

# *The Second Great Commandment and the Leader's Golden Rule*

Peter B. Vaill

Response by Anna Lloyd

## Summary of Response

Dr. Vaill: Yes, I believe that there is a way to phrase the Golden Rule in terms of organizational conduct...the conduct of all its members, usually featuring its leaders. I, also, believe that an organization can be said to be constituted to do God's work. We are living, in the US especially, in an extraordinary time, one that offers us a unique opportunity to consider organizational, or institutional, behavior.

David Specht and Dick Broholm challenged us yesterday to consider out loud and altogether "when will we learn to hold the necessary deed in greater esteem than the unsullied conscience?" What formation of institution offers this learning, or even the environment to consider this, and what is our responsibility as theologians, business leaders and managers, citizens, to ensure that this can happen...this primary interest in achieving the common good? Peter Vaill answers "do unto others as you would have others do unto others". I believe he is absolutely, heart and head driven, correct.

My recent work has been in the identification and practical demonstration of integrative leadership in the for - profit sector, especially. Multi-sector and interdisciplinary, the *Center for Integrative Leadership at the University of Minnesota* was launched by twenty-two faculty, representing eleven different colleges across the university, and, specifically, by a collaboration between the business and public policy schools. Case studies have been identified for classroom teaching and public forums provide a unique lens through which integrative, or cross boundary, behavior is explored. MBA students are increasingly interested in alternative uses with their academic tools and have simultaneously launched a national network, NetImpact, to serve as a platform from which a new type of leadership in business can grow. Integrative leadership builds coalitions and shares power, establishing an environment where individuals and groups work together to use their talents, resources, power and connections. This environment, within any organized institution, serves as platform and context; Dr. Vaill's keen sense of spirit opportunity responds to this. These faculty and these students model for others a brand of leadership, one infused with a heart opening and a deep sensitivity to impact; isn't this Peter's Golden Rule in action? Thinking and behaving collaboratively, believing that trust in one another is a vital connector, "giving back" while moving forward, now not later.

In general, the field of leadership studies has moved from a focus on leaders to

leadership – that is, from individuals as leaders to the relationships between leaders and followers (or constituents, colleagues, collaborators).(1) Dr. Vaill argues for a way of talking about what organizations are so there is something to be theological about; I suggest that organizations, essentially, are those relationships between leaders and followers and, given that, it is urgent that we talk out loud and, as often as possible, altogether about “declaring spirituality in the starting model or frame”. Yesterday, several of us gathered here, as David Specht and Richard Broholm recommend in their submission, called for “a conversation in which organizational leaders experience their messy worlds, and the consequential decisions they face in these settings (being) held in trust through an engagement marked both by respect and rigorous engagement”.(2) In order to tangibly ground (a conversation) in organizational life and clearly inform (that conversation) with theological perspective (2), we need to re visit processes by which the individual has been trained and informed, and the institution has been developed, with the integrative lens of connection between our heads with our hearts, producing trust, the only true barometer of candid conversation and steadfast connection.

My own experience is that we need to say what we intend to do and why; leaders are increasingly *un*concerned about over stating the need for collaboration and connection, especially as both workforce development and retention issues loom large. These deliverables in for-profit institutions, collaboration and connection, depend on relationships, respect, and a routine demonstration by individual leaders, whether project director, executive officer, or board. Bill George (former CEO, Medtronic) and David Gergen joined us for a public conversation at the *Center*, their primary concern being that we do not have enough leaders, from across sectors, talking openly and routinely about the urgent need for values driven behavior today. If we don’t, then *why not* becomes the vital question, and given today’s headlines, business schools offer a unique environment to engage both scholar and practitioner; apparently, so do seminars.

Dr. Vaill reviews Douglas McGregor’s work, “the human side of enterprise”. As Peter explains, *there is no human side*; people relate to one another and commit to participation and collaboration when we feel connected, integrated, into the very fabric of an operation. Without naming it, we do indeed respond to the heart opening of connection, or “community building”; notwithstanding the variety of business management labels available, the result is the same. As presented by Peter, McGregor’s work ultimately developed “the principle of integration”, achieved only through the exercise of an enlightened theory of leading and managing based on the real nature of human motivation, and explains that this principle is a fallacy – continuing to promote a compartmentalized need that had been identified rather than a true integration of people and product needs. I agree with Dr. Vaill that it has been the supposed rightness of the McGregor, or M-1 model, that has led to many erroneous calculations of monetary values by financial leaders, most of whom proudly tell us that (they) go to church or synagogue each week. I agree that, today, we have an opportunity to create a different model of the organization, one that values its members and its stakeholders differently. an integrative system, perhaps.

Jim Collins, without proper mention I believe, takes advantage of Dr. Vaill's thesis when he offers his Monograph, *Good to Great for the Social Sectors*, and explores the integration of for – profit “efficiencies” with not – for – profit mission and service delivery. Collins relies heavily on personal demonstration in his summary of impact and employee cultivation and offers a unique resource to transcend the intellectual boundaries of profit making and non-profit making missions. Examples of this cross boundary, cross sector, success need immediate public attention so that faculty can include them in the classroom. We are living in an unusual and captivating time. It is easier, right here, right now, to demand change in the ways in which we study and promote encouraging the heart in our leaders, across all sectors. Dr. Vaill's references to Kouzes and Posner's work, “modeling the way” and “encouraging the heart”, (3), offer a unique platform from which each of us should personally adapt our own work. Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky's recent work, *Leadership On the Line*, extends Dr. Vaill's concluding thesis that the theology of institutions depends on a view of an organization that permits us to see it trying to do God's work i.e. seeing God, or spirit in one another and constructing relationships that openly justify these elements, describing the personal and spiritual resources necessary to manage leadership today. Creating a climate of relationships in which persons are valued for their contributions to the system requires a leader to “hold steady in the face of danger.”

If we are to truly reframe an institution's theology, and feature relationship as a priority, then we must commit to a personal collaboration between head and heart, and demonstrate the practice, and it is a practice, of “doing unto others as you would have others do unto others”.

Thank you, Dr. Vaill.

- (1) Crosby, B.C. (2006). *A Proposal for a Unique All-University Center Dedicated to Innovative Leadership and Individual, Organizational, and Societal Transformation*
- (2) Specht, D., and Broholm, R. (2009) *Toward A New Theology of Institutions*
- (3) Kouzes, J. and Posner, B. (2002). *The Leadership Challenge*  
(Josey-Bass, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)