

Peter J. Mango

Molloy College, USA

PHILOSOPHICAL TENSIONS AMONG LEADERSHIP, EFFICIENCY, COMMUNITY— AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE ACADEMY

I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men.

—Lao-Tse

“Effective immediately, your job with our institution is terminated.” On a day of spring 2014 these words were uttered to a person I know. A person holding a Philosophy Ph.D. Someone who had gotten along with fellow coworkers, supervisors, and students alike. Someone who had not been guilty of a crime, nor even of failure to perform teaching or administrative duties as requested. This was a person who had repeatedly stood up for the boss, in fact had tried to make him look good, and who often worked overtime. Someone who had made a point of not disrespecting colleagues, or students, behind their backs. The starkness of the words spoken, beyond even what they entailed, was perhaps what most stood out to this person. Words spoken as if to an enemy, rather than to a loyal coworker. The only reason offered for this dismissal was one of “organizational restructuring.” And this happened at an institution of higher education which prides itself on its Catholic spiritual identity. How to account for this?

The Spread of the “Toxic Leader”

Harvard University’s Dr. Daniel Goleman, popularizer of the term “emotional intelligence,” has written recently of leaders who deploy what

he terms a “super-focused” management style. Goleman refers to such a leader as a “pacesetter.” Goleman claims that, “Pacesetters tend to rely on a ‘command and coerce’ leadership strategy,” “where they simply give orders and expect obedience.” According to Goleman—and here I’m going to cite him at some length—leaders sporting a pacesetting management style:

create a *toxic* climate, one that dispirits those they lead. Such leaders may get short-term results through personal heroics . . . but do so at the expense of building their organizations . . . Such leaders don’t listen, let alone make decisions by consensus. They don’t spend time getting to know the people they work with day in and day out, but relate to them in one-dimensional roles. They don’t help people develop new strengths or refine their abilities, but dismiss their need to learn as a failing. They come off as arrogant and impatient. [emphases added]

Goleman continues, adding ominously:

And they are spreading [emphasis added] . . . the number of people in organizations of *all* kinds who are overachievers [in the sense Goleman just described] *has been climbing steadily among those in leadership positions* since the 1990’s . . . During the financial crisis of 2008 and onward, [and here Goleman quotes business consultant Georg Vielmetter], ‘many companies promoted . . . top-down leaders . . . good for handling emergencies . . . But it changes the heart of an organization. Two years later those same leaders created a climate where trust and loyalty evaporate’ . . .¹

The just-get-it-done mode runs roughshod over human concerns . . . Ambitious revenue targets or growth goals are not the only gauge of an organization’s health—and if they are achieved at a cost to other basics, the long-term downsides, like losing star employees, can outweigh short-term successes as those costs lead to later failures

¹ Daniel Goleman, *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence* (A&C Black, 2013). Goleman here goes on to add of the period in time he is describing: “That was a period when economic growth created an atmosphere where raise-the-bar-at-any-cost heroics was lionized. The downsides of this style—for example, lapses in ethics, cutting corners, and running roughshod over people—were too often winked at. Then came a series of flameouts and burst bubbles . . . [which] put a spotlight on the underside of pacesetters’ single-minded focus on fiscal results at the expense of other leadership basics.”

. . . Single-pointed fixation on a goal morphs into *over* achievement when the category of ‘distractions’ [from the leader’s perspective] expands to include other people’s valid concerns . . . ideas, and their crucial information. Not to mention their morale, loyalty, and motivation.²

Goleman’s comments here dovetail with the judgment of several respected experts in the for-profit sector going back decades.³ According to W. Stephen Brown of the Fortune Group, leadership is defined as one’s ability to motivate others to follow willingly. Going back to 1978 a distinction was made between “transactional” leadership versus “transforma-

² Business not being Goleman’s field, some might be tempted to write him off, saying: “He’s basically saying to be nice to people—and I usually am. But that’s just not how the game of business is played nowadays—and you can ask anyone at the country club, the yacht club, or the golf course. You cover your own behind first, and you fire who you fire to boost stock prices a few cents every other year. Because if you can’t keep up with the status of your peers—you’re not a real man. What’s more: both your friends—and your spouse—may remind you of how far behind you’ve fallen in the race for more.” (The reader can fill in whatever “more” is supposed to consist of here.)

³ E.g., the late great Dr. Stephen R. Covey, who raised these identical issues twenty-five years ago; W. Steven Brown, President of the Fortune Group, who did so even earlier; Dr. James C. Collins who taught at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, basing his judgments on over two decades’ worth of empirical data and CEO interviews; CEO John Mackey, founder of the Whole Foods chain of stores, and coauthor with R. Sisodia of the incomparable synthesis of historical analysis and success story found in his book *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business* (Harvard Business Review, 2013); CEO Vincent Higgins and C. Dan McArthur in their book *Social Influence and Genius, a Leadership Journey* (Tanglewood Publishing, 2011); and Robert K. Greenleaf, in his seminal essay “The Servant as Leader” (1970). This is to name just a few. Greenleaf, for example, writes the following: “The servant-leader is servant *first* . . . That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that *other* people’s *highest* priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow *as* persons? Do they . . . become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society?” [emphases added]. In his later book *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Greenleaf writes: “A new moral principle is emerging, which holds that the *only* authority deserving of one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the *led* to the leader in *response* to, and in *proportion* to, the *clearly* evident servant stature of the leader . . . [T]hey will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants [first]. To the extent that this principle prevails in the future, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant led” [emphases added]. R. K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 24.

tional” leadership, the latter being characterized by a leader’s interpersonal relationships combined with the active promotion of worker creativity. Transformational leaders stress communication within the group, show trust in group members, and celebrate tasks accomplished.

Yet according to Goleman, today we are increasingly confronted with the workplace narcissism of what others have called the “toxic leader.” The U.S. Army defines toxic leaders as those who put their own needs first, micromanage subordinates, and periodically behave in a mean-spirited manner, and display poor decision-making.⁴

Now it is true we must walk very delicately when presuming to evaluate the motives and mental states of other people, such as coworkers; and, for academics at least, that includes evaluating the motives and mental states of certain academic administrators perhaps.⁵

⁴ “Army worries about ‘toxic leaders’ in ranks,” *The Washington Post* (June 25, 2011). “Why do we allow Toxic Leadership to occur?” Combined Arms Center Blog. The Center for Army Leadership found toxic leaders promote themselves at the expense of subordinates, without considering long-term consequences to either their subordinate or their unit. (Here one might think back to the film *A Few Good Men*—which I’ve seriously viewed roughly 22 times now—starring Jack Nichols, Tom Cruise, and Demi Moore, to get an idea). According to Professor Jean Lipman-Blumen “toxic leadership” is not about mismanagement in general. Rather it refers to leaders who due to “dysfunctional personal characteristics” and “destructive behaviours” leave their subordinates and organization worse off than they found them, either personally or professionally. See too J. Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians—and How We Can Survive Them* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵ For we all may very well get along with colleagues and students. But not all of us may have subordinates, or people reporting to us directly, while we ourselves, simultaneously, are burdened with institutional financial pressures. As Abraham Lincoln once said, if you wish to test someone, don’t just let him suffer; give him power. Then watch what he does with it. How many of us can say we have wielded power of any kind? As Augustine famously claimed the root of most institution building historically is the lust to ‘prevail,’ either over, or at least in the full view of, others (what he famously called in *Civitas dei* the *libido dominandi*). Both Alasdair MacIntyre—who labels himself an “Augustinian” Thomist for this reason, and René Girard, respectively, have had interesting things to say about this. It should first be noted, if we are all honest with ourselves—and own up to the psychological analyses of Augustine or Paul—the fact is we are, at root, all of us, narcissists. According to Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (7.14ff)—and Aquinas will gloss this passage with his own commentary of course—we do the evil we would not do; and we fail to do the good we would do. What am I about to describe therefore manifests itself along a kind of spectrum of individuals, intersecting the leader’s individual maturity and the nature and number of external pressures bearing down upon the leader in question. Professor Terry L. Price offers a cognitive account for ethical failures in toxic leadership, claiming leaders can be aware of what normative ethical behavior should consist of generally; but can then go on to err as to

Yet it is no dishonesty to recognize when the egocentric behaviors of those accountable for the common good of teams or institutions become toxic to that team or to that institution. Nor is it necessarily wrong to hold them publicly—perhaps even prophetically—accountable for such, as this may be both for their own individual good, as well as for the good of those whose fates partially depend upon them.⁶

One of the first things one notices about a toxic leader is how he or she may feel subjectively that everything is “on” him or her to perform; and thus he or she may feel a crushing sense of responsibility to something—or, more to the point, to someone. Yet what is noteworthy is that this sense of *all-encompassing* responsibility—and that *distrust* of subordinate collaborators that so often accompanies this sense of responsibility—is itself a manifestation of egocentricity; of a kind of self-imposed isolation from subordinates, professional peers, or external advisors; and of a failure to trust deeply or perseveringly in any higher power for real assistance.

Whereas so called “task-oriented” leaders are usually unconcerned with catering to group members, and more concerned with working out a particular solution to meeting a concrete goal, they can ensure certain deadlines are met, but their group members’ well-being may suffer. Relationship-oriented leaders, by contrast, focus on updating their team members’ skills, and enhancing the relationships within that team by soliciting honest feedback.

In the end—whether he is fully conscious of it or not—the health of an institution in a toxic leader’s eyes is merely the health of the leader’s own reputation, in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others, be they subordinates, peers, clients, or all three.⁷ This in its turn leads to what are

whether a specific norm applies to them in a particular situation, or whether they can exempt themselves from it for the sake of their goal. Of course, fear of failure or humiliation, hyper-focus, and lack of compassion or intellectual humility can seriously warp their cognitive processes in deciding.

⁶ This is true in institutes of religious life. It is true in families. It is true in business enterprises. It is true in academic departments; in academic administration; and on the boards of institutions of higher learning. In short, it is true wherever human beings—and thus authority figures—can be found.

⁷ His sense of responsibility thus runs the risk of not being born out of a desire to please God, for example, for God’s own sake, because God himself is good—in other words, the definition of charity as Augustine describes this. Nor is it even to seek the flourishing of individuals in community, as friends, or as “other selves”—as Aristotle’s argued. Rather—whatever else the toxic leader may *tell himself*—he ultimately is motivated by terror.

called “CWB,” or “counterproductive workplace behaviors,” which result when toxic leaders feel pressured or threatened—which is fairly regularly. Management analyst Gillian Flynn has described a toxic leader as one who at least periodically “bullies, threatens, yells. Whose mood swings determine the climate of the office on any given workday. Who forces employees to whisper in sympathy in cubicles and hallways.”

The traits of toxic leaders reveal themselves in, at least periodic or cyclical, flashes of the following:⁸

Namely, the terror of a humiliating failure in the eyes of his peers, or of his subordinates, or of a superior, or, in many cases, of all three.

⁸ A much more comprehensive list of a toxic leader’s qualities include the following, some of which are found on the “Hare Psychopathy Checklist,” and which constitute so called “Aggressive Narcissism:” (1) Evaluating long-term institutional strategies in light of their potential to safeguard the manager’s reputation—rather than the long-term good of the institution, or of individual members within it. (2) Carving out of “kingdom” within which subordinates’ performance standards are picked not on the basis of their usefulness to their institution, but rather on the basis of subordinates’ ability to satisfy a toxic leader personally. (3) A consequent expectation of loyalty from subordinates—combined with his paradoxical inability to reciprocate real loyalty of any kind, himself; especially should he be feeling “under the gun” to perform. (4) Authoritarian decision-making (accompanied by arrogance in executing key decisions), due either to an unwillingness or an inability to learn—even from consultants outside the institution. (5) Having subordinates sign “non-disclosure agreements” about operations, so that the leader may take credit for subordinates’ work performed on his watch; and so subordinates may not defend themselves from the leader’s public, or private, criticism of themselves. (6) Deep emotional insecurity in his own role—accompanied by a fear of how others will view him, and consequent hypersensitivity to even constructive critique which could help produce internal reform. (7) Fearfulness of change. (8) Hyper-competitive attitudes toward other individuals and institutions perceived as rivals; this partially is manifested by attempting to bond with associates over things which are predominantly “negative” (e.g., a common “enemy” or a common hassle), more so than over things to be positively celebrated or shared in common. (9) An inability to sympathize, either habitually or consistently, with the perspectives or circumstances of subordinates. (10) Inducing subordinates to “turn on” each other when feeling stressed himself; this, due to a fear subordinates may come to a collective consensus about the leadership’s need to improve—though this is usually just the leader’s own paranoia at work. (11) Mistrust of how subordinates use their time, viewing them as wayward children, rather than esteemed coworkers; the leader habitually mistrusts how others use *their* time, because he is painfully aware he chronically fails to maximize his own. (12) A growing (and often paralyzing) sense of self-imposed isolation from various subordinates—especially from those judged to have higher skill sets closer to his own. (13) Habitual (or else on-again, off-again) irritability with others—including impatience with their work performance. (14) Delegating work to subordinates, while micromanaging subordinates’ performance—thus enabling the leader to take credit for *positive* results; and to shift blame for negative results onto subordinates (in this way a toxic leader displaces any personal accountability for failure on his part, but does not delegate to subordinates freedom to act in such a way as might lead to success).

a) What has been called an “addiction” to micro-managing the tasks of subordinates—rather than attending to one’s own proper tasks—all the while expressing irritation if a subordinate make decisions without consulting him first—and this even if the decision falls within the scope of the subordinate’s authority.⁹

b) Poor emotional regulation, resulting in “flailing about,” such as shouting or using vulgar language—or even hotly expressing a desire to

(15) Blaming others for a failure to perform; when, paradoxically, it is the leader who happens to be underperforming in his own specific tasks—either due to a lack of training, or to procrastination due to self-doubt, or to both. (16) Playing the part of a perfectionist out of the anxiety that he must possess *total* control—or at least the *appearance* of such control. (17) Callous criticism of others in their absence; this, either for the purpose of dividing subordinates from each other; or else to select a *particular* subordinate for collective scapegoating, and consequent isolation by the group (heedless of the words of Thomas a’Kempis, who said that to be humble is “not to think highly of oneself, [and] always to think highly of others”). (18) *Public* criticism of others during meetings; both in order to elevate the leader’s own status, by expressing dominance; or else to isolate that subordinate. (19) A chronic, habitual, inability to apologize, much less to admit mistakes. (20) A lack of trust in the competence, judgment, and/or the loyalty, of those the leader has hired—regardless of whatever qualifications, skills, or successes they may possess; this has the potential to promote a dysfunctional, hostile environment that kills trust both “vertically” between manager and subordinate, and “horizontally” with subordinates among one another, damaging their interpersonal relationships, and discouraging subordinates from engaging in teamwork and creative production. (21) A “behavioral dependence” on control over subordinates, both as a lifestyle of the toxic leader—and precisely in order to perpetuate that lifestyle. (22) Failure to tolerate mistakes of any kind by a subordinate as part of their learning process, abiding by what Stephen R. Covey calls the “law of the machine” rather than the “law of the farm.” (23) Withholding information which a subordinate may require in order to succeed at their own tasks. (24) General cunning, duplicity, and a propensity for manipulation. (25) Shallow, fleeting empathy only, lacking any deep or lasting remorse for callous behavior toward those more vulnerable than themselves. (26) Regularly demanding unnecessary, hyper-detailed, reports (what’s been called “reportomania”), due to terror of “losing control” over the workplace; as well as to reinforce the leader’s own sense that his own position is secure, that his role is useful and needed—because his oversight is allegedly so critical; such reports seek low-level trivia which delay decision-making, obscure bottom-line objectives, and divert a project in different, or even opposite, directions; in other words, first he creates the chaos—then he proposes to impose some kind of external order on that chaos to show himself, and others, how much he is needed.

⁹ In *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (Riverhead Books, 2011), Daniel H. Pink argues on the basis of empirical evidence that self-management/self-directed processes, and worker autonomy are more effective incentives than monetary compensation. The latter motive is extrinsic, the former intrinsic.

close down the institution—in the presence of subordinates (though not in the presence of others) when he feels stressed.¹⁰

c) Setting up a subordinate to fail, by overloading the subordinate with work on the one hand, while denying him or her the authority to handle this work appropriately; all the while intrusively micro-managing the subordinate's work.

d) Using the subordinate's consequent lack of success at his or her task as ammunition to discredit and blame the victim in the eyes of fellow coworkers.

This last point is supposedly a common workplace bullying tactic, in which the toxic leader displaces his own feelings of inadequacy onto a subordinate, so that the subordinate might act as a kind of copper wire of connectivity for the toxic leader's sense of feeling "trapped," vulnerable, and helpless in his own position. (Though this position of helplessness, ironically, is of the leader's own creation; due to a combination of procrastination, lack of transparency, and self-imposed isolation.)¹¹

The ultimate consummation of "setting someone up to fail" is often job termination.¹²

The lack of trust displayed by a toxic leader toward subordinates undermines growth by channeling worker energy into gossip, second guessing, and anxiety-fueled distraction. When one considers that—by contrast—"A *high performance* workplace can expect to achieve a 20 per cent increase in productivity and profitability"—and that such an environment is partially defined by institutionalizing innovation, combined with

¹⁰ Dr. H. Greibel cites Aquinas describing humility as "praiseworthy self-abasement to the lowest place . . . [since] humility is part of the cardinal virtue of temperance because it *restrains and moderates the 'impetuosity of the emotions'*" [emphases added]. Unpublished paper "Humility and the Intellectual Life" [<http://www.google.pl/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fcourseweb.stthom.as.edu%2Fmlemmons%2Fqv%2520giebel%2520humility%2520intellectual%2520life.doc&ei=WRHSVJDEC8P2UrymhIgH&usq=AFQjCNEj7GxPqWN3LbFn4m3eBOdQvIC4iw&bvm=bv.85076809.d.d24&cad=rja>, accessed on 10.07.2014].

¹¹ The subordinate is thus made to 'feel the superior's pain' and frustration in his own work situation, as a kind of 'enforced empathy' with the superior's situation so to speak. A more common manner of expressing this is to say that "misery loves company." In any case, this behavior constitutes a deeply anti-social, callous willingness to inflict psychological pain; an obvious manifestation of infantile sadism.

¹² This is something General Kitchener is alleged, at least, to have done to Winston Churchill by engineering the Allies' defeat at the Battle of Gallipoli, during the First World War.

freedom from fear of failing, then one begins to realize how damaging a toxic leader is to his own institution.¹³

Hence, the reason such leaders are called “toxic” is, quite simply, because they risk burning their institutions down. First, because a failure to prioritize their own affairs, and an addiction to micromanaging subordinates to compensate for this, take them off-point. Second, because their own emotional insecurity disables them from thinking clearly, or of being able to put others before themselves. Third, and lastly, because the tension and the “lifeboat” mentality of distrust toxic leaders generate among subordinates leads to endless waves of staff turnover (or “churn”) within an institution. This pours down the drain boatloads of funding which had been invested in bringing a new hire up to speed on an institution’s goals, history, internal logic, members, methodologies, and specific protocols, over what is often a year-long cycle.

The toxic leader likewise damages his institution’s reputation with current and potential clientele—including potential students and financial donors, if we’re talking about an institution of higher learning. Damage to an institution’s reputation can further *increase* the felt insecurity of toxic leaders—perpetuating a negative feedback loop of *even further* micro-management. Now, we can all agree this is awful. Here’s the problem.

First, people who engage in these behaviors often are—at best—only semi-consciously aware of what they are doing, to others or to themselves.¹⁴ What results from their hyper-focused approach, and the attendant lack of habitual empathy and perspective taking they need to lead, is a lethal lack of intellectual humility. Dr. Peter Graham, Professor of Philosophy at the University of California at Riverside, notes that intellectual humility is a positive social virtue which involves neither

¹³ “High Performance Teams—the only way to sustained benefits,” Chartered Institute of Personnel November 2003 [www.kinetik.uk.com/docs/High_Performing_Teams_IOM.pdf, accessed on 08.07.2014].

¹⁴ Their capacity for habitual empathy and perspective-taking regularly “shut downs” due a closing of their attention horizon. The leader’s “hyper-focus” on fiscal deficits—rather than on their own role in institutional growth (say, through sales, or if in a college setting, on the need for their own individual ongoing fundraising efforts), cause this to happen. To use Goleman’s terminology, they lack an authentic leader’s foundational quality: “self-awareness.” Namely, an awareness of how they impact others emotionally; yet they are also, very simply, lacking in self-knowledge regarding their own deepest motives, though subordinates begin to discern them. They may even lack a basic ability to “label” their own complex emotions linguistically. They thus necessarily run the occupationally lethal risk of lacking authentic intellectual humility.

overestimating, nor underestimating, one's own knowledge.¹⁵ To the extent a toxic leader regularly distrusts the judgment of coworkers or of outside consultants, he sins against the first point—through what Graham calls “hyper-autonomy.”¹⁶ To the extent he allows himself to be tortured by self-doubt, due to an egocentric, perpetually second-guessing insecurity, he sins against the latter point, resulting in periodic paralysis.

What is more—and here we come full circle—this very lack of self-awareness—of even having “time” to be aware of oneself—is undermined by the “pace-setting” management style Goleman describes as having taken off since the 1990's, and as increasing exponentially since 2008 in particular. For it has been claimed that “the temptation to micromanage intensifies mightily during times of financial or occupational instability.”¹⁷ It is when we most feel helpless and “out of control” that we may be most tempted to start controlling those around us.

As Simon Head recently pointed out in publication, the lengths to which not only computer business systems (CBS's), but actually physically worn devices, track and surveillance workers, are reaching apoplectic proportions, revealing a level of micromanagement which—by curtailing the human element—isolates individuals, and reveals a profoundly demoralizing distrust in human beings as agents.¹⁸

Due to the toxic leader's hyper-focus, a cognitive dissonance can arise in which he salutes certain principles that offer him an idealistic, prosocial identity; yet he lacks the self-awareness of his own deepest motives—these become apparent to coworkers and subordinates over time—for the actual decisions he makes; especially when these are know-

¹⁵ As Graham points out, intellectual humility involves self-knowledge; or again, what Goleman refers to as that key quality any leader requires: “self-awareness.” Or, in the words of the Introduction to the “Dependence Thesis” articulated by St. Louis University's Philosophy and Theology of Intellectual Humility Project, intellectual humility is “related to open-mindedness, a sense of one's own fallibility, and a healthy recognition of one's intellectual debts to others” [<http://humility.slu.edu/team/guy-longworth>, accessed on 17.07.2014].

¹⁶ Dr. Greibel cites St. John of the Cross as noting that “the humble soul has the ‘virtue of self-knowledge, which is so excellent and necessary, considering itself now as nothing and experiencing no satisfaction in itself; for it sees that it does nothing of itself nor can do anything’ . . .”

¹⁷ Under such circumstances, even spouses may attempt to micromanage one another's productive occupations outside the home, with the danger of inducing domestic tension. (This, in spite of the fact that, as George Macdonald pointed out, people often would prefer to be trusted even than to be loved.)

¹⁸ *Mindless: Why Smarter Machines are Making Dumber Humans* (Basic Books, 2014).

ingly damaging to others. It is in such a state that Augustine's *libido domi-nandi* may flourish unaware.

The Macro Level

At this point we are compelled to add that the spread of the toxic leader—as well as of levels of reported 70% worker disengagement in the U.S. which have accompanied his rise—follows upon something occurring at the macro level in our economy. Namely, the subordination of the needs of individual workers, of families, and of their local communities, to a particular unfettered vision of *finance* capitalism; something exquisitely described by the CEO of a \$3 billion company. Namely, John Mackey of Whole Foods.

In making this claim, I am—in no way—advocating a redistribution of income through federal taxation (which I oppose); nor advocating increased oversight by a centralized state; nor am I critiquing the operation of free markets for goods and services, any more than Mackey is (and he doesn't). Nor am I Luddite. Rather, I'm talking about the tension that necessarily exists between (allegedly) more efficient short-terms means by which publicly traded companies attract investment today, as Mackey describes this dynamic, versus that sense of solidarity, of community, and of all those Aristotelian virtues so often shredded as a consequence of these pressures.¹⁹ Because I suspect the increase in the numbers of toxic bosses results in part from a trickle-down effect—from publicly traded firms to

¹⁹ Since at least the recession of 1992, reality is that the cultural Left has been handed a made-to-order weapon against its opponents. This weapon is a pointed finger—a sometimes gun-shaped finger—aimed at those deemed by the young to be the destroyers of their parents' trust in the traditional workplace. Its engines, and its results, include: mass layoffs of workers in the interests of boosting stock prices from one quarter to the next (and here the flawed yet evocative film *The Company Men* starring Tommy Lee Jones, Ben Affleck, and Kevin Costner, comes to mind); the overworking of those “left behind” expected to “do more” as a consequence (evocative of the workhorse “Boxer” in Orwell's novel *1984*, only to be carted out himself soon enough), resulting in social alienation and burnout; the cynicism and lack of loyalty to institutions displayed by so many millennials; the increasing fear of younger people to commit to one another in marriage, much less to bear children within wedlock; the willingness of the young to “punish” an alleged top 1% through heavier taxation—and to entrust their security and future to the State. Yet, paradoxically, while much of this can, at least in part, be laid at the feet of a current regime of financial capitalism, in its mania for mechanized, utilitarian conceptions of efficiency, it bizzarely coincides with current *socialist* or progressive visions of order. Either way, it is the individual, the family, and local communities which “lose.”

privately held ones, and right down to nonprofit organizations—schools included. But if this analysis is correct—and Goleman seems to think it is—what are we to do about it?

One alternative, at least, is ready at hand. It can be found quite simply in having students—from grammar school up—trained in the “interdependent stakeholder” philosophies of CEO John Mackey and of the late great management expert Dr. Stephen R. Covey, respectively.

For the philosophical underpinnings of his own thought, Stephen R. Covey proposed a strongly classical facultative psychology, and openly either praised or quoted in his writings such figures as Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Martin Buber, and Kurt Lewin (the father of “force field theory” in human relations) as potentially contributing to a natural law-based dialogical personalism. Covey insisted it was *trust* among all stakeholders—namely among all those affected by an institution in any way—which fueled both healthy human and healthy financial growth in the workplace. In fact, Covey was ultimately persuaded to describe the application of this personalism of the workplace to educational institutions—an initiative which now involves 1,500 schools and which is expanding exponentially.

John Mackey, likewise a lifelong student of philosophy, openly uses such terms and categories as “virtue,” “solidarity,” “human flourishing,” and an overt rejection of postmodern relativism in the defense of recognizing objective truth. Mackey himself cites as philosophical influences Dr. Viktor Frankl and the philosophy of the beautiful, the good, the true, and the heroic first proposed by Plato, while citing Jesus, St. Francis of Assisi, and Mother Teresa as potential role models for leaders. (Something many might not expect from the free-marketeering founder of a successful \$3 billion dollar company.)

So impressive, in fact, is Mackey’s 2013 book *Conscious Capitalism*, that it really should be developed into a comprehensive course in management philosophy. Offering as it does a brilliant, evenhanded, historically and philosophically-minded analysis of the sins of both Wall Street and of the “Occupy Wall Street” crowd alike,²⁰ Mackey’s book

²⁰ Mackey lists as some of his own role leaderships models such figures as Vineet Nayar of HCL Technologies; JRD Tata, founder of the Tata group; Howard Schulz, chairman, president, and CEO of Starbucks; Herb Kelleher, former CEO and chairman of Southwest Airlines; Biz Stone, cofounder of Twitter; Terri Kelly, CEO of W.L. Gore & Associates. My own include a founder of the \$100 million company WesTech Engineering, a Catholic permanent deacon who told me he started his company to be based on solid social principles

should be required reading for every MBA student in America. But: what does any of this have to do with the academy? Two things.

First: it just goes to demonstrate what philosophical training can do for our economy—a topic rarely far from our minds today; and a fact toward which neither an Aristotle nor an Aquinas would have been indifferent had they lived in our day.

Second: when we talk about toxic leaders, it becomes incumbent on institutions of higher learning to know *who it is that they are hiring* to run their schools.

This begins with the president—whose primary duty, following the 80/20 (or 90/10) rule formulated by Wilfredo Pareto—is, and ought to be, institutional advancement through donor fundraising.²¹ If the president fails to do his own job in this respect, those he leads will be unable to do theirs; and thus begins the temptation to become a toxic leader, reactively seeking to scapegoat subordinates accordingly, and to rationalize his own inadequacies to the school's board.

Conversely, it is the institution's duty to duly train an incoming college president both in fundraising methodologies on the one hand, and in the soundest management philosophy on the other; so as not to set him or her up for failure, and to create that trust within the institution which it needs to thrive.

The institution which fails to do these two things—merely assuming an incoming president must already possess these skills, or otherwise he or she would not have been selected for the position, does an injustice both to the incoming president, to faculty, staff, students, and donors alike.

(one of the stated values on their website remains "Value our people and their families"); James Dangermond, founder and president of the ESRI software company and an old mentor of mine in practical affairs; and Vince Higgins, author and CEO of the Texas-based Fitir Energy corporation—and an old personal mentor of mine in practical affairs.

²¹ Melissa Ezarik, "The President's Role in Fundraising," *University Business* (May 2012) [www.universitybusiness.com/article/presidents-role-fundraising, accessed on 17.07.2014]; "Overcoming the College President's Achilles' Heel: Fundraising," by Mel and Pearl Shaw [<http://diverseeducation.com/article/11898>, accessed on 17.07.2014]; Derek M. Wesley, "Catholic college and university presidents: Fundraising initiatives and identity maintenance" (January 2007), Dissertation & Theses Collection, Paper AAI3315136; Jennifer J. Raab, "For Public College Presidents, Fundraising Is Full-Time Job on Top of Their Full-Time Jobs," *The Huffington Post* (08.11.2013) [accessed on 17.07.2014]; Matthew W. Miller, "The Role of the Community College President in Fundraising: Perceptions of Selected Michigan Community College Presidents," DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska—Lincoln (April 2013), accessed on 17.07.2014.

In addition, however, and John Mackey points the way here, as he does in so many things: a school must choose wisely who its “investors” are. For, while long-term investors have rights that must be respected and actively consulted, they in turn must learn to respect the ethic of mutual trust owed employees and clients alike. For this reason, Mackey believes only those long-term investors should be accommodated who understand his organization’s philosophy, first and last. Now, in an institution of higher learning, the “investors” in question are often board members, who are also financial contributors to the school; clients are the students; and employees remain the same.

If, as Goleman points out, the toxic leader is now everywhere—and his influence is growing—then he or she must not be invited onto your school’s board, however much money he can contribute in the short-term. (Just ask him for that contribution to your capital campaign over five years instead, or something.) Because in the long-term, he may burn your institution to the ground. Since no matter what his good intentions may be, he is hyper-focused and, ultimately, short-sighted (though he himself is unaware of this fact—precisely because he is short-sighted). They will fire staff for short-term debt reduction, setting the deadly staff-turnover wheel in motion. They will automate and outsource, but without retraining those replaced for higher skill sets which can increase staff value to the institution. In short: they will fail to be smart.

If the person in question is already on your board, then a rightfully-trained and selected president must be able to gently educate this person on the school’s philosophy regarding how it treats human beings, and why it does so; and to stand up to this person if need be—even if this person is the chairman of the board, for the sake of the institution. (Hopefully other rightfully-educated board members would have the fortitude to do the same.)

Final Thoughts

What we have just described has implications for the online education revolution—and again, here I insist I am no Luddite.

I have heard it alleged that what students most appreciate today is a “blended” course which incorporates online delivery combined with limited face-to-face interaction best pleases students, and that their test scores testify to the potential of these methods. Either way, we know the online revolution is here. We know declining enrollments due to population de-

cline in the U.S. mean students must be sought for abroad, even if it means they are acquired virtually. We know a great many instructors living abroad will not ask to be compensated at the rates homegrown American tenured instructors expect to be. We know U.S. students are crushed by a \$1 trillion debt in outstanding financial aid, part of it consisting in residential cost-of-living expenses.

We know all this. And boards and academic administrators know it too. They would be irresponsible—and failing in their jobs—if they failed to know all this. It is part of their job description to do so.

What we must work toward is an ideal in which school presidents create a synergy of high trust among board members, academic administrators, instructors, and students alike, in which each individual's input is actively sought moving forward; and that the interests and desires of all stakeholders are genuinely respected.

And one last thing. Why is it that to locate a management philosophy as close to classical thought and preaching human solidarity in the workplace as I could find among CEO's and management consultants, I had to find it outside the fold of Thomism? I could be wrong, but I believe Vineet Nayar is Hindu. Stephen R. Covey was Mormon. John Mackey (very occasionally) sounds New Agey. These individuals are the best of the best. When I learned that something called the "Aquinas Leadership International" had been founded, I had one thought: where have *you* been all my life?

I am certain it is Thomistic personalists aware of the contributions of the hermeneutics of everyday life, and of all the human and social sciences, who are best positioned to offer larger metaphysical and epistemic groundings for the proposals of authors like Covey and Mackey. In sum: we have a lot of work to do.

PHILOSOPHICAL TENSIONS AMONG LEADERSHIP, EFFICIENCY, COMMUNITY—AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE ACADEMY

SUMMARY

In any age, at any given time, there are leaders who fail to lead by example. The desires which motivate them, and the means they deploy to cover for this fact, can weave paths of destruction with social costs borne by those who can least afford them—including within the academy. Taking the right steps—both professionally and spiritually—at least theoretically make this avoidable. This article addresses select topics in light of ancient perspectives and

recent phenomena alike, including those of: the harmony of Thomistic personalism with stakeholder theory and transformational leadership, respectively; the relationship of Augustinian realism to cognitive dissonance theory and the composition of boards.

KEYWORDS: leadership, efficiency, community, Thomism, personalism, academy.