
Kierkegaard and Leadership Theory, a Radical Reappraisal

Abe J. Zakhem¹

A COMMENTARY ON Vivi Storsletten and Ove Jakobsen (2015), “Development of Leadership Theory in the Perspective of Kierkegaard’s Philosophy,” *J Bus Ethics* 128(2): 337–349, <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2106-y>

ABSTRACT

Storsletten and Jakobsen (2015) try to integrate the instrumental, responsible, and spiritual positions in leadership studies with Kierkegaard’s aesthetic, ethical, and religious modes of existence. Their combination of leadership theory and Kierkegaardian thought, however, seems deeply problematic. In particular, the instrumental-aesthetic and responsible-ethical connections appear weak or at least significantly underdeveloped, and the spiritual-religious connection seems logically inconsistent.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD’S WORK on spiritual development has had a deep and lasting influence on philosophical and religious thought. Storsletten and Jakobsen (2015) argue that bringing together prominent positions in leadership theory (instrumental, responsible, and spiritual positions) with Kierkegaard’s “stages on life’s way” (aesthetic, ethical, and religious modes of existence) yields a radical and much needed change to the way that we view the relationship between business, culture, and the natural environment. There are some concerns with each of their respective connections. In particular, there are good

¹ Seton Hall University. Email: abe.zakhem@shu.edu