purpose and activity beyond the few. Arguably a relational, situated perspective of engaging and working with stakeholders on aligned purposes of shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2006) will become increasingly the norm (Maak & Pless 2006a), particularly with respect to addressing the grand challenges (Malgrande, 2015) that face us – societal, ecological, and humanitarian. That's the real invitation to responsible leadership theory from both the questions and the incomplete kaleidoscope image.

To look beyond the individual as leader and extend exploration of how to develop responsibility as a relational phenomenon appears most central if leadership is to make its most necessary mark on addressing such grand challenges. Such expression begins to lean towards the romanticism that is in part the energy behind this volume, why authors have come together. Yet authors are also mindful of the realism that impacts on the respective aspect they will speak about, more on this very shortly. You



will note the desire to break away from leader-centric notions of leadership in many of the chapters in this book but at the same time a difficulty in doing so. Our overall sense is that the two frames of romanticism and realism go some way to shed light on this dilemma and to these in turn we will now turn.

### **Romanticism:**

Romanticism probably is most identified with a movement that became prominent from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century where it was a reaction against the enlightenment and associated notions of objectivity, control, restraint, logic, and rational behaviour. It gave emphasis to emotion, inspiration, subjectivity, imagination, and beauty. Romanticism seemed to hold much in store in understanding the past and the important link to nature. Friedrich Schlegel appears to be the first to use the term *romantic*, describing literature depicting emotional matter in an imaginative form (Stone, 2005). Others prominent to the Romanticism movement were Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Our actual usage of the construct comes from the recent *Developing Leadership Capacity Conference* held at Lancaster Leadership Centre (July 2014) which drew heavily on the work of Simon Bainbridge. He acted as co-host providing a thread through the conference helping to frame the conference theme ‘the new romantics of responsible leadership’. Many colleagues will be aware that it was from the discussions and insights at this conference that became the inspiration to this book.

So in this spirit we authors have sought to draw on a central tenet of romanticism, that of the free and imaginative expression of the feelings of the artist. To this end authors are encouraged to draw on Wordsworth’s view that writing should begin as ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings [that] the poet can then mould into art’. Such liberation seen to enable ‘a new and restless spirit, seeking violently to burst through old and cramping forms, [...] for perpetual movement and change, an effort to return to the forgotten sources of life.’ By a ‘return to forgotten sources of life’ (Berlin, 1965: 92) this is towards a closer connection to humanity and a closer ecological connection to nature and the environment. Yet we also recognise here a caution against a nostalgia for aspects of society that are quite unwarranted to the current prescient circumstances.

Following further conversation with Simon Bainbridge, we understand that the essence of romanticism is as a utopian movement imagining a better world and seeking to build a better world. Nancy Adler’s recent work on leading beautifully (2011) echoes romanticism; although she does not overtly position her thesis as drawing from this. Citing the poet Donogoe she brings an evocative attention to the need for beauty to be reclaimed: ‘Our trust in the future has lost its innocence [...] it is because we have so disastrously neglected the *Beautiful* that we now find ourselves in such a terrible crisis’ (2011, p. 208, emphasis added). Innocence and beauty are central romantic tenets. Romanticism sought to resist the rationalising objectivity and productivity of the enlightenment project. Adler’s argument seeks to give voice to beauty alongside objectivity, with passion and emotion alongside reason. She evocatively

critiques notions of 'progress' by discussing ugliness and beauty. Romanticist's quest was (and perhaps still is) to give attention to the industrial ugliness of mankind over nature and seek to reassert nature over mankind. Goldsmith spoke of the ugliness of industrialisation at the cost of the lost beauty of the romantic idyll of rural life:

*'Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,  
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;  
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,  
And Desolation saddens all thy green ...  
Around the world each needful product flies  
For all the luxuries the world supplies  
While thus the land adored for pleasure all  
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall'*

Extract from 'The Deserted Village', by Oliver Goldsmith (In Lutz, 1998)

In a way, Goldsmith described the prescient future of nature dominated by humanity, where we have lost something beautiful through our connection with nature. Many romanticist painters depicted this loss through contrasting nature vs. industrialisation. Our interpretation of Adler is that she is encouraging an awakening of excitement and emotion through rediscovering beauty in the acts and deeds of our endeavours. Her keynote presentations (International Leadership Association, 2013; Academy of Management, 2015) are rooted in pictures of nature and through the joy of music generating imagination of possibilities: a thoroughly romantic project. What is being argued is for is the arrogance of the enlightenment project and its offspring that of modernity to be moderated by romanticism. Bainbridge suggests that this was in the mind of Wordsworth that romanticism is not unfettered though as, even erratically, romanticism sought to unite itself with realism – Wordsworth argues in *The Prelude* it is ...

*'Not in Utopia – subterraneous fields,  
Or some secreted island, heaven know where –  
But in the very world which is the world  
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,  
We find our happiness, or not at all.'* (X, 723-7, In Bainbridge, 2007)

Wordsworth's phrase 'the very world which is the world / Of all of us' connects to notions of realism. He is arguing that ultimately it is in this world of realism that we will find 'our happiness, or not at all'. It's a mistake then to read romanticism as an alternative to realism: romanticism is better understood as complementing and supplementing realism. What use after all is pragmatism without possibility, logic without emotion, rationality without imagination? As we argue here and throughout the volume this

real world needs the injection of imagination if we are to find movement, novelty, and aspiration in challenges that defy existing knowledge and expertise.

So the romanticism of hope and imagination needs to be grounded in the realism of context. It is here in the ‘very world [...] of all of us’ that we need to introduce the balance of realism to the arguments and crafting of chapters.

## **Realism**

The primary interest of realism is to the actual or real or situated understanding to facts. It is important however that realism is not seen as prosaic and dull. Realism should mean confronting reality or engaging with how things really are as opposed to how one might like or imagine them to be. In such a sense then realism is courageous and bold, given one of the most challenging things we surely do is learn to strip away rose tinted spectacles, our own prejudices and pretence, and take a good long look at ourselves, others, and our context. Those who call themselves realists – artists or otherwise – take their inspiration and direction from what is present in life and not idealised or abstracted. Realism can have a grittiness, power, and honesty that can help us face up to what we most might want to evade about ourselves, our thinking, and our action or inaction. In such a vein, we would consider realist writers such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Mark Twain who turned attention to what we could call ordinary characters deeply embedded in social relationships and structures in their accomplishment of everyday life. At its best realism has a political and social character to it where difficult realities – poverty, injustice, corruption – are seen as deserving of attention as anything else. We argue that rather than being drawn to ‘just imagine’ (the romanticist request of us), those in leadership need to be grounded to using their senses, being fully in the present and not flinching at inconvenient or messy ‘truths’. There are few absolutes in realism so truth is a continuum and the accent is on seeking to accurately reflect a reality that will be uncertain and emergent.

Our stance then is that responsible leadership involves a reawakening to the realities of a world that demands we claim our leadership starting point from how it is experienced by the myriad of those involved. Realism focuses on context and social relations – a sense of the ‘here and now’. In contrast to romanticism and its focus on the rural idyl, realism focuses on urbanisation – reflecting the reality of its time. In Steve’s work with Ken Parry (Kempster & Parry, 2011) the argument of a critical realist orientation to leadership research was offered that outlines the case of seeking to explain the realism of the local here and now. Drawing on Bhaskar (1978) the gritty reality is seen as composed of events, empirical experience, concepts, and language – transitive aspects of reality – and these transitive elements interact with underlying structures – intransitive aspects of reality. As we seek to make sense and reveal the reality of our experiences and on-going practices in and of the world these have an on-going correspondence with knowledge, meaning and truth. We draw here on Andrew Sayer’s powerful

treatise on realism and social science (1992, 2000). He explicates an argument for practical adequacy of truth claims as opposed to a correspondence reduction of truth:

‘truth might better be understood as ‘practical adequacy’, that is in terms of the extent to which it generates expectations about the world and about results of our actions which are realized. Practically adequate different parts of our knowledge will vary according to where, [when,] and to what they are applied (2000, p. 43).

Set within this notion of realism our practical endeavours, relationships, assumptions, and meanings are shaped by embedded structures. Yet structures also become transitive through sufficient passage of time (Archer, 1995). So rather than truth claims being proven / not proven, truth (as a transitive form of reality) should be seen as a continuum (Dean, Joseph, Roberts & Wight, 2006, p. 53). For example ‘certain’, ‘obvious’, ‘evident’, ‘beyond reasonable doubt’, ‘probable’ on the one hand; through ‘probably false’, ‘clear to disbelieve’, ‘reasonable to disbelieve’, ‘evidently false’, ‘obviously false’ and ‘certainly false’. So a realist perspective seeks to offer up accounts that have verisimilitude, providing a window to the real; yet accepts that such accounts are only a kind of truth. Reality is too complex to capture – hence a continuum of truth claims. So what does this all mean to the discussion on responsible leadership: realism and romanticism?

The romantic perspective offers up imagination of what might be. It gives a lead to energy, passion, and excitement to possibilities of desirable futures. Attention to the aesthetic beauty of what we are seeking to create gives impetus to enhancing practices for collective effect. A rebalancing for nature in harmony with humankind. Romanticism gives emphasis to the heroic individual to make change occur – both a strength and a weakness: a strength in terms of energy and commitment to change the status quo, and a weakness with the limitations of the heroic leader model.

This individual orientation is different to the realist perspective which places emphasis on social relations. It emphasises an examination of why things are as they are; seeking attention to the detail of understand situated events, relationships, motives and power. The emphasis is on providing a glimpse of truth accounts which are assumed to be fallible as a result of reality emergence. Realism assumes deep complexity to reality. Its strength is the attention to contextual detail, description, and contingent explanation of how reality occurs. It’s weaknesses are a tendency towards determinism – a sense of lacking the visionary and emotive energy and excitement of romanticism. Realism accepts limits on imagination and the possible. The gritty and often grim ordinariness of reality makes it less appealing than the romantic trope of the heroes’ journey and the quest to find again the loss of connection to a utopian ideal. To enable a movement toward responsible leadership is not simply a claim for imagination of possibilities or more emotional and exciting visions. Rather it is finding an intersection between an engagement with everyday experiences and expectations, and the potentiality of very

different norms, practices, and expectations with the potential to transform relationships, structures, and practices.

## **Statement of Aims of the Book**

The aim of this book is to bring together a selection of high quality papers in a volume which helps readers navigate their understanding of responsible leadership using both realist and romantic points of reference. That is, the *romanticism* for change in practices of leadership that may address societal, ecological, and humanitarian challenges through everyday organisational activity set alongside the *realism* of such contexts and antecedent influences that may contemporaneously limit scope for action. Our intentions were deliberately expansive and invited colleagues to explore themes of responsibility from a very broad canvas. We desired that authors would be driven by their own engagement with gritty current realities and idealistic future passions to craft and present scholarly arguments. After all, Coleridge spoke of the artist / thinker not being constrained by artificial rules that might limit imagination and limit the ‘romantic originality’. Hence we have sought to give authors their voice and you will find a wide range of theoretical, empirical, critical, confirmatory, pedagogical, and action orientated voices in this volume. While we have invited Eric Guthey to give concluding voice, all chapters provide arguments that seek to provoke and move on the debate around leadership and responsibility.

The chapters have been grouped in to three themes.

### **Theme One: Interrogating, Critiquing, strengthening RL theory**

Iszatt-White - Mapping the terrain of responsible leadership: something ‘old’, something new, something borrowed, something green

Carroll Re-defining Responsibility: Towards a Theory of Co-responsible Leadership

### **Theme Two: Connecting Responsible Leadership Theory to practice**

Lee & Higgs - This green pastoral landscape: Values, responsible leadership and the romantic imagination

Madsen - Leadership Responsibility and Calling: The Role of Calling in a Woman’s Choice to Lead

Blakeley - Responsible Leadership: A Radical View

### **Theme Three: Developing Responsible Leadership**

Gustafsson & Hope-Hailey - Responsible Leadership, trust and the role of HRM

Parry & Jackson - Promoting Responsibility, Purpose and Romanticism in Business Schools

Kempster, Gregory & Watton - Developing Responsible Leadership through Discourse Ethics

Turnbull & Williams - Developing ‘next generation’ globally responsible leadership: Gen Y perspectives on global responsibility, leadership, and integrity

## **Theme One: Interrogating, critiquing and strengthening RL theory**

*Chapter 2 – Mapping the terrain of responsible leadership: Something ‘old’, something new, something borrowed, something green*

Following on from the broad canvas outlined in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 - Marian makes that case that much has been written in recent years concerning the need for responsible leadership to move us ‘from value to values, from shareholders to stakeholders, and from balance sheets to balanced development’ (Kofi Annan, 14th October, 2002). Attempts have also been made to arrive at a consensus definition of the construct and to compare this emergent understanding of the characteristics of responsible leadership with related extant leadership theories. This is clearly a work in progress with much still to be done. In this chapter Marian aims to contribute to this work of ‘bricolage’ by further developing the mapping process (and critiquing what has gone before) and by weaving in some thoughts in relation to the micro-level behaviours required of anybody (individual or organisation) who wishes to appear credible in proclaiming the wider ‘responsible’ agenda. The suggestion here is that, actually, we do need to ‘sweat the small stuff’ as well as striving for the big stuff!

*Chapter 3 – Re-defining responsibility: Towards a theory of co-responsible leadership*

Brigid explores more deeply the nature of responsibility as a phenomenon in Chapter 4. She outlines an argument for redefining responsibility: from individual attribute to collective capacity. Whilst leadership theory, practice, and development has, and is, making a slow but steady shift from an individual to a collective construct, understandings of responsibility in the leadership terrain have barely moved. Brigid’s chapter critically examines notions of collective responsibility (Jonas, 1984) and co-responsibility (Apel, 1988) and asks whether either can provide a sufficient redefinition of responsibility that would facilitate collective and participatory forms of leadership. Of particular interest is how to redefine the discursive, identity, social and political dimensions of responsibility substantively in order to achieve more relational and distributed leadership dynamics.

## **Theme Two: Connecting RL theory to practice/ applying RL in the real world**

*Chapter 4 – This green pastoral landscape: Values, responsible leadership and the romantic imagination.*

Sarah and Malcolm raise three key questions for responsible leadership and practice, which emerge from an examination of the personal values concept and its application to organisational settings. By exploring the theoretical foundations of values research, we make links between personal values theory and the practice of leadership in organisations that espouse a strong, values-based culture. The chapter

suggests practical ways to approach the issues raised while adding to contemporary debates on responsible leadership and to the agenda for future research.

#### *Chapter 5 – Leadership responsibility and calling: The role of calling in a woman’s choice to lead*

Recent research has continued to find that low numbers of women are found in top leadership positions in nearly all industries and countries. Although progress has been made, there remain many barriers that arise from within the complex team and organisational environments (external) and also within women themselves (internal). In this chapter, Susan contends that in finding ways to better prepare women for leadership, one of the most important and foundational areas of emerging research focuses on understanding women’s aspirations and motivations to lead. In most cases, these aspirations and motivations appear to be significantly different for women than for men, with initial studies finding that a powerful motivator for many women who have stepped forward to lead is a sense of ‘calling’. After becoming aware of their own giftedness and then understanding this call to lead, it appears that, among other things, their self-efficacy and ability to become more resilient seem to increase. These are, Susan suggests, key characteristics needed for women to step forward to take on positional leadership roles. In this chapter, she shares research, cases, and personal experiences, and passions to help explore this multifaceted phenomenon and its applications to the leadership research, theory, and practice.

#### *Chapter 6 – Responsible leadership: A radical view*

If Steve Jobs was the business icon of the late 20th century, Unilever’s current CEO, Paul Polman, could be viewed as today’s equivalent. This quintessentially responsible leader is Vice-Chairman of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and serves on the Board of the UN Global Compact. Polman’s powerful position at the apex of a transnational corporation with a unique culture and heritage raises an important question as to whether we can all be responsible leaders whatever our organisations, contexts, and roles within the system. In this chapter, Karen challenges particularly corporates and multinationals – and those leading in them – to claim their own complicity and power in the most significant challenges of our time. She argues that such issues require new partnerships and alliances of those who are powerful and marginalised to engage increasingly more diverse networks of stakeholders with the true complexities of such issues. She sees a real difference between radical responsible leadership theories pursuing systems wide progress and transformational leadership approaches orientated at offering too quick but simplistic answers. This chapter doesn’t fall into the latter category of offering simple answers but instead calls for leadership partnerships that transcends sectors and institutions to set ethical agendas, humanistic values, democratic structures, moral character, and the fundamental transformation of systems.

### **Theme Three: Developing Responsible Leadership**

### *Chapter 7 – Developing trustworthy leadership: The role of HRM*

In this chapter Stefanie and Veronica examine how Human Resources processes and practices may enable the development of trustworthy leadership. While studies to date have made important contributions to our understanding of trust, leadership, and HRM, none thus far has empirically investigated how organisations may either explicitly or implicitly develop trustworthy leadership through HR practices and processes. A gap filled by the authors own research, presented here and showing how through various HR practices and processes organisations may select, develop, and assess trustworthiness in their leaders, either explicitly or implicitly. Their findings suggest that organisations more readily make use of practices that build the ability and predictability of their leaders using well-established performance metrics, rather than practices which develop integrity and benevolence, which are seen to be more challenging because dependent on personal judgements resulting from social interactions. Instead, these were more implicitly and informally developed and often seemed to require a sense of courage in order to be explicitly addressed.

### *Chapter 8 – Promoting responsibility, purpose and romanticism*

This chapter seeks to differentiate leadership responsibility from leadership accountability. In this chapter leadership is *responsible* for generating shared sense-making whilst *accountable* for organisational outcomes. Ken and Brad argue that business schools have largely focused on developing accountability for outcomes at the detriment of developing the capacity of leadership to build trust, create dialogue, and pursue ethical and sustainable solutions. This inability of business schools to develop a more nuanced interdependence between responsibility and accountability is a significant contributor to the loss of ethical and moral leadership that the contemporary business environment can be charged with. They propose that, beyond calls for new business school curricula, a new business discourse is required which develops the capacity of future business leaders to be reflective, interdisciplinary, creative, and connected to broader philosophical and cultural understandings than they currently are.

### *Chapter 9 – Developing responsible leadership through discourse ethics*

The use of case studies in the teaching of business ethics has been seen as a process to stimulate discourse ethics. However, many case studies ask students to consider abstract and sometimes hypothetical situations and, whilst these can have pedagogical value in catalysing such discourse, they have limited resonance with the milieu of everyday managerial context – they lack the necessary nuance of lived experience which is provided by live cases. In this chapter, Steve, Sarah, and Emma explore how live cases can be created within management education through the use of the critical incident technique. Specifically, the chapter explores the notion of linking leadership learning lived experience (Kempster, 2006, 2009), ethical dilemmas from such lived experience using the critical incident



technique in the classroom with the primary goals of stimulating discourse ethics and interrelated management learning. In so doing, Sarah, Steve, and Emma seek to elaborate the theoretical argument of why such an approach of live cases in the classroom may gain greater traction than abstract cases.

*Chapter 10 – Developing ‘next generation’ globally responsible leadership: Generation Y perspectives on global responsibility, leadership, and integrity*

In 2011 Daimler’s Corporate Academy invited 125 next generation leaders from across the globe to a contribute essays on the theme of ‘What does globally responsible leadership and integrity mean to you?’ In 2012-13, the University of Gloucestershire incorporated a final year undergraduate module on Global Responsible Leadership where students were asked to write a similar essay and the top 22 essays were selected for analysis. In this chapter, Sharon and Sue focus on the crucial role of developing Generation Y leaders in building a responsible global society for the future, recognising that without a significant shift in business school curricula as well as leadership development agendas, it will not be possible to break with the individualistic short-term behaviours of today’s organisations and businesses. The chapter examines the discourses of globally responsible leadership embedded in the essays, and asks what underlying meaning and assumptions about the economic and social world, the planet, and the nature of responsibility and integrity are found within these discourses and how these agendas can be further developed.

*Chapter 11 – Concluding thoughts: Where now for responsible leadership?*

In the concluding chapter, a recognised commentator in the field of responsible leadership, Eric Guthey, brings together the chapters in a new twist on the realism/romanticism theme. Through a compelling historical lens and approach, he tosses antimodernism into the mix as a type of romanticism particularly attuned to the leadership mandate. His concern in this last chapter is fittingly the capacity of responsible leadership theory to be genuinely transformative and a real force for mobilising change. He argues that if responsible leadership theory relies too much on conventional and particularly individualistic notions of leadership then it will risk unwittingly reinforcing the status quo more than it would like. He concludes by calling for a fundamental reconceptualization of leadership as a social, collective, and interactive activity that functions more as a social movement than a personal challenge or quest.

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