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ORIGINAL PAPER

Modeling Leadership in Tolkien's Fiction: Craft and Wisdom, Gift and Task

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Abstract
This article contributes to conversations about the "Hitler problem" in leadership ethics and the use of literary narratives in leadership studies by proposing Tolkien's fiction as a model of leadership. Resonating with Aristotelian and Thomistic themes, these narratives present leadership as more a matter of practical wisdom than of morally neutral craft, or, more precisely, they model leadership as a matter of using craft for the sake of wisdom's ends. Those ends become intelligible in terms of a triadic account of human action that depicts it as a response to a gift or call. I argue that this model of leadership suggests that Hitler-type leaders are corrupted leaders, rather than partially excellent leaders or no leaders at all. I also maintain that these insights demonstrate the fruitfulness for leadership studies of approaching literary narratives in something like the way scientists treat their models.

Keywords Leadership · Tolkien · Ethics

Introduction

In this essay, I argue that a fruitful model of leadership can be found in J. R. R. Tolkien's stories and novels, especially the early mythology of his imagined world found in *The Silmarillion* and his later work in *The Lord of the Rings*. In terms of these narratives, leadership is more a matter of practical wisdom than of craft, or, more precisely, leadership is a matter of using craft for the sake of wisdom's ends. Those ends become intelligible in terms of a triadic account of human action that depicts it as a response to a gift or call. Together these insights about craft, wisdom, and action, provide a distinctive response to the "Hitler problem," the question of whether bad leaders are really leaders at all. Because the narratives construe leadership normatively in terms of an account of human action, they do not face the dilemma of implausibly denying Hitler-like leaders' effectiveness or simply accepting them as genuine leaders who happened to do bad things. Instead, they can construe such actors as leaders indeed, but corrupt leaders.

Using Tolkien's narrative world, or legendarium, as a resource for articulating such a vision of leadership can contribute to ongoing work in leadership studies in at least two ways. First, by responding to the Hitler problem, it moves the conversation forward with respect to the relation between technical and moral excellence in leadership. Second, it shows that literary narratives can prove useful instruments for the study of leadership, business, and organizational behavior. I begin by considering some connections to current literature along these dimensions, before turning to a version of the Hitler problem in Tolkien's character Fëanor. I prepare the way for an alternative solution by arguing that Tolkien's narratives implicitly distinguish between craft and practical wisdom; articulate the intrinsic norms of the latter through a depiction of human action in terms of gift and task; and depict leadership as a work of wisdom. I then employ these distinctions and insights to argue that Tolkien presents Fëanor as a corrupted leader and such corrupted leadership as a mis-relation between craft and wisdom that he calls "the Machine." Finally, I suggest some ways that further inquiry into leadership could apply the model found in Tolkien's legendarium.

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The Hitler Problem

The relation between ethics and effectiveness in ascriptions of good leadership takes a particularly dramatic form as the "Hitler Problem." As Joanne Ciulla puts it, the Hitler Problem has to do with the evaluation of Hitler as a leader (1995, 2018). In some ways, Hitler's *effectiveness* cannot be denied, but the *ethical* direction of his leadership was obviously abominable. So was he a good leader or a bad one?

A rich literature on this problem has appeared in the last 20 years, but I will focus my attention on the seminal contributions of two early participants in this conversation. Their contrasting positions provide ideal types in reference to which one can triangulate an alternative like Tolkien's.

Burns (1978) addressed the Hitler problem even before Ciulla, arguing that "Adolf Hitler … was not a leader but a despot" (p. 240). Burns distinguishes mere power-wielders from true leaders on the ground that the former move followers to act for the power-wielders' own purposes without regard to the followers' needs, goals, and motivations. Leaders, on the other hand, whether transactional or transformational, interact with followers in a way that facilitates the achievement of the goals of both (Burns 1978). Leaders view followers as persons; wielders of brute power, like Hitler, see them only as things (Burns 1978).

Burns maintained this view in later texts. Burns (2003) denies that leadership is a "neutral" term: "'Bad' leadership implies *no* leadership" (p. 2). Contrasting "leadership" with "rulership," Burns concludes that "Hitler ruled the German people, but he did not lead them" (p. 29). That judgment rests partly on Burns's threefold taxonomy of leadership "standards or norms." "Virtues" are the habits of good character that manifest in private life; "ethics" concerns exchanges between individuals and finds expression in the golden rule. "Transforming values," on this account, consist in "such lofty public principles as order, liberty, equality …, justice, the pursuit of happiness" (Burns 2003, p. 27). Leaders may earn passing grades in one aspect of this taxonomy while failing in others, a complication that makes evaluation of flawed leaders often difficult. But, within this framework, the Hitler problem is a relatively easy one: Hitler is simply not a leader at all, because he failed abysmally with respect to every category of leadership norm.

Burns (2014) returned to these themes. Though he largely repeats his earlier arguments, Burns now identifies Hitler as a "terrible mis-leader" and affirms his status as a "leader of change," since "he left Germany a smoking devastated land" (Burns 2014, p. xii). Perhaps his hesitation to advance as strong a conclusion as he had previously maintained stems from confronting objections like Kellerman's 2004.

Kellerman's book is, in some ways, the photographic negative of Burns (2003). Kellerman insists that efforts to foster good leadership must have efforts to prevent bad leadership as their necessary complements. "To deny bad leadership equivalence in the conversation and curriculum is misguided," she argues, "tantamount to a medical school that would claim to teach health while ignoring disease" (Kellerman 2004, p. 11). Kellerman not only maintains that Hitler was, indeed, a leader; she also endorses the judgment that "'he was a good leader in that he was very effective,'" even though "'ethically bad'" (Kellerman 2004, p. 29). Denying leadership status to figures such as Hitler will ultimately subvert efforts to understand what it means to lead. Kellerman writes, "If we pretend … bad leadership is unrelated to good leadership, if we pretend to know the one without knowing the other, we will in the end distort the enterprise," because, among other reasons, leadership in ordinary language refers to good and bad alike (2004, pp. 11–12).

Kellerman's analysis of ordinary language is persuasive. The plain person might think of Burns's claim that Hitler is not a leader as a matter of semantic special pleading. But Kellerman's alternative to Burns's approach is not finally compelling. For Kellerman, leadership has no intrinsic values, norms, goods, or goals; it is merely an instrument that may be put to use for achieving this end or that and may be employed in any manner. To use Ciulla's terms, leadership is merely a matter of technical excellence and may be enacted in moral or immoral ways. Kellerman and Burns thus offer diametrically opposed views: from one perspective, leadership in itself is unrelated to moral norms; from the other, leadership is only leadership when it measures up to those norms.

But this dilemma is false. There is a third option in cases where technical excellence parts from moral excellence, one that Burns gestures towards with his late adoption of the language of "mis-leadership" in place of the simple denial of leadership. One can see it even more clearly in some of Kellerman's analogies, which have the effect of undermining her own claims about the value-free nature of leadership. Consider, for example, her comparison of leadership training with medical training, which must focus intensively on disease as well as health. But medical training does not identify health and disease as two topics of the same standing, two states equally related to the organs, functions, and processes in view. Instead, disease has to be defined in relation to health, not the other way around. Of course, doctors must study diseased systems, but they do so by identifying them as corruptions or pathologies of healthy systems. In medical training, then, the primary point to be understood is the function of healthy systems, so that one can accurately identify and remedy their pathological malfunctions. Thus, knowledge of healthy function must logically precede knowledge of disease. Likewise, corrupted, pathological leadership must be understood in relation to

healthy leadership, but healthy leadership itself is intelligible in terms of its intrinsic goods.

Consider also Kellerman's claim that comparing good leaders and bad leaders is "not to compare apples and oranges, but apples and apples" (Kellerman 2004, p. 12). That good leaders and bad leaders do not stand to one another as apples to oranges is undoubtedly correct; it is the insight behind the confusion the plain person would likely experience in learning from Burns that Hitler is not a leader at all. But it does not follow that good leaders stand to bad leaders as apples to apples. Kellerman overlooks another, more apt, analogy: good leaders may well stand to bad leaders as ripe apples to rotten apples. In bad leaders, one may say, the phenomenon of leadership has undergone a kind of decay or corruption that deprives it of the soundness of its healthy state, as defined by its own unique function and intrinsic ends.

In this paper, I draw on Tolkien's fictional world, itself rooted in the philosophies of Aristotle and Aquinas, to argue for and further develop this third option. Leadership in Tolkien's world is not a morally neutral tool, a craft equally suited to any end; instead it is a form of practical wisdom for a community, ordered intrinsically to the flourishing of the community and the members that make it up. Thus, Tolkien's model of leadership pushes back against Kellerman's insistence that leadership is value-free and Burns's view that evil leaders are not real leaders at all.

Literary Narrative and Leadership Studies

Why turn to a fictional narrative to explore these issues? The pedagogical use of literary art is not new to leadership studies. According to Śliwa et al. (2015, p. 247), "For almost three decades now, management and organization scholars have explored and elaborated on the application of novels in teaching management and organization" (Badaracco 2006; Czarniawska-Joerges and; Monthoux 1994; Grant 2015; Griffin et al. 2018; Nehls 2012; Martin et al. 2018; McManus and Perucci 2015; Shushok and Moore 2010). Czarniawska-Joerges and de Monthoux canvas most of the reasons advocates advance for the use of literature in leadership and organizational studies classrooms. They cite its complexity, concreteness, and subjectivity, as well as its ability to transmit tacit knowledge and communicate Weberian ideal types, gestalts (Calvard 2018; Czarniawska-Joerges and; Monthoux 1994; Grafström and Jonsson 2018; Hermida-Ruiz 2008), or a "realistic ideal" (Bezio 2013, p. 54). Novels and other literature can help students to feel or vicariously experience leadership and so come to know it from the inside out (Badaracco 2006; Kajtár 2015; Woudenberg 2006); gain imaginative, cognitive, and emotional skills (Currie 2016); and raise fruitful and critical questions (Hermida-Ruiz 2008; Warner 2008).

However, it is not clear that the qualities that make literary narratives apt for pedagogy would also make them productive for a scientific understanding of leadership and organizational phenomena. One must look further, then, for reasons to take up fictional narratives in the search for such knowledge. A number of researchers have argued that leadership is "rooted in storytelling" (Nehls 2012) or uses storytelling as an essential tool (Denning 2005; Hersted and Frimann 2016; Takala and Auvinen 2016). These arguments extend the significance of narrative beyond leadership pedagogy to the exercise of leadership. If they are right, then one would expect efforts to understand leadership to depend in some way on narrative analysis. Case studies would be an example of such analysis, and literary fiction might then appear as simply a more complex version of a hypothetical case study.

But methodological and philosophical reflection on the social and natural sciences offers even more resources for securing a place for literary narrative in leadership and organizational studies. Polkinghorne (1988), for example, argues that narrative must be an important part of sociological research. Research in the human or social sciences, according to Polkinghorne, focuses not on the physical or organic realms of human existence but on the mental realm of meaning, and meaning in human experience arises from the narrative form language imposes on physical and organic reality. Sociological narrative investigations are either descriptive, articulating the narrative schema some target uses to find meaning in its experience, or explanatory, using a narrative to construct an account of why something happened or someone acted in a certain way. Polkinghorne admits that the results of such narrative investigation are "retrodictive" rather than predictive, and yield no covering laws or mechanisms of control (1988, p. 183). However, he also maintains that the human sciences "do not produce knowledge that leads to the prediction and control of human experience; they produce, instead, knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of human existence" (p. 159). So, according to Polkinghorne, the absence of predictive control does not derogate from the sociological significance of narrative research.

Polkinghorne's analysis points to the sociological usefulness of narrative inquiry in studies of leadership and organizational behavior, providing a justification for the pervasive use of case studies in the field, as well as the historical investigations that one finds in such texts as Burns (1978). But the fictional nature of novels may still make some uneasy about their use in leadership studies. Longo (2015) has recently built on the insights of Polkinghorne, Alfred Schutz, and other theorists to consider the use of literary narrative as a sociological resource. Longo argues that

"literary narratives may give the empirical and theoretical sociologist deep insights into reality" (p. 139), for a number of reasons. They not only function to provide a view into the taken-for-granted phenomena of the readers' social worlds but also open new perspectives on those social worlds by integrating them, in some aspects, with a fictional world. Such literary narratives can even introduce new "social types" into their readers' perceived worlds (Longo 2015, p. 141). In several ways, then, a "fictional document is an instrument with which to probe into reality, testing certain features of the world as described in the text" (Longo 2015, p. 140).

Longo's notion of the literary narrative as an instrument with which to probe reality suggests that fictional tales may stand to leadership and organizational investigation as models stand to inquiries in the natural sciences. Recent work in philosophy of science has focused on the problem of models in a way that may shed light on that suggestion. Many philosophers understand models to be, in some sense, fictional, and so the question arises as to how a fictional model can yield knowledge of a non-fictional world—a precisely analogous question to the one about the cognitive value of literary narratives for understanding real-world leadership. Some advocates of a fictional view of scientific models argue that they can yield factive conclusions. Elgin (2004), for example, maintains that fictional models "can structure our understanding in a way that makes available information we would not otherwise have access to" (p. 127). When we use fictional models "we impose an order on things, highlight certain aspects of the phenomena, reveal connections, patterns and discrepancies, and make possible insights that we could not otherwise obtain" (Elgin 2004, p. 127). Likewise, Bokulich (2016) maintains that "fictional models can succeed in offering genuine explanations by correctly capturing relevant patterns of counterfactual dependence and licensing correct inferences" (p. 260).

If fictional models can reveal patterns and connections that illuminate reality, facilitating theory selection, causal analysis, and scientific discovery (De Mey 2006), one might still wonder how to bring those insights into contact with the world outside the fiction in a way that proves truth-preserving. Salis (2016) suggests that such insights can be exported from the imagined model as a "testable hypothesis." "Such exports," Salis writes, "are one step removed from the imagination, but they could not have been achieved without going through the imagination first" (2016, p. 256). The tests appropriate for a hypothesis in the social sciences might well differ from those in the natural sciences, and even within the social sciences, different phenomena will require different sorts of testing. But even without any more determinate conception of what it would mean to test a hypothesis derived from a narrative—and laying aside, with Polkinghorne, the notion that any genuine understanding must afford predictive control—it remains the case that these considerations provide strong grounds for expecting cognitive gain from investigating leadership in fictional models.

The fictional models in the natural sciences take a variety of forms: equations, physical representations, diagrams, and so on. Literary narratives are not among them. But a distinctive feature of leadership makes literary narratives a particularly apt choice for relevant models. Both traditional (Ciulla 1995) and newer concepts of leadership (Brooks and Kensler 2011; Rhodes and Badham 2018; Ospina and Uhl-Bien 2012) present leadership as an irreducibly triadic relation that cannot be reduced to any series of dyadic relations, such as causal interactions. Ketner et al. (1995), drawing on the semiotic thought of the nineteenth-century American philosopher C. S. Peirce and his twentieth-century heir, Walker Percy, argue more generally that the phenomena of the social and human sciences share this characteristic. After demonstrating the irreducibly triadic nature of such phenomena, Ketner argues that their triadic nature must shape any inquiry into them: "We must analyze triadic relations by means of other triadic relations" (p. 275).

Ketner et al. (1995) explain how this can be done by means of models. As we have already noted, scientists routinely pursue their investigations by creating models of the phenomenon they want to study and then investigating, manipulating, applying, and observing the model. In the course of doing so, inquirers can achieve new understanding of the modeled reality, discerning previously undiscovered relations or new facets of previously recognized ones. Ketner suggests that a pre-eminent source for models of the triadic relations endemic to human action may be found in novels. Just as physicists model physical interaction in equations, inquirers into specifically human experience can find models for their investigations in literature (Ciulla 2008; Shushok and Moore 2010). In the rest of this paper, I turn to a reading of Tolkien's legendarium meant to support the resolution to the Hitler problem suggested in the previous section by treating Tolkien's fiction as a kind of leadership model, along the lines adumbrated in the present section.

In the next three sections, I argue that two pairs of elements in Tolkien's model—craft and wisdom, gift and task—underwrite an analysis of leadership as a form of wisdom rather than as a kind of craft. Having gathered these materials, I apply them to a question, paralleling the "Hitler problem," that arises in Tolkien's legendarium about the character Fëanor and discuss the corruption of leadership in light of Tolkien's critique of the mis-relation between craft and wisdom that he calls "the Machine." I close with brief remarks on some possible further applications of Tolkien's leadership model.

Craft and Wisdom

The Silmarillion begins with a focus on the characters known as the Valar and the Maiar. The Maiar form a lesser order of angelic beings, who support the greater order, the Valar, in their work of developing, ornamenting, and governing the world brought into being by Ilúvatar, the monotheistic God of Tolkien's mythology. Having created the Valar in the beginning, Ilúvatar gave to them musical themes for their delight and for their elaboration. Melkor, the greatest of the Valar, wished to introduce his own themes rather than to respond to those of Illúvatar and to the harmonies of the other Valar, seeking an increase of his already great "power and glory" (Tolkien 2001, p. 16). Ilúvatar introduced new themes to incorporate Melkor's and direct them back from dissonance to harmony with all the others. Ilúvatar then gave these harmonies and symphonies visual form and, finally, their own being in the creation of our world, Arda or Middle-earth. To the Valar, he assigned the task of overseeing the course of the music that they had already anticipated and helped to shape, but the task would also now include the struggle with Melkor and his attempt to mar the gifts of Illúvatar.

Each of the Valar took a special responsibility for the aspects of the world that flowed from his or her contributions to the heavenly music. "The delight and pride of Aulë," for example, "is in the deed of making, and in the thing made" (Tolkien 2001, p. 19). *The Silmarillion* describes Aulë as "a smith and master of all crafts" (Tolkien 2001, p. 27). It is Aulë who makes the first lamps to light the earth, and "in the making all things he had the chief part" (Tolkien 2001, p. 39). Aulë's consort is Yavanna, the Vala who takes special responsibility for plants, trees, and other things that grow from seeds (Tolkien 2001). Her love is for things that have their own life within them, more than for works she shapes by her own hand. The Two Trees of Valinor, whose light replaces Aulë's lamps after their destruction by Melkor, come from Yavanna's song (Tolkien 2001). The light of these Two Trees becomes the central theme of all the other stories in *The Silmarillion* and enters into the central images of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Aulë and Yavanna both find their satisfaction in crafts—*techne* in Aristotle's terms or *ars* in Aquinas's. But their crafts are of quite different kinds. Aulë begins with matter that might be shaped into lamps or hammers and then chooses to fashion it in a way that accords with the choice he has made for its function. Yavanna's craft begins with things that already have their function inscribed within them. Having sown seeds, she sings, and the Two Trees sprout, flower, and grow towards their flourishing. Thus, Yavanna's craft works on living things with their own intrinsic ends, cooperating with their own intrinsic energy and facilitating their movement to their own end, rather than imposing her own end on them. One could call Yavanna's a kind of cooperative art and Aulë's craft a kind of non-cooperative art (Aquinas 1981, 1975; Maritain 1960, 1974). Despite their differences, they are both modes of bringing something to be outside the agent; they are productive crafts rather than performative arts such as music or horse riding (Aquinas 1993, 1995; Colton forthcoming).

Another episode in Tolkien (2001) suggests a further distinction between craft-knowledge of any kind and the virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis* or *prudentia*). All the Valar had seen in Ilúvatar's music the coming of the "Children of Ilúvatar," elves and men, embodied but rational creatures who in some mysterious way lay at the heart of Ilúvatar's plans for Arda. Although the Valar did not know when the Children would come into the story, nor what role they would eventually play in its denouement, they were eager to see what Ilúvatar would create. Aulë attempts to anticipate Ilúvatar by fashioning creatures from the earth, taking as his model his own dim understanding of the form of the coming Children of Illúvatar. Ilúvatar confronts Aulë, reminding him that his own being is a gift and that he has no power to provide such a gift to others. Aulë's creatures can only be automatons, totally determined by his own thoughts and desires. In response, Aulë accuses himself of impatience and folly, insisting that he had "desired things other than I am, to love and to teach them, so that they too might perceive the beauty … which thou hast caused to be" (Tolkien 2001, p. 43). In a scene reminiscent of the Binding of Isaac, Aulë raises a hammer to his creations, but Ilúvatar stays his hand and grants their own being to the products of Aulë's craft, who will eventually wake as the dwarves of Middle-Earth.

The difference between the dwarves before and after Ilúvatar's intervention reveals a distinction between craft and practical wisdom. To demonstrate that he has endowed the dwarves with their own life beyond Aulë's ability, Ilúvatar points to their shrinking from Aulë's hammer. They now perceive and act in the light of an end that goes beyond Aulë's own goals or the goals he might impose on them. In this episode, then, *The Silmarillion* suggests a distinction between the productive practice of craft, which finds fulfillment in an excellence that exists outside the agent, and the choices made by living things by which they bring about their own flourishing. Practitioners of crafts may work in such a way that they achieve excellence in making while at the same time causing harm to themselves, as Michelangelo created the masterpiece of the Sistine ceiling but damaged his own body in the process. The dwarves, after they wake to their own lives as a result of Ilúvatar's pity for Aulë, will have to consider not only how to achieve a good outside themselves, but how to achieve their own good, their own flourishing. They will thus require not only craft but practical wisdom.

Of course, Aulë and Yavanna also must exercise practical wisdom as agents themselves. Aulë's confession of folly was an acknowledgement of a failure in exercising such wisdom. In his impatient anticipation of Ilúvatar, he displayed a high degree of craft—but he also showed that his craft was not directed by practical wisdom.

The comparison of craft and practical wisdom poses a perplexity. Aulë's kind of craft has some obvious criteria of excellence: a good lamp illuminates brightly, consistently, and evenly. These standards are intrinsic to the kind of crafting Aulë has chosen; having decided to engage in lamp-making, his work must be judged according to such criteria. But those standards are extrinsic to himself. Illuminating brightly is not a mark of a good Vala, nor is lamp-making the only kind of activity that would make Aulë's choices good. Aulë needs more than craft-knowledge to know what sort of craft to pursue, as do all who work in crafts.

Consider the physicists and engineers who had to decide whether or not to work on the Manhattan Project. Their craft-knowledge, as indisputably sophisticated as it was, could not tell them whether applying that knowledge to the construction of an atomic bomb was a worthy choice for them to make, not just as technical experts but as moral agents responsible for their use of their technical ability. They needed not just craft-knowledge about nuclear fission but wisdom about the choice to exercise such knowledge. No amount of scientific know-how could provide that wisdom, since their use of know-how depended on it. They faced the question, where can one find criteria for excellence in practical wisdom? When has an agent chosen in such a way that we can call the choice good?

Gift and Task

In Tolkien's world, a consideration of "doom" can help us find an answer to these questions. In current English, doom connotes some destructive fate. Its deeper history is more complicated. Whitt (2010) argues that in its Germanic origins, doom relates to death but more fundamentally suggests both fate and the judgment of authority, both key elements of doom in Tolkien's *Silmarillion*. But I think Whitt overlooks another dimension of doom in the legendarium, one that is essential for thinking about practical wisdom.

Tolkien (2000) explains that doom is also gift, at least in some circumstances. In particular, Tolkien explains that "the doom of Elves is to be immortal," while the "Doom (or the Gift) of Men is mortality" (Tolkien 2000, p. 147). Tolkien's authorial interpretation appears inside the story as part of a message from the Valar to the Númenóreans, humans who were contemplating rebellion against their mortal fate and the wresting of immortality from the gods. The messengers explain why the Valar do not remove the doom of death by saying, "Nor can the Valar take away the gifts of Ilúvatar.. .. And the Doom of Men, that they should depart, was at first a gift of Ilúvatar" (Tolkien 2001, pp. 264–265). Here the Valar explicitly identify doom with gift, and, in particular, they describe death itself as a gift.

Another clear expression of doom as gift occurs in an earlier passage. The elvish narrator of this passage contrasts the gifts given to elves and humans. The elves receive beauty, skill, and a greater measure of temporal bliss. But of the Atani, the humans, Ilúvatar says, "I will give [them] a new gift" (Tolkien 2001, p. 41). The new gift is mortality: "Death is their fate, the gift of Ilúvatar" (Tolkien 2001, p. 42).

In Tolkien's narratives, human characters wonder about this claim (Tolkien 1993b). How can death be a gift? A doom that is a gift must in some sense lead to flourishing; otherwise, a doom is more properly punishment than gift. The gift proper to elves, for instance, is described as "the fulfilment of their being" (Tolkien 2001, p. 264). The gift to the Atani must then also somehow contribute to the fulfillment of their being, though it appears as simply the cessation of being. For the stories' human characters, this is especially puzzling given the contrast with the elves, who receive a kind of immortality. Their lives have no natural end—though they are susceptible to accident and violence—as long as the world endures (Tolkien 2001). The short span of human lives due to the "gift" of mortality seems rather paltry in comparison, a cause for sorrow or envy rather than gratitude. Indeed, the humans devise stories in which death comes to them as an attack by Melkor or as a punishment for a distant, ancestral sin instead of as a gift.

But there are clues suggesting an answer in the text of *The Silmarillion*. The messengers from the Valar tell the Númenóreans that the elves' immortality makes them bound to the world, whereas

> you escape and leave the world, and are not bound to it, in hope or in weariness. … But this we hold to be true, that your home is not here, … anywhere within the Circles of the Word. And the Doom of Men, that they would depart, was at first a gift of Ilúvatar. (Tolkien 2001, p. 265)

The "Doom of Men" is a gift of transcendence, freeing humans from the cycles of the world, and drawing them on to something beyond themselves and their circumstances. This Augustinian notion of transcendence even finds Augustinian expression, when the elvish narrator reports that Ilúvatar "willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein" (Tolkien 2001, p. 41), echoing Augustine's confession that "our heart is restless until it rests in you" (1992, p. 3).

The gift of death, then, is the gift of transcendence. And, in the view of the Elvish narrator, transcendence is a condition for human freedom and an indication of the human task.

Ilúvatar willed that humans "should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is fate to all things else" (Tolkien 2001, p. 41). Orientation towards a transcendent end frees humans from the immanent powers and ends of the world. But the price of freedom is death: "It is one with the gift of freedom that the children of Men dwell only a short space in the world alive, and are not bound to it, and depart soon whither the Elves know not" (Tolkien 2001, p. 42). So the Elves call humans "Guests" or "Strangers" in the world, living in it but not living by it, as the Elves do. Nevertheless, though the Elves are more at home in Arda than humans, it is human action that will finally bring Ilúvatar's plans for the world to fruition. According to the Elvish narrator, it is Ilúvatar's will that "[o]f their operation everything should be, in form and deed, completed, and the world fulfilled unto the last and smallest" (Tolkien 2001, p. 42). The freedom and transcendence of human action gives it an orientation to the good of the whole, in opposition to a view of freedom that conceives it as an arbitrary indifference to any goal or means. Achieving a renewal of the immanent world through a search for the transcendent good becomes the human task.

So the "Doom of Men" is a gift from Ilúvatar. It is or makes possible the transcendence that is the condition of their freedom, the beginning of their lives, the fulfillment of their being, and the substance of their task. Rather than an unhealed wound of an enemy, a brute fact of human misery, or a punishment of human evil, mortality is a vocation, calling humans to live a certain kind of life within the circles of the world so as to find in some unknown way a transcendent good beyond it (Tolkien 2001). As a response to a vocation, human action has an irreducibly triadic structure. It becomes intelligible only in the relation of the gift, the agent, and the task to which the agent is called.

As gift and task, the "Doom of Men" renders human action not only triadic but also intrinsically normative. Human action has within itself its own direction and tendency in terms of which one can understand, judge, and evaluate its instantiations. The Númenóreans, for example, fall under condemnation precisely because, afraid of death, they live "clinging to their [lives] beyond the end of all joy" (Tolkien 2001, p. 266). Their refusal to take up the task with which the gift of Ilúvatar endows them quickly leads to pride, greed, domination, rape, incest, murder, human sacrifice, and despair. All these offenses serve the Númenóreans as means in their attempt not to be faithful to the task found in the gift but to possess the gift in its own right. The Valar and Elves, of course, have their own gifts and so their own tasks as well; their action is as intrinsically triadic and normative as humans'.

With these observations in hand, we can return to the question about the criteria for excellence in practical wisdom. Whereas craft-making has its standards of excellence outside itself in the product to be made or the living thing to be nurtured, human action has its criteria within itself, in the gift and task that provide the horizon within which it first becomes intelligible. Craft is an ability to choose well in making, whether productively or cooperatively, in light of the proper function and excellence of the resulting object. Practical wisdom is the ability to choose well in acting, in light of one's own gift and task (Aquinas 1981).

Craft, Wisdom, and Leadership in Tolkien's Model

When we turn from the broader issue of human making and action to the narrower topic of leadership, several questions arise. Is leadership a cooperative craft? A non-cooperative craft? Or a form of practical wisdom? And if it involves craft, which craft and how should it be related to wisdom? Taking Tolkien's world as a model suggests some answers to these questions. First, leadership is not a craft but a matter of practical wisdom. It does, however, involve craft: especially the art of rhetoric but also other crafts that function as signs and indicators of a leader's trustworthiness. This section of the paper will explore these claims.

Leadership is a cooperative craft, since it concerns human action, rather than inert matter. Aulë's making of the dwarves offers a paradigmatic example of a non-cooperative, productive craft, in which a form is imposed on some sort of material that in itself is capable of taking on a wide variety of forms. Aulë makes dwarves out of the rocks at hand; he could have made hammers or tables. The end product completely depends on the maker for its shaping into this sort of thing rather than that, and it depends on the maker or some other external cause for its energy and movement. When Ilúvatar confronts Aulë, he emphasizes just this point:

> For thou hast from me as a gift thy own being only, and no more; and therefore the creatures of thy hand and mind can live only by that being, moving when thou thinkest to move them, and if thy thought be elsewhere, standing idle. Is that thy desire?

Aulë answers, "I did not desire such lordship." (Tolkien 2001, p. 43). Aulë was moved by a desire for a community he could lead, friends he could love and teach, "so that they too might perceive the beauty of Eä," the world Ilúvatar has brought into being. But if followers are the products of the leader, then no true community can arise, because there is no one truly *other* to be brought into *one*. Community requires public action, action shared as such between members. But where action is of the kind Ilúvatar describes in his accusation, there is nothing truly public; the followers do not choose to join a common action—they do not choose at all, in fact, but are simply extensions of the leader's private

whims. To have a relation between leader and follower, the two must be distinct; as Aulë comments, "I desired things other than I am." Insofar as leadership concerns the form of common action, it expresses a desire for the irreducible other. Leadership that aims at followers as at a product, then, subverts the very aim of common action.

Nonetheless, leadership as a non-cooperative craft is a perennial temptation. Aulë falls prey to it near the beginning of *The Silmarillion*, and the motif repeats later in the legendarium as well, especially with respect to the Orcs. Readers of *The Lord of the Rings* will be familiar with these enemies of Elves and humans. Like Elves and humans in form and rationality, they are the servants of Sauron in the later epic. In *The Silmarillion*, they are identified as the products of Melkor, the fallen Vala. Unlike Aulë's dwarves, however, they are not made from inert matter but from Elves who, captured by Melkor, were "by slow arts of cruelty … corrupted and enslaved; … thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves" (Tolkien 2001, p. 260). Frodo later repeats this story in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien 1993a). Here we find a kind of leadership as cooperative production, since the matter on which Melkor goes to work does in fact have its own being and can be the source of its own action.

But Melkor's monstrous craft is a perversion of Yavanna's nurturing craft. His sort of leadership only becomes possible through the corruption of the followers, so they become as much like tools of the leader as they can while still retaining in some sense their own being. In this sense, it is also a corruption of leadership itself, a "mockery" of leadership, just as the Orcs themselves are mockeries of the Children of Ilúvatar. It is a mockery because it twists the intrinsic purposefulness of the captured Elves to another end not belonging to their own gift and task. Whereas Elves are especially called to beauty, to skill, to memory, and to the improvement of Arda, the Orcs use their skill for ugliness and destruction. This mockery is not accidental to leadership as production, since such leadership must impose alien ends on that which already has its own intrinsic goal; otherwise, it would not look like production at all. Leadership as productive craft, to the extent that it is possible, fails to conform to the intrinsic normativity of gift and action while it simultaneously relies on the independent being its followers bear within themselves. In other words, leadership as production can only be understood as a parasitic mockery of the action and leadership that fit the gifts and independent being of the followers.

Yavanna's cooperative craft provides a contrast with Melkor's mockery and, in another way, with Aulë's non-cooperative productive craft, but it also fails to model leadership well. In Tolkien's world, action begins with the gift and task given to each person. Though all humans are doomed to die, each one's death belongs to that person singularly, and so the transcendence that provides the horizon for action also belongs to each singularly. So participation in a common action requires a choice on the part of each member of the community, in which some judgment is made about the relation between that choice and the task present in the gift. The action of Elves has the same structure, since Elves also have their own singular skills and relation to Arda. But Yavanna's craft depends on an ineluctable tendency to a particular end, a movement that automatically comes about, given the right environment and nurturing. Yavanna may nourish, nurture, and facilitate the growth of the Trees, but she does not lead them in a common action, anymore than a farmer leads a field of corn. Where there are not individual choices to join a common action, there cannot be leadership.

Rather than any kind of craft, leadership in Tolkien's legendarium is a form of practical wisdom. Practical wisdom can be taken in two senses. On the level of the individual, it consists in the ability to choose well with respect to one's own good, one's own gift and task. But in a common action, something more than an individual's good comes into view, since that joint action has its own relation to the gifts and tasks of the participants. In Tolkien's world, it is even possible to say that the community has a gift and task that is its own, irreducible to the gifts and tasks of its members. Humans, for example, have as their task a part in the final consummation of Ilúvatar's plans and so in the final happiness of the Elves, but that task is not reducible to the task of any one member of the human community. The ability to form good communal choices needs its own particular kind of practical wisdom; drawing on the tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, we might call that sort of practical wisdom, "political wisdom," since it concerns the common action of a community or *polis* (Aquinas 1981; Aristotle 1999).

For an example of a similar phenomenon on a smaller scale, consider the Council of Elrond in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien 1993a). The narrative at that point has brought together a number of participants who have their own reasons to be interested in a Ring of power carried by one of their number, Frodo. Frodo has inherited that Ring as a gift, but it also brings with it a burden that turns out to be a task. In Frodo's case, the gift and task that belong to him as sharing in the human doom take on a more specific and particular shape by virtue of the gift of the Ring. The physical action of the story pauses for a moment at the House of Elrond. Echoing Aquinas's (1981) and Aristotle's (1999) emphases on the importance of reflection and deliberation for practical wisdom, Tolkien identifies the House of Elrond as "not a scene of action but of reflection. Thus it is a place visited on the way to all deeds, or 'adventures'" (Tolkien 2000, p. 153). The Council together forms a community with the task of keeping the world safe from the dark power that threatens to use the Ring for destructive purposes. Though Frodo has a special responsibility as the bearer of the Ring,

the Council reflects together on the best choice for achieving its common task. The members of the Council bring a variety of particular gifts to the reflection: some represent affected communities, for example, and some are renowned for wisdom or for strength. Each of these gifts brings with it the task of ordering the use of that gift both to the individual's own fulfillment and to the common goal of the Council in reflecting on the choice best suited to the end of thwarting the evil power that seeks to regain the Ring. Their deliberation eventually leads to a Fellowship, a new community born from reflection and taking up a common action. Aquinas's analysis of friendship depends on the related concept of a *communicatio*, the social context, gift, or shared activity from which friendship emerges, grows, and takes its specific nature. The *communicatio* binds many selves into one friendship sharing a common life (Bobik 1986; Schwartz 2007). For the Fellowship, the task of responding to the Ring constitutes just such a unifying *communicatio*. Thus, the Council and the Fellowship call not just for an individual practical wisdom, but for a political wisdom that has in view the achievement of a common task through the right ordering of individual gifts and common action.

Tolkien's stories, however, do not simply oppose political wisdom to craft. Instead, it becomes obvious, even in the Council of Elrond, that political wisdom acts through craft to achieve its ends (Aquinas 1981). The common action of the Fellowship receives its form and order from the counsel and advice provided by Elrond and Gandalf. They act as leaders by shaping common action through their words. Their words do not produce followers or common actions as Aulë's smithing can produce a lamp, but by their words they persuade the participants to take up a particular kind of common action ordered to a particular end. Cicero called this ability to speak so as to persuade others to common actions that achieve common tasks the art or craft of rhetoric (Cicero 1970).

The connection between leadership and rhetoric is depicted even more dramatically in some other episodes of Tolkien's mythology. It can be found most strikingly, perhaps, in the story of Fëanor, the Elf who became a great master in smithing and devised a way to imprison some of the light of Yavanna's Trees in crystals of his own fashioning, called the Silmarils (Tolkien 2001). When the Trees are destroyed and the Silmarils stolen by Melkor, Fëanor swears a terrible oath to rebel against the Valar and follow Melkor to other shores, where the Silmarils could be regained. By his oath, in which he is joined by his seven sons, he sets himself and them a task; he dooms himself and his kin, in a mockery of the gift and task he first received, to an impossible and foolish end. That doom eventually becomes their destruction.

But first Fëanor must lead a great host of Elves across the sea if he is to have the strength necessary to mount even a foolish challenge to Melkor. He needs to shape their common action towards his own goal of revenge and recovery of his precious Silmarils. To do so, he turns to rhetoric. The narrator tells us, "Fëanor was a master of words, and his tongue had great power over hearts when he would use it; and that night he made a speech before the Noldor which they ever remembered" (Tolkien 2001, p. 82). In that speech, he appealed to his hearers' desires for freedom, to their self-appraisal as mighty doers of great deeds, and to their suspicion and envy of the Valar. He presented himself as a trustworthy interpreter of events and persons, and as a powerful force for their enemies to reckon with. Through this interweaving of his presented character, his argument, and his attention to his hearers' mood and desires (Aristotle 1991), he was able to move them to a common action best suited for his purposes. Fëanor's leadership is not a craft, but he exercises it through the craft of rhetoric.

The Fëanor Problem

Fëanor's leadership of the Noldor against the Valar and to a destructive doom raises a version of the "Hitler problem" (Ciulla 1995, 2014a, 2018). Is Fëanor a good leader, because he is effective; or is he a bad leader, because he shapes common action to destructive ends; or is he not a leader at all, because he fails to elevate and improve his followers? A parallel problem can be raised about his use of rhetoric: Is Fëanor a good rhetorician, because he is effective; or is he a bad rhetorician, because he shapes common action to destructive ends; or is he not a rhetorician at all, because he fails to elevate and improve his hearers? For help with these questions, I first turn to Beabout's (2013) treatment of rhetoric.

Beabout examines closely an ancient dispute about rhetoric. On one side, Gorgias and the sophists argue that rhetoric is a value-neutral tool for producing the outcome of persuasion. A good rhetorician, then, is the effective rhetorician, who can produce persuasion in an audience of any kind and for any reason. Plato and Aristotle, however, reject this model of the rhetorician. For Aristotle, rhetoric is an art or craft, and one standard of success is the outcome. But there is another, more important, standard intrinsic to the art itself, so that someone could succeed in producing the desired outcome but fail by the intrinsic standards of the practice. In the same way, a doctor can provide treatment that is excellent according to the standards of medicine and yet fail to produce health as an outcome. A doctor who fails to produce health may yet be a good doctor, if his treatment excels in terms of medicine's intrinsic standards. Likewise, a rhetorician may fail to persuade and yet still count as a good rhetorician, if his art lives up to its intrinsic standards. And, conversely, a rhetorician who succeeds in persuading

may be a bad rhetorician because his art falls short of those standards.

Beabout focuses on Plato's *Gorgias* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but he could have found similar accounts of rhetoric as intrinsically ordered to a goal beyond effectiveness in other ancient thinkers, such as Cicero (1970) and Augustine (1996), as well as more modern commentators, such as Weaver (1953). In Cicero's 1970 dialogue, Crassus considers the relation between a "twofold excellence in acting and speaking" (p. 208). Socrates, according to Crassus, despite his genius, made the fatal mistake of separating the two, bringing about a "divorce, as it were, of the tongue from the heart." But, contrary to Socrates, Crassus views eloquence and the wisdom of virtue as "naturally united" (Cicero 1970, p. 209). Consequently, to form an orator without "probity and eminent judgment" is not to educate a rhetorician of technical excellence who just so happens to use his skill badly; it is instead to "give arms to madmen," supplying weapons to one in whom the natural, intrinsic union of wisdom and eloquence has been corrupted into insanity (Cicero 1970, p. 207). Taking the union of soul and body as an example of a natural union, one might say that Crassus sees the technically excellent but morally deficient rhetor as like a lifeless body that nonetheless still mimics in monstrous fashion the movements of the living—in more contemporary terms, one might even think of a zombie. In any case, Crassus's remarks put in question the interpretation of rhetoric as a neutral tool equally available to the morally wise and foolish. The standards of moral wisdom are, rather, intrinsic to the practice of rhetoric, given its state of natural union with virtue.

Augustine uses the relation between soul and body as an image for the relation between wisdom and eloquence even more explicitly. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine writes that.

> just as someone who has a beautiful body and a misshapen mind is more to be grieved over than if he also had a misshapen body, so too those who eloquently utter things that are false are more to be pitied than if they said such things in a shapeless style." (1996, p. 239).

In other words, eloquence in some way seems to fit wisdom; they seem to go together, to be made for each other. Nevertheless, Augustine also recognizes that in actual practice one often finds eloquence combined with "unwisdom" (1996, p. 204), and he describes rhetoric as "the art of persuading people to accept something, whether it is true or false" (1996, p. 201). No doubt Augustine penned these words with memories of his own past experience, when he was a student and then teacher of the rhetoric of the legal profession, "where one's reputation is high in proportion to one's success in deceiving people" (1992, p. 38). Augustine knew well how eloquence and wisdom can come apart in the practice of rhetoric and so often do in practice. But he continued to maintain its importance. "Why should good men not study to acquire the art," he asks, "so that it may fight for the truth, if bad men can usurp it to the winning of their vain and misguided cases in the service of iniquity and error" (Augustine 1996, p. 202; slightly modified translation)? Eloquence belongs on the side of wisdom, and it can serve evil only when it is twisted from its intrinsic order to the truth.

Reflecting on Plato's *Phaedrus*, Weaver (1953) also comes to the conclusion that rhetoric has within itself an orientation to certain norms or standards, though it can fail to meet them. In language that anticipates Burns's analysis of transforming leadership, Weaver writes, "rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal" (Weaver 1953, p. 25); in another place, he briefly defines rhetoric as "something which creates an informed appetition for the good" (Weaver 1953, p. 115). According to Weaver, the *Phaedrus* teaches that "all speech … is a form of eros (1953, p. 26), because it is a form of love that "desire[s] to bring truth into a kind of existence" (1953, p. 25). But another form of love can hijack rhetoric, a love that seeks not the truth but only its own will through the exploitation of the other (Weaver 1953). This "evil love" expresses itself in a "base rhetoric" that, far from being simply an alternative use of a neutral tool, is fundamentally a corruption of true love (Weaver 1953, p. 11). In other words, genuine love expresses itself in a rhetoric that helps those loved to become better versions of themselves, in light of the truth about who they are; a base love corrupts its rhetorical expression by moving others to a good that belongs only to the will of the lover and not to the welfare of the loved. Love and rhetoric, then, have the truth about the beloved's or auditor's flourishing as an intrinsic standard of their perfection (Weaver 1953).

Where can one find such intrinsic standards of wisdom, truth, and flourishing? Since rhetoric in the classical sense concerns deliberation about common action, its standards have to be sought in the nature of human action. The rhetorician is someone who can shape deliberation so that good choices about common action can be made; so his activity depends for its excellence on the common good towards which that action is ordered. Beabout (2013) summarizes, "In order to advance toward mastery in the art of rhetoric, one must become a person of practical wisdom, prepared to participate in leadership in the community" (p. 170). Fëanor, then, does not count as a good rhetorician, despite his success at turning the crowd his way, because he displays no ability to form common action so that it is ordered to the tasks intrinsic to its original gifts. In a parallel way, one must also judge Fëanor a bad leader, because he does not use the power of rhetoric to shape common action towards its intrinsic task.

But the effectiveness of Fëanor's leadership and rhetoric makes it seem odd to deny that he is good at either or, more dramatically, to deny that he is a leader or rhetorician at all. In much the same way, it may seem odd to call someone like Gorgias—a craftsman of exquisite, sophisticated, and pleasing orations—a bad rhetorician. Gorgias and his colleagues, however, have left us a name for such perplexing combinations: a sophist. Sophistry combines a facility with speech and the tools of rhetoric that foster its external success with a lack of care for, or even opposition to, its intrinsic standards. Sophistry thus twists the rhetorical use of words from its intrinsic ends to extrinsic ones. We easily recognize sophistry as a corruption of rhetoric and discourse, but, at the same time, we acknowledge its frequent effectiveness, judged by external standards. Thus, the notion of corruption or mocking, in which phenomena with their own intrinsic directedness are twisted to other and alien ends, allows us to hold together an assessment of effectiveness with one of ethical failure in the evaluation of rhetoric.

A parallel evaluation can be made with respect to leadership. Since action has its own intrinsic ends, so does leadership, the political wisdom that shapes or forms common action. The bending of wills to the leader's own may meet the external standard of getting a group of people to do what the leader wants (Tolkien 2001). In such a case, we have the corruption of leadership, someone who is a success according to external standards but a failure according to internal standards. Fëanor, like Hitler, falls into this category, because he is externally effective as a leader, but he does not meet the internal standards that result from the gift and task structure of action, whether individual or common.

The Machine

Tolkien's model associates such corrupt leadership with what he calls in his letters "the Machine." Tolkien's resistance to the Machine sometimes appears as a simple Ludditism. He bemoans the very existence of the "'infernal combustion' engine" (Tolkien 2000, p. 77) and finds a special source of the horror of war in the use of the air force (Tolkien 2000). But Tolkien's legendarium also suggests a deeper criticism that can illuminate the nature of corrupt leadership. In a long letter providing an overview of his mythology for a potential publisher, Tolkien identifies the Machine as one of the central themes of his work: "Anyway all this stuff is mainly concerned with Fall, Mortality, and the Machine" (Tolkien 2000, p. 145).

All of these motifs recur in a variety of complicated patterns. The theme of Fall recurs in every story of corruption, of twisting actions and agents from their intrinsic ends to something alien. Mortality appears centrally in the "Doom of Men," but, for Tolkien it also bears a close connection to craft. Outside his legendarium, Tolkien speaks often of literary craft as "sub-creation" (Tolkien 1966), and he includes under that rubric any example of craft or creative expression more generally. For Tolkien, these are the efforts that seem "to have no biological function" but instead express the craftsman's love of the primary world in which he finds himself and his dissatisfaction with it (Tolkien 2000, p. 145). In that sense, it suggests a kind of drive for the transcendent that is captured in the "Doom of Men," and it is expressed in making something that is beautiful in itself and so a kind of microcosmic model of what the craftsman loves in the primary world.

But the sub-creator does not just copy the primary world; in creating his own secondary reality, he introduces aspects and features that are not just imitations of what he already knows. Consequently, sub-creation may lead to Fall in various sorts of ways, but especially through the vice of possessiveness, which plays a prominent role in the legendarium. The sub-creator, says Tolkien, "may become possessive, clinging to the things made as 'its own', the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation" (Tolkien 2000, p. 145). That may seem a strange complaint at first; after all, why is that sub-creation not the artist's own? In Tolkien's view, the sub-creation is the artist's own, but it is the artist's own through gift, so that gratitude rather than possessiveness is always the proper response. Reflection on our own efforts of sub-creation may bear this out. Often artists and other sub-creators express the sense that their work has its origin ultimately somewhere beyond their conscious and calculating minds (Stevenson 2010). It comes as a gift from some source that seems to transcend themselves, as ancient artists recognized in their invocations of the muses (Pieper 2000). Possessiveness, then, is a vice that can corrupt the sub-creative work of craft.

That corruption may manifest itself in rebellion against the gift and whatever seems to be its source, the twisted attempt to claim that one's work is solely self-sufficient and so not accountable or responsible to anyone or anything else. It also manifests, according to Tolkien, in a rebellion against mortality, against the reality that all sub-creation consists in a finite, fragile, and limited response to something that seems to transcend those bounds. These corruptions introduce Tolkien's third theme, the Machine. Together, says Tolkien, they "will lead to the desire for Power, for making the will more quickly effective,—and so to the Machine (or Magic)." Tolkien's equation of the Machine and Magic may seem surprising, but he explains it this way:

> the last I intend all use of external plans or devices (apparatus) instead of development of inherent inner

> powers or talents—or even the use of those talents with the corrupted motive of dominating: bulldozing the real world, or coercing other wills" (Tolkien 2000, pp. 145–146).

The Machine represents the substitution of external criteria, means, and ends for internal ones. It is the substitution of craft for wisdom, attempting to direct action, especially common action, towards ends opposed to that action's intrinsic normativity as found in its gift and task.

Leadership as productive craft participates in the Machine and constitutes the target for a polemic against domination that runs throughout Tolkien's work. Notice that there is no attack on craft as such; the craft of Aulë and Yavanna, of Elrond and Gandalf, and of many others is the subject of praise, wonder, and admiration. Even Fëanor's craft is in itself a good thing in the story. The Valar admire and praise it and even ask to use its product, the Silmarils, to heal the Trees after their marring; eventually, one of the Silmarils takes up a permanent place as a star in the heavens (Tolkien 2001). The problem lies not in the crafting itself but in the possessiveness to which it tempts Fëanor. It is his inability to resist this temptation that initiates a tragic doom for him, his house, and the whole of Arda. Likewise, the Númenóreans are praised for their craft, but their possessiveness leads to rejection of the gift of death and so prepares the way for the great cataclysm that destroys their civilization and remakes the world (Tolkien 2001). For all these figures, their leadership is enhanced by craft, whether the craft of rhetoric that more directly shapes common action through persuasion or other crafts of smithing, sailing, and so on.

But when the aims of crafts, twisted by possessiveness and other vices, usurp the ends of wisdom, Tolkien sees domination, coercion, and destruction as the result. Crafts operate according to external criteria and in view of goals that are more limited than the flourishing of whole persons and communities. Political wisdom, on the other hand, deliberates and chooses in light of intrinsic gifts and tasks, talents and abilities, virtues and character traits, and so aims ultimately at the fulfillment of agents and communities. That fulfillment usually takes place through the work of various crafts, but in the case of genuine wisdom, the crafts are the means to the end of wisdom and not a replacement for it. The replacement of wisdom by craft, then, leads ultimately to the Ring of power, the symbol, as Tolkien says in one place, of "the will to mere power, seeking to make itself objective by physical force and mechanism, and so also inevitably by lies" (Tolkien 2000, p. 160). The substitution of craft for wisdom is a corruption of leadership.

The Machine may often seem stronger, more reliable, and more manipulable than the work of political wisdom; that is its temptation for leaders. Every leader in *The Lord of the Rings* is vulnerable to it. Given most people's unreliability in developing their talents and gifts, what hope other than the Machine does a leader have? Tolkien's answer comes in another of the recurring themes he identifies in his legendarium: the surprising agency of the small and marginalized. He describes it as "the place in 'world politics' of the unforeseen and unforeseeable acts of will, and deeds of virtue of the apparently small, ungreat, forgotten in the places of the Wise and Great (good as well as evil)" (Tolkien 2000, p. 160). The alternative to attempting to gain control of the Machine—an effort that, in the narratives, always leads to disaster—is hope in a gift. This hope is not merely passive. Elrond and Gandalf, for example, spend great effort and thought on helping Frodo and others to recognize and develop their gifts. But it does mean that, in the end, leaders must not only develop skill in rhetoric and the other crafts pertinent to the common action at stake, but they must also cultivate the virtues of gratitude for the relevant gifts; hope and magnanimity with respect to the tasks; and even reverence for the sources and bearers of the gifts (Ciulla 2005; Fehr et al. 2017; Havard 2014; Otaghsara and Hamzehzadeh 2017; Woodruff 2001). These virtues will foster a view of followers as persons, capable of and responsible for the unfolding of their own gifts and talents, rather than as products to be made, possessed and controlled by their leaders.

Conclusion: Further Applications of Tolkien's Model

I have argued in this paper that Tolkien's legendarium provides a model that yields the following hypothesis with respect to leadership: leadership is a form of political wisdom responsive to the gifts and tasks of human action rather than a productive craft operating according to external criteria and tending to the corruption endemic to the Machine. On this hypothesis, leadership receives its ultimate norms from the gifts and tasks of human action, because leadership concerns the shaping of common action. Leadership is thus not a craft that can equally well serve any number of goals; instead, it is a matter of using crafts for wisdom's ends, enabling communities not only to succeed by standards external to their gifts and tasks but to choose well, in light of those gifts and tasks, among the ends and actions their crafts make possible. A Hitler or a Fëanor does not, then succeed in leadership nor simply fail to be a candidate for leadership at all. Such figures make a mockery of leadership by twisting common action away from its intrinsic norms. They are leaders—but corrupt leaders.

In my view, this essay's argument provides direct evidence for the cognitive fruitfulness of literary narrative in the search to understand the nature and phenomena of leadership. Tolkien's model of leadership also invites practical reflection. It can move us to ask whether our own leadership

can make better sense in terms of gifts and tasks. If so, we must learn how to practice the discernment that can reveal the shape those gifts and tasks take in our lives and in the activities of the communities to which we belong, whether as leaders, followers, or both in different respects. We can also consider the relation between craft and wisdom as we experience it. Do we find there the temptations to possessiveness, domination, and the Machine that Tolkien's model predicts? How can we respond to such temptations? If we find the phenomena of gift and task at the heart of our own leadership, then we can make sense of our activity only by making a place for the virtues of gratitude and hope in our leadership. Can we do so without sentimentalism? All these questions and more suggest the fecundity of Tolkien's model of leadership not just for the Hitler problem but for self-examination in the practice of leadership.

Beyond these themes from the present examination of Tolkien's narratives, I believe Tolkien's world can continue to bear cognitive fruit for leadership studies through further investigation. I have left largely unexplored, for instance, the relation of trust, command, and domination in leadership; the phenomena of loyalty, faithfulness, and betrayal between leader and follower; and the agency of followers. Consider, as an example of the latter, Tolkien's frequent descriptions of some of his characters as "taking" leaders for themselves (Tolkien 2001). These episodes are intriguing places to look for models of agency in followership. Tolkien also provides interesting examples of women in leadership, in such characters as Melian, Haleth, and Galadriel. Pursuing such topics, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

Tolkien's model provides more particular resources for engaging some specific approaches to leadership. Leadership as productive craft interprets leaders as distinct from and acting on followers and their common action; leadership as political wisdom renders leaders as members of a community and participants in a common good, shaping and being shaped by the community rather than treating it as an external, inert object. So accounts of leadership that critique obedience may provide confirmation for the flaws in leadership as a productive craft that appear in Tolkien's model (Boaks 2014; Munro and Thanem 2018). Tolkien's critique of leadership as productive craft may also find confirmation in aspects of relational or distributed approaches to leadership (Brooks and Kensler 2011; Rhodes and Badham 2018). Investigating Tolkien's model may help to illuminate these approaches to leadership.

Further, we have seen that Tolkien's model allows us to interpret effective but morally deficient leaders as not merely bad leaders or non-leaders but as corrupt leaders. That aspect of the model should prove of interest to leadership ethics, with its emphasis on the relation between technical excellence and moral excellence in leadership (Boaks 2014; Ciulla 1995, 2005, 2014a; Ciulla et al. 2018). Closely related to leadership ethics are approaches to leadership that begin with the virtues (Audi 2012; Beabout 2013; Ciulla 2014b; Dobel 1998; Luo 2012; Whetstone 2005). Through its depictions of the virtues, especially the intellectual virtue of political wisdom, Tolkien's model may help one to understand better to what extent leadership is a virtue or requires virtues. It may also help researchers to think about the relative place of different styles of ethical theory in leadership studies. Can the logic of gift, task, and virtue render deontological, teleological, and aretaic themes as elements of a coherent model that is reducible to none of those three simply nor a mere eclectic agglomeration of them (Ciulla 2005)?

One virtue of a model lies in the questions and research projects its use suggests. In those terms, Tolkien's model proves its worth, even if not all of its features are finally confirmed. Even beyond Tolkien's own work, the approach of Ketner's novel science shows promise for cognitive yield from other literary narratives in leadership studies. Whatever one's approach to leadership, and however one defines it, taking complex narrative works like Tolkien's legendarium as models can help develop insight into the triadic phenomena belonging to leadership and organizational studies.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

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