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Title: Leading With Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit

Author(s): William Howe .

Source: Business Horizons.

Document Type: Book review

Article Preview :

The reviewer, William Howe, is an assistant professor of leadership studies at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. Had enough of the traditional social science and business management accounts of leadership? Tired of the rational/logical/industrial/structural/functional, here's-how you-become-a successful/effective/productive-leader books? Or the journal-oriented leadership articles that seem inextricably wedded to, and embedded in, a few "legitimate" disciplines--psychology, business management, and perhaps sociology? Feeling as though something is missing in leadership studies and practice? Something that has little to do with the usual litany of leadership theories and concepts, the often invoked "new paradigms" of leadership, or "bottom lines," cyberspace, restructuring, reengineering, and "the right stuff"? Leading With Soul, a radical departure from the mainstream leadership literature, may be just what you've been waiting for. At the very least, it may prod you to rethink the way leadership should be conceived, practiced, and taught, even as it may also compel you to examine who you are as a person, leader, and/or teacher. Here is a book--actually

a story or fable composed of parables, questions, koans, reflections, and dialogues—that seems to take narrative through the looking glass and into unexplored territory far from the madding crowd of institutionalized social science. Here is "an uncommon journey of spirit" that, despite its unusual and different approach to leadership, encourages all of us to follow its strange narrative path on the journey undertaken by its main character, Steven Camden--himself an allegorical Everyman who, like Bunyan's Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, represents the spiritual quester in all men. Here is a marvelous fiction that may reveal more truth about us and about leadership than a stack of the most carefully designed empirical studies. And here is a literary creation that we, its readers, help to create as we identify with Steven and reflect upon its parables, paradoxes, and questions. Altogether, this is a courageous venture into a realm that leadership scholars, practitioners, and teachers have neglected and even rejected. To some it may seem ethereal fluff; to others it may seem nonscientific perspective-taking; still others may deem it useless, nonpragmatic wisps of opinion. But such nonbelievers--much like the spiritually empty Steven Camden at the beginning of the journey--may have the most to gain from the book. Without a doubt, this is a highly different read, particularly because it requires that we approach it figuratively (as metaphor or allegory) rather than literally (as fact or science). In an important sense, *Leading With Soul* is closer to the leadership poems of Lao Tzu, to Platonic dialogues, or to Nietzschean aphorisms than to accepted forms of leadership scholarship. Thus, the book requires its readers to step out of customary modes of reading leadership texts--that is, texts that provide answers or information--and accept a new mode, that of reflecting upon and creating the text. For some readers this may be an impossible task. But the effort is certainly well worthwhile. As I see it, this book boldly demonstrates that it is time for leadership studies to break free from the constraints...

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