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Samaritan leadership

Terrence M.I. Egan

Whatever one's code of ethical or religious belief, the notion of service to others is an ideal common to all cultures and civilizations. For this reason, the story of the Good Samaritan is one of the most poignant, and universally-appealing parables of the New Testament.

Asked, "Who is my neighbor?", Jesus replied with the parable of a Samaritan who took pity on the half-dead victim of brigands. A priest and a Levite passed by, but it was the socially inferior Samaritan who proved to be the epitome of neighborly service. The Good Samaritan displayed qualities of leadership that the designated leaders of his time were unwilling or incapable of demonstrating. By humbling himself in dressing the wounds of another he exalted his status as a leader. He demonstrated true servant leadership.

The purpose of this article is to examine the accomplishments, philosophies, and impact of three modern Samaritans who have become models of the concept of service to community. They are: Robert Greenleaf, Alec Dickson, and Kurt Hahn. Each has had a profound impact on the field of experiential education.

Greenleaf

The former Director of Management Research for American Telephone & Telegraph, Robert K. Greenleaf was also a lecturer and consultant in the fields of management research, development, and education. In 1977, Greenleaf wrote *Servant Leadership* as a rejoinder to the turbulence of the late 1960's. The first chapter, dealing with the servant as leader, "was written in 1969 out of concern for pervasive student attitudes which ... seemed devoid of hope" (1977, p. 3). He strongly advocated that "more servants should emerge as leaders" and that "servants should follow only servant-leaders" (1977, p. 10).

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Greenleaf developed his concepts of servant leadership as an antidote to what he felt was a crisis of leadership in the United States. Of the many institutions that he felt were failing to provide leadership, Greenleaf felt especially concerned about the lack of leadership in education, faulting the whole educational system on three major points.

First, he criticized it:

for the refusal...to offer explicit preparation for leadership to those who have the potential for it. Not only do educators seem passive about it, but...some influential educators not only denigrate leadership but administer what has been called an anti-leadership vaccine. The resistance to encouraging the growth of leadership is so formidable that there seems no other way to account for it (1977, p. 164).

Greenleaf's second area of concern about the process of education was about the attitude of educators toward social mobility. In particular, he was concerned about the prevailing view of education as a one-way ticket out of, and away from, poverty. He would have preferred to see many of the upwardly mobile to return to their old neighborhoods to provide leadership for those communities. Only recently has the issue of the flight of the middle class from the "blocks" to the "burbs" become an issue with social scientists concerned about inadequate numbers of successful role models in inner city neighborhoods. Greenleaf does not deny the rights of the disadvantaged to upgrade their lives in whatever way they choose. What he does suggest, however, is that there should be educational options for those who do choose the challenge of leading within their own communities.

Greenleaf's third concern was for the state of confusion over the teaching of values. He noted that as schools retreat from the posture of institutions as the upholders of moral standards, there are increasing student demands for courses about religion. Yet, at the same time, the practice of holding religious services, even in nominally religious schools, seems to have declined. Greenleaf asked an oft-spoken question for educators:

Is it only appropriate to teach about values, and make no judgments about what they ought to be? Is this really an adequate role for schools and colleges. Should not schools be importantly concerned with value clarification so that students are given as firm a basis as possible for making the choices they have always made—even when the schools presumed to know what their values ought to be (1977, p. 165)?

Implicit in Greenleaf's argument is that educators should indeed be in the business of teaching values; however, he felt that the process of credentialing students as well as the expansion of the numbers of colleges and universities have militated against it. As a result, the focus of education has changed from socializing a servant elite to a highly competitive business imbued with entrepreneurial value systems.

Greenleaf was adamant that the purpose of education is to prepare students for life and leadership and in *Servant Leadership* he described a situation that seemed to illustrate his ideas of the experiential nature of education. On this occasion, when he was making a presentation at Dickinson College as a Woodrow Wilson Senior Fellow, Greenleaf was introduced as someone from the "real" world. His reaction was that "students who are potential bearers of responsibility should see their college years are being as real as anything they will ever experience. Therefore, they should conduct themselves in the college environment in a way that develops to the full their capacity for responsible behavior" (1977, p. 200). In other words, they should prepare themselves to become servant leaders.

And once a leader, then what? Greenleaf argued that servant leaders "know experimentally" and that they gain a "sustaining spirit when they venture and risk" (1977, p. 329). It is this same "sustaining spirit" that Dickson and Hahn sought to create in their development of servant leaders through community service and experiential development and education.

Dickson

A contemporary of both Greenleaf and Hahn, Alec Dickson was educated at Rugby School and New College, Oxford. Between 1935 and 1939, he worked as a journalist and as a volunteer to disadvantaged youth in Leeds and London. During World War II, he served in the British Army as an officer in the King's African Rifles (KAR) in Ethiopia and East Africa. Dickson's role as an infantry officer was quite unique. He led a Mobile Propaganda Unit composed of native specialists from different sections of the army who also represented a spectrum of tribal allegiances. The propaganda unit's mission was to develop local support for the British government and its war policies. To get the government's point across, unit members employed techniques remarkably akin to those that Viet Cong cadres frequently used to develop support in rural Viet Nam—

gymnastic exercises, dramatic enactments, educational lectures, and exemplary off-duty conduct.

It was during his service in the regiment that he first conceived his ideas of individual development and service to the community. As his wife, Moira, noted: (Service in the KAR) "had given Alec Dickson a philosophy grounded in profound personal experience which was to affect all his later work. He found himself reinforced in his conviction that people were all-important and that their interests mattered more than those of any system or organization" (Dickson, 1976, p. 30). This was a remarkable insight given that the power and prestige of the British government at the time was devoted to maintaining the rule and presence of the "Raj."

But military service had taught Dickson "the comparative ease with which esprit de corps and feelings of unit loyalty can be instilled into platoons and companies when there are good African NCO's to help" (1976, p. 32). He asked himself if he couldn't develop a similar sense of community in African villages through a comparable process. The answer to that question was to shape his later period of servant leadership in Africa.

Leaving the service, Dickson spent two years with the Control Commission for Germany, working with displaced persons in Berlin. But Dickson's heart was in Africa and he went back to the Gold Coast and Ghana in 1948. A year later, he developed a mobile mass education team, based on the propaganda team model, which:

set out to provide opportunities for the training of voluntary leaders in social development and mass education, and to organize this training in short intensive courses, held in rural areas in such a way that they constituted a technique for arousing and stimulating understanding and enthusiasm among the local community (Dickson, 1976, p. 39).

Dickson's experience with the mobile team continued to reinforce his belief that it was essential for all young people to engage in some form of service to their communities.

It was during this period that Dickson observed that formal schooling "had become the enemy of community development" as a "new division perhaps more far-reaching in its implications had arisen—the separation of the schooled from the illiterate" (1982, p. 6). To illustrate, Dickson wrote how he had once come across some school boys watching illiterate tribesmen constructing a crude bridge across a stream near their village. When he asked the boys why they didn't help the villagers they replied that their education had placed them above such activity!

In order to counter this division and to facilitate nation-building and leadership development, he created a unique community leadership training scheme in the Cameroons, which was later moved to Nigeria's Man O' War Bay. Flatly borrowing from Outward

Bound, he combined adventure and physical challenge, along with his own unique approach to servant leadership through community development.

Dickson's students at the Man O' War Bay Training Centre were "in the employment of the government, in the employment of missions, in private companies...young teachers, young principals...or forest guards, or in the railway administration" (1982, p. 8). The common denominator was that they were all future leaders of Africa.

To develop their innate leadership and to inculcate them with the belief that nation-building was their solemn duty, Dickson put them through a program of physical challenge and adventure coupled with hands-on community service. Some of the students were from arid plains—they learned how to swim in the ocean. The students from the coasts climbed Mount Cameroon. All went to rural areas of Nigeria to apply their talents as best they could. To enhance transference of the experience he held evening discussions of the problems facing Africa and what the students could do to help meet those challenges. The program worked well, but when two students were lost and almost died on Mount Cameroon, Dickson felt personally responsible for the near disaster and subsequently tendered his resignation.

Dickson's next two assignments were with UNESCO doing rural development in Iraq, and in Austria doing refugee work. Returning to England in 1956, Dickson conceived the idea of high school graduates spending a year in service to the emerging Commonwealth countries. He initially faced considerable skepticism about the ability of teenagers with no skills to accomplish anything significant. What the skeptics later found out was that youthful enthusiasm, energy, and optimism could get a lot done. Some worked as teachers, others as laborers, and others in semi-skilled professions. Perhaps their most important accomplishment was to model servant leadership in emerging countries that lacked enough positive models for development. Dickson's organization, Voluntary Service Overseas, eventually grew and become highly successful, although it initially failed to achieve the national level of support he had hoped for. However,

in late 1960 and early 1961 three delegations from America had come to Voluntary Service Overseas to ask questions about their experience. All three were from universities in the States doing research for the President. So it was no great surprise when President Kennedy announced the formation of the United States Peace Corps, and the opportunity for Britain to lead in this field was gone (Dickson, 1976, p. 106).

Leaving VSO after a reorganization, Dickson cast his creative gaze closer to home. Recognizing that there were profound social problems in the United Kingdom that would benefit from voluntary assistance, Dickson

founded Community Service Volunteers. Antedating, but similar in concept to VISTA, the philosophical differences are remarkable. As Dickson noted:

The young Americans recruited to new social programmes (sic) have, however, little interest in the tedious tasks that professional welfare organizations are normally willing to leave to them—decorating dilapidated houses, changing hospital linen, visiting the old and so on....These young people do not seek to make their contribution at the bottom of a staff hierarchy or a welfare organization. They seem themselves rather as Ombudsmen with flaming swords—enabling a minority group, the workless or slum tenants threatened by urban renewal, to achieve justice or assert their rights (1976, P. 133).

Dickson's concept of community building was less confrontational and more in line with the concept of servant leadership—that there is no social ill that would not benefit from the ministrations of dedicated, altruistic volunteers. The concept may have seemed hopelessly quixotic as Dickson traveled the world lecturing, inspiring, galvanizing, and helping others to launch similar service schemes. Yet, countries as diverse as Nepal, India, New Zealand, and New Guinea, have benefited from his vision which has inspired over 30,000 volunteers (Dickson, 1979, p. 437).

Perhaps Dickinson's greatest service may be his contributions to experiential education which he felt had a two-fold purpose. First, he believed that education and labor must be connected in order to avoid the alienation from labor that frequently accompanies education. Second, education must become more community centered and less child oriented. For example, in the past two decades Dickson has promoted the concept of community service as an integral part, indeed vital part, of the educational process.

Thus, Dickson has posited a blend of community service with experiential or adventure education. Indeed, he believes that service should be adventurous. As Dickson stated: "adventure should be the keynote in our work with young people" (1976, p. 79).

Hahn

Kurt Hahn also believed that adventure should be the core of youth education. Born of prosperous German parents, Hahn was educated at the Universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, Freiburg, Göttingen, and Christchurch, Oxford. Hahn served in the wartime government of Germany and later was an advisor to Prince Max of Baden at the drafting of the Treaty of Versailles. He later founded a school at the Prince's Schloss Salem. According to James (1990), Hahn's creation:

Represented an attempt to create a healthy environment in which young people could learn habits that would protect them against what Hahn saw as the deteriorating values of

modern life. He identified the worst of declines as those in fitness, skill and care, self-discipline, initiative and enterprise, memory and imagination, and compassion (p. 7).

Imprisoned by Hitler because of his ethnicity and opposition to the Nazis, Hahn was later released through the timely intervention of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and others who helped to arrange for his immigration to England in 1933. Shortly after his arrival in Britain, Hahn founded Gordonstoun, a country school, which he modeled on the Salem tradition.

The Gordonstoun regimen was characterized by its emphasis on personal responsibility, honesty, discipline, physical fitness, and the Samaritan ethic. Hahn did not place great value on the accumulation of knowledge for its own sake. His pedagogical themes were centered around the development of the powers of judgment and the concept of selfless service to others. For example, both Gordonstoun and Salem were distinguished by having their own community fire brigade, made up entirely of students. During the war he also started coastal rescue teams, also made up of students. In doing so he combined service with a sense of adventure, seeing acceptance of risk as a form of education in itself. As one of his biographers noted:

'Experience therapy' is one of the basic tenets of Hahn's conception of education. In modern society, in view of the complicated requirements of life, young people are kept in the dependent position of learners well into the age of adulthood; yet they need to test and prove themselves if they are to discover and realize themselves (Rohrs, 1970, p. 126).

In 1941, Hahn started Outward Bound as a short course. Although it was initially considered to be an adjunct to his educational career—merely his contribution to the war effort, the international expansion of the movement was to eclipse his pedagogical accomplishments. As James explained: "Initially, the goal was to strengthen the will of young men so that they could prevail against adversity as Great Britain faced staggering losses at sea during World War II" (1990, p. 10). At that time, scores of young sailors were surviving the sinking of their vessels only to die in the open sea where older, more seasoned sailors prevailed.

As a result of the successes of this program, Outward Bound schools proliferated throughout the world expanding in size and in areas of emphasis, but grounded in Hahn's belief that: "it is possible, even in a relatively short time, to introduce greater balance and compassion into human lives by impelling people into experience which show them that they can rise above adversity and overcome their own defeatism" (James, 1990, p. 10).

As Outward Bound spread, its educational origin and purposes were sometimes forgotten. Yet Outward Bound proved to be a vital tonic against the alienation

and anomie of modern society even as the experiential enrichment shifted focus from service learning to learning about the self. In a relatively short time, Outward Bound Schools were opened in Germany, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and elsewhere, including five in the United States. Originally the courses were for healthy, young men looking for challenge and personal development. Over the years, however the phenomenon has changed to include females (as students and instructors), physically and mentally challenged, offenders, drug abusers, and a host of special clientele groups.

Late in life, Hahn came to develop an appreciation for Alec Dickson's concept of service, which one writer has called "epic service" and which he defined as referring "to those labors in which the need is not as acute, the adventure less physical, and the action less dramatic than rescue service" (MacArthur, 1982, p. 34). Although Hahn's preference was for the "dramatic service" of rescue, he acknowledged the need to undertake "those epic labours (sic) of love which are undertaken by young people; helping old people, the spastics, the blind, the deaf, helping in hospitals, helping to preserve the treasures of nature. I mention Alec Dickson's Community Service and the great work done by Voluntary Service Overseas which he founded" (MacArthur, 1982, p. 35).

An interesting trend in Outward Bound experiential education is a return to its original emphasis on service learning. For example, one Outward Bound school has conducted expeditions in Costa Rica with the primary objective of community service. Dartmouth College hosts a cooperative arrangement between Outward Bound and the Tucker Foundation for an epic service program that has students ministering to the needs of the community. The program bonds the concept of service to the learning institution.

Other outdoor experiential education organizations which are similar to Outward Bound such as Raleigh International, Youth Service International, and Youth Challenge International have always had a strong community service component to their expeditions. However, even their learning objectives have changed from individual leadership development to team development, with increased emphasis on service learning. If anything, these organization's commitment to service has strengthened and clarified in the past few years.

Integration: The critical multiplication factor

Perhaps it is a reaction to what has been viewed as the excess of the 1980's that individual people, and increasingly organizations, are rejecting the notion of self-aggrandizement in favor of a concept of servant leadership. That the concept has taken root in the outdoor experiential movement should come as no surprise. People participate in Outward Bound programs

because they want to improve their self-esteem, awareness or risk-taking ability, but what better way to raise self-esteem and awareness than by doing good unto others? Would it not improve risk-taking ability by going into a poor neighborhood to tutor underprivileged children where the risks are perhaps to one's person, but more certainly to one's complacency. Heightened awareness of our world comes not only when we stare at it from a mountain top, but also in valleys of poverty and need.

"Hahn saw the morally responsible man, not the scholar or artist, as the ideal for his school" (Kraft, 1985, p. 15). Greenleaf saw the servant leader as the ideal for schools, businesses, and institutions. Dickson's ideal has been the volunteer who would act as "the critical multiplication factor": who would nobly serve his or her community and also "impart their commitment to those nearest them" (Dickson, 1985, p. 285). Each has had a vision which has shaped the experiential education movement. Their vision has been to make education "real," to make it meet the needs of society as opposed to being another need that must be met by society. That the outdoor experiential education movement is moving from a concept of self-development to community development is directly attributable to their vision. Each is widely quoted in experiential education literature because of the profound effects of their transformational leadership. As a result, they have become a model for our times, an antidote to erosion of Samaritan values.

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