

Chapter V

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

This chapter gives a conclusion of the ethical concepts from Asaṅga's work and its application to modern leadership. The discussions and suggestions for future studies are also presented.

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Ethical concepts from Asaṅga's work

Asaṅga's Chapter on Ethics from the Bodhisattvabhūmi addresses the two key aspects: the essence of ethics (*svabhāvaśīla*) and complete ethics (*sarvaśīla*). The **essence of ethics** comprises four qualities: correct reception [of moral disciplines] from the other, purified intention, correction after failure, and avoidance of failure. The **complete ethics** (*sarvaśīla*), which comprise lay side and monastic side, are classified into three kinds: ethics of the vow (*saṃvara-śīla*), ethics of collecting wholesome factors (*kuśala-dharma-saṃgrāhaka-śīla*), and ethics of benefitting sentient beings (*sattva-ārtha-kriyāśīla*). The three sorts of ethics can be stated as the whole scheme for the bodhisattva and for the Mahāyāna.

The essence of ethics with four endowed qualities was found to be a continuing process. The first two qualities of the essence of ethics are the matter of procurement of ethics whereas the subsequent two qualities are about the preservation of ethics.

The three kinds of complete ethics are stated to constitute all the work of bodhisattva. The findings from the investigation of the three kinds of complete ethics are as follows. Firstly, The **ethics of the vow**, which is the vow held by one of the seven prātimokṣa classes (five monastic classes and two lay classes) is shared with (but is not) prātimokṣa vow. Ethics of the vow, or the vow of bodhisattva, is claimed to guard against what is reprehensible by precept and what is reprehensible by nature (the ten unvirtuous actions) whereas the prātimokṣa vow guards against what is reprehensible by precept. Next, the **ethics of collecting wholesome factors** is

subsequent to the undertaking of the ethics of the vow. It involves the bodhisattva accumulating with his body and speech [and mind] anything that is wholesome. Finally, the **ethics of benefiting other sentient beings** is involved with the bodhisattva addressing the needs of those to be converted. **Skill in means** come into play when the bodhisattva deals with diverse groups of sentient beings who have various needs.

The classification of complete ethics into three kinds was found to have different emphases in the **establishment of ethics**. The establishment of the ethics of the vow emphasizes on the adaptation of a bodhisattva aspirant who undertakes the vow and renounces the sovereignty of a universal monarch to engage initially on the new path (i.e., bodhisattva path). The concern is on the bodhisattva's own readiness to move on the new path with a sense of obligation to the vow. The establishment of the ethics of collecting wholesome factors emphasizes on the merit accumulation of the bodhisattva along the new path. The establishment of the ethics of benefiting others emphasizes on the benefit of other sentient beings; however, it also enables the bodhisattva to develop his/ her own perfections.

The bodhisattva ethics can also be described with **other seven aspects**. The ethics is difficult for practitioners; it is ethics in all directions and in all different aspects; it directs to petitioners in distress; it leads to happiness this life and in the after-life; it belongs to a good person; and it is purified.

5.1.2 Application of Asaṅga's ethical concepts to modern leadership

Ethical challenges of leadership occur when a leader has to choose between alternatives that are considered as ethical or unethical. Prevalent ethical challenges of modern leadership include those related with people, information, technology, as well as (personal gain in the form of) material wealth (or other benefits). Ethical challenges can occur in all types of organizations, in industries, and across professional careers whereas particular industries or careers tend to be more exposed to the challenges.

The bodhisattva ethics contributes in terms of an integrated framework for the emerging theories of moral leadership. The integration also leads to the ethical attributes of modern leadership: self-restraint, virtue, skillful means, and wisdom. All of these ethical attributes have altruism as a basis in a similar notion to the bodhisattva's ethics having compassion as a foundation.

Asaṅga's work on bodhisattva ethics can be applied to some extent to modern leadership, whose task is to drive organizations to sustainability. Ethics is to be conceived as embedding in all the work and modern leaders are to work with ethics, lead with ethics, as well as live with ethics. The ethics (of three types) can be practiced by modern leaders to develop oneself and to help develop their followers. The nature of training in ethics for leaders is for them to procure moral disciplines that are proper for the people and the prevailing context and to preserve disciplines while maintaining forbearance and vigilance. The leaders guard against actions that are reprehensible by moral codes, develop own internal virtues, and act as role models for their followers. Modern leaders wisely use proper and modern methods to induce moral codes to followers and help them to practice ethics by restraining their behaviors while developing internal virtues for their work (and their lives) in order to be on the track of sustainability. Ethics can be understood by modern leaders as a continued practicing process whereby unethical acts for short-term gain be considered for punishment, be remedied, and be avoided in the future accordingly.

5.2 Discussion and Suggestions

The study can be discussed in terms of the ethical type of bodhisattva ethics, the comparison of bodhisattva attributes with those of the empirical findings, as well as the drive of modern leadership for sustainability.

(1) Virtue Ethics. The virtue ethics perspective primarily focuses on the character development of the person. In the literature, virtue ethics has been described with synonyms such as virtue theory, virtue-based ethics, virtue-centered ethics, agent-based ethics, character ethics, Aristotelian ethics, and human nature ethics.¹ The term "virtue" refers to singular attributes that represent moral excellence. Aristotle² equated virtue with "excellence in the human soul" and made the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues. "Moral virtues" are those that are concerned with the will and can be acquired through regular practice whereas

¹ S. Arjoon, "Virtue theory as a dynamic theory of business", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 28 (2000): 161.

² Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* (M. Oswald, Trans.) Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999.

“intellectual virtues” are acquired through learning. Whetstone (2001) indicates that virtue is part of a person’s character and something internal which is closer to an internal value, which is something of the spiritual essence of the person. He describes “virtue” as “a qualitative characteristic, generally considered part of a person’s character, something within the person, although neither materially nor biologically identifiable”³. Whetstone refers to Aristotle that a “virtuous act” must satisfy three conditions: (1) the virtuous person does the act knowingly, aware of the pertinent facts and the practical wisdom needed to apply the act so as to fit its appropriate purpose; (2) the motive for choosing the act must be simply because it is virtuous, not for personal advantage or other non-ideal motives; and (3) the act must be as a result of a steady state of character disposition, not a one-off or impulsive act, but irrespective of particular times and persons. A virtuous act is thus based on an awareness of pertinent facts and a wise assessment of situations; the act is chosen because it is virtuous and is a result of the actor’s personality traits (steady state of character disposition).

Asaṅga’s ethical concepts and their application to modern leadership are relevant to virtue ethics perspective in that ethics can be educated and developed through practices either by bodhisattvas or by leaders. The bodhisattva studies bodhisattva collections and practices in the three types of ethics to make spiritual advancement. Leaders learn of and practice ethics in their work and lives. If Aristotle’s terms are used, the bodhisattva acquires “moral virtues” through regular practices of ethics and acquires “intellectual virtues” through the learning of bodhisattva collections. Similarly, leaders acquire “moral virtues” through regular practices of ethics in work and acquires “intellectual virtues” through the learning of moral codes and virtues. Aristotle’s “virtuous act” that Whetstone refers to is in accord with the virtuous act of the bodhisattva and the leader. Firstly, the value of bodhisattva for purification in conducts or the value of leaders for goodness is relevant to virtuous motive of Aristotle’s virtuous act. The bodhisattva acts for the benefit of other sentient beings and leaders act for the benefit of their followers while

³ J. T. Whetstone, “How virtue fits within business ethics”, **Journal of Business Ethics**, 33, (2001): 104.

Aristotle's virtuous act is not for personal advantage. Secondly, the bodhisattva uses skill in means to convert diverse groups of audience with appropriate methods in different situations or contexts. Leaders use skill in means to teach or guide followers with proper methods in different situations or contexts. Aristotle's virtuous act is based on an awareness of pertinent facts and a wise assessment of situations, the notion that is in line with the skill in means. Thirdly, the bodhisattva preserves the three kinds of ethics and this can be interpreted that the act/ behavior of the bodhisattva is a continuing process rather than a one-off or impulsive act. By the same token, leaders' procurement and preservation of ethics is a continuing process. The virtuous acts of leaders are the results of leaders' attributes or disposition. This carries the same notion with that of Aristotle who views that a virtuous act is a result of a steady state of character disposition.

(2) Compatibility of Attributes based on Bodhisattva's Ethical Concepts and those from Empirical Studies of Ethical Leadership. When compared with the empirical studies on ethical leadership, the attributes being advocated from the three kinds of bodhisattva's complete ethics are compatible with their findings. For example, Resick, Hanges, Dickson & Mitchelson (2006) examined data from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) Research Program, a study on leadership and culture across 62 different societies, and found that four aspects of ethical leadership (Character/ Integrity, Altruism, Collective Motivation, Encouragement) were endorsed as important for ethical and effective leadership across cultures. **Character** refers to "the pattern of intentions, inclinations, and virtues" that provide the ethical or moral foundation for behavior⁴ and **integrity** is a fundamental component of character.⁵ Integrity is often considered to be an important aspect of leadership in general (e.g. Bass, 1990). **Altruism** composes the attributes of generosity, fraternalism, compassion and modesty; **collective motivation** composes the attributes of communication,

⁴ J. A. Petrick & J. F. Quinn, **Management Ethics: Integrity at Work**, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Series in Business Ethics, 1997)

⁵ W. Fluker, 'Roundtable 3: Ethics and Leadership', in *Conversations on Leadership* (President and Fellows of Harvard College, Cambridge MA, 2002)

confidence building, group orientation, motive arouser and team building; and **encouragement** composes the attributes of encouraging and morale booster.⁶

Comparing with the ethical concepts from Asaṅga's work in this study, **character** seems relevant to leaders' attribute of **virtues**, which is in accord with the ethics of collecting wholesome factors. **Integrity**, which is a component of Character, and the leaders' values for virtue corresponds to the attribute of **self-restraint** and moral value, which is the notion of the ethics of the vow. **Altruism** as defined above corresponds to the attribute of **generosity** (from the six Perfections) as well as **compassion**, the foundation of bodhisattvas' attributes. **Collective motivation** and **encouragement**, which represent the notion that leaders communicate, gather, build, motivate, and encourage teams of followers, correspond to the attributes of **skillful means** and **wisdom**, which follow from the notion of ethics of benefitting others.

Besides the findings from the GLOBE project, other studies on the attributes of ethical leadership also show compatibility with the ethical attributes based on bodhisattva's aspects. For instance, studies on ethical leadership have proposed an attribute of **altruism** (e.g. Kanungo & Mendoca, 1996), **integrity**, and **responsibility**, which include among others concern for people (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). A study by Trevino, Brown & Hartman (2003) also found that ethical leadership is more than traits such as integrity and more than value-based inspirational leadership; it includes transactional component that involves using communication and the reward system to guide behavior. This finding seems to suggest the importance of the congruence between values and behaviors of leaders which is the consistent notion with that of bodhisattvas.

The compatibility between the previous empirical findings on leaders' ethical attributes and the ethical concepts of bodhisattva is intriguing. Future studies may explore further the relation and interaction between the attributes of leadership as suggested by this study as well as the consequences of leadership's attributes towards followers and other stakeholders.

⁶ C. J. Resick, P. J. Hanges, M.W. Dickson & J.K. Mitchelson, "A Cross - Cultural Examination of the Endorsement of Ethical Leadership", **Journal of Business Ethics**, 63 (2006): 350

(3) Normative ethics. Theoretical approaches to leadership generally fall into one of two categories: descriptive or normative. Descriptive leadership theories describe how leaders act. On the other hand, normative leadership theories are concerned with how leaders ought to act. These theories are explicitly built on moral principles or norms and provide guidelines for promoting ethical behavior.⁷

The application of Asaṅga's ethical concepts to leadership is normative. The concepts show how ethical concepts of bodhisattva should be applied for practice by modern leadership. Mainly, leaders should work, lead, and live with ethics. Ethics is not a separate issue from leadership. The leaders should be possessors of ethics to be more capable in acting as role models and attracting their followers to be intent and committed to practicing ethics in their work.

In order to provide an example of the application of the bodhisattva ethics to the case to illustrate Figure 2 (p.119), the case (mentioned in Chapter II, p.36) regarding the nurse who takes care of an end stage cancer patient can be used with the assumption that the nurse was the Head nurse. With regard to the patient's request to the Head nurse not to tell other nurses about his suicide attempt, the nurse could first refer to the codes of conduct whether they include this type of situation. In case that the codes have relevant protocol, the Head nurse acknowledges that and with good intention and compassion, use wisdom in making decision whether to follow the protocol taking into consideration the benefit of the patient. In case that the codes did not provide protocol for this type of situation, the Head nurse uses wisdom to consider the pros and cons of the act of telling others in light of the patient's benefits. And since the pros seem to outweigh the cons, the Head nurse then uses the skills in notifying information (about the patient's suicide attempt and his request for secrecy) to other health care professionals to get good collaboration in perfecting the further care. The Head nurse also uses the skill in communicating and persuading Mr. Green not to be concerned with suicide attempt. The Head Nurse has thus become an ethical role model by making decision to follow the codes or suicide protocol and by showing good intent and concern for the other, i.e., the patient. With regard to the seven aspects of ethics (besides the essence of ethics and complete ethics), the behaviors of

⁷ C. E. Johnson, **Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership: Casting Light or Shadow**, (California: SAGE Publications, 2015), p.230.

the Head nurse seem compatible to several types of ethics such as the ethics of a holy person, the ethics as all modes, and ethics of well-being here and there.

Despite the practicality of the bodhisattva's ethics for actual cases, it should be noted that rather than providing a clear-cut stipulation for the leaders how to act when facing ethical challenges in varying situations, the bodhisattva's ethical concepts provide broad guidelines for leaders to refer to and to make further decision. The reasons for this are firstly, leaders are exposed to a variety of situations, of contexts, and of different groups of people; thus the leaders need to make decision and act in the way that they deemed ethically proper for the people involved in each situation in the context. Secondly, leadership of each leader may differ; some may be more transformative while others may be more authentic, or more spiritual. Thus, these leaders may react differently in the same situation; they may react with emphases in different aspects although their actions are ethical acts. Thirdly, the bodhisattva ethics is more like transcendental ethics whereas the ethics for leadership is worldly ethics; their desired ends somewhat differ although both ends fall in the ethical framework. The bodhisattva ethics is to excel purification while the laity ethics is for the good conducts of a person; therefore, the application of bodhisattva ethics can be adjusted to be at the proper level or magnitude for laity.

(4) Modernity of Asaṅga's ethical concepts in the application with laity.

Lay ethics is predicated on the simple desire for continuation of the good life after death, or its improvement on a paradisaal plane. Precepts offered to the laity for practice bear the promise of obtaining a higher state of rebirth as a human or divine being, and avoiding a lower state of rebirth as hell-dweller, ghost, or animal.⁸ Furthermore, the cardinal virtue for a layperson is generosity. The laic takes a vow of five precepts: to refrain from murder, theft, sexual misconduct (basically: adultery), telling lies and drinking liquor. A later set of Buddhist precepts shared by laity and monkhood are the ten unwholesome courses of action, i.e., the prohibitions against murder, theft, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh speech, slander, idle chatter, covetousness, ill will, and false view. The bodhisattva's ethics encompass all these

⁸ Mark Tatz, *Asaṅga's Chapter on Ethics with the Commentary of Tsong-Kha-Pa, The Basic Path to Awakening, The Complete Bodhisattva*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), p. 9.

precepts while emphasizing the wisdom and skill of practitioners such that the ethics are also proper for applying, with some differences in levels, for modern leaders.

(5) Leadership for Sustainability. A recent trend in leadership field puts more emphasis on leaders' task in managing sustainable organizations. Considering this, the study specifies one key task of modern leadership in its definition, i.e., to drive for the organization's sustainability. Sustainable development has been defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."⁹ Sustainability at an organization level can thus be defined as "meeting the needs of the organizations' direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders". Previous studies such as that of Metcalf & Benn (2013)¹⁰ suggest that leadership for sustainability requires leaders of extraordinary abilities: (a) leaders who can read and predict through complexity, (b) think through complex problems, (c) engage groups in dynamic adaptive organizational change and (d) have the emotional intelligence to adaptively engage with their own emotions associated with complex problem solving. These abilities are to some extent consistent with the attributes of leadership based on Bodhisattva's ethical concepts. The first two abilities indicated by Metcalf and Benn (2013) are consistent with the virtue of "wisdom" of leaders whereas the third ability is compatible with leaders' "skills in means" which can be used to deal with others amid dynamic changes. The fourth ability is a combination of the virtue of "wisdom" and "patience" as well as "self-restraint" of leaders. By employing the framework of bodhisattva ethics, it is evident that the attributes of virtue such as generosity, vigor, and focus (or concentration) of leaders have not been mentioned by Metcalf and Benn although these are key attributes that leaders can use to deal with their stakeholders.

Metcalf & Benn (2013) state that leaders and leadership is a key interpreter of how sustainability of the organization 'links' to its wider systems in which the

⁹ G. H. Brundtland, **Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our common future**, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), p.2

¹⁰ L. Metcalf & S. Benn., "Leadership for Sustainability: An Evolution of Leadership Ability", **Journal of Business Ethics**, 112, (2013): 369

organization sits, and executing that link well requires unusual leaders and leadership systems. This study concurs with the former part of their statement, that is, leaders need to be able to link organizations to wider system and manage the sustainability of organizations; these are the tasks of modern leadership. The latter part of their statement about requiring “unusual leaders and leadership system”, however, may be clarified by linking to the bodhisattva’s ethical concepts. The attributes of “modern leaders” (in this study), which comprise wisdom, skillful means, virtue, and self-restraint, seems suffice to drive organizations to sustainability. The attributes address the capacity of leaders as well as the capacity of followers in meeting the needs of others, i.e., current and future stakeholders of organizations. Actually, these attributes of leaders are not “unusual” in the sense that they have been existent more than thousands years ago but are “excelled” attributes for modern leadership in assuming their role. The suggested attributes of modern leaders call for them to be visionary, creative, transformative, resilient, inspirational, and ethical.

5.3 Future Studies

Asaṅga’s ethical aspects could be further explored for modern leadership in the following areas:

(1) Measurement of attributes, conducts, and values of ethical leadership. The ethical aspects of leadership according to the framework based on Asaṅga’s work are multi-faceted, i.e., they embrace values/ beliefs, attributes as well as conducts of leaders. Future research may develop or expand measurement of ethical leadership to implicate internal ethical aspects and their coherence with external ethical aspects (i.e. behaviors) of leaders. The Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) developed by Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan & Prussia (2011) may be used as a starting point since their questionnaires include the measurement of moral personality attributes such as honesty, integrity, fairness and moral behaviors such as putting the needs of others above his/her own interest. The questionnaires may be refined so that they can measure the ethical attributes of modern leadership as suggested by this study. Besides, the consequence of modern leadership’s attributes towards followers and other stakeholders is another interesting area for deeper study.

(2) Ethical aspects of leadership across cultures. Although the research on ethical aspects of leadership across cultures found shared moral aspects, cultures are found to vary significantly in the degree of endorsement for each dimension (Resick et al., 2006). Future studies could explore further the attributes of modern leadership, as suggested by this study, across cultures. The results should be fruitful in increasing our understandings of similarity or differences between the attributes of leaders in Western and Eastern cultures.