

Ethics of Leadership

Servant Leadership

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

Reading

- Robert Greenleaf, "The Servant as Leader", pp. 212–219.
- Yasin Sarayrah, "Servant Leadership in the Bedouin-Arab Culture" (PDF on webpage).

Background

In contrast with the ethical egoism advocated by people like Ayn Rand, Robert Greenleaf presents a moral theory of leadership based on the idea that the leader ought to, first and foremost, serve his or her followers. The reading from Yasin Sarayrah provides two case studies that attempt to illustrate how pre-Islamic and Islamic Arab culture reflect significant elements of servant leadership. Indeed, while this article was written well before the Arab Spring uprising across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), it offers intriguing thoughts about possible reforms for these countries.

Questions

1. According to Robert Greenleaf, what is servant leadership? What is the difference between how a leader is chosen and how service is chosen? What is the ultimate goal or purpose of a servant leader? How exactly are they supposed to lead others when they are "servants first"?
2. In what ways is servant leadership different from the style of leadership advocated by Ayn Rand? Based on what Greenleaf says, is servant leadership best understood as a form of problem solving, altruism, or something else entirely?
3. Ultimately, do you believe servant leadership is a compelling moral theory of leadership?
4. Who were Omar bin al-Khattab and Sheikh Hajj Ali? Why does Yasin Sarayrah believe they were servant-leaders? In general, what reasons does Sarayrah provide to show that Bedouin/Arab/Islamic culture is highly compatible with and encouraging for servant leadership?
5. In light of the Arab Spring, what advice do you believe Sarayrah would recommend for reforming the institutions of MENA countries? Do you think these are realistic?