



# Paradoxes in Developing Virtuous Leadership

## 1. Paradox of Desirability vs. Reality of Leadership

Virtuous leadership is highly desirable in theory, yet in practice, corporate and political leaders often fail to embody these virtues. Maybe in these contexts all kinds of tactics and skills around strategy and power are necessary to become and be recognized as a leader in the first place.

## 2. Paradox of Academic vs. Popular Views

Academics and intellectuals advocate for virtuous leadership, but public and popular perceptions, shaped by prevalent leadership practices, often contradict this ideal. Followers define their leadership, not academics.

## 3. Paradox of Ethical Guidance vs. Organizational Reward Systems

Ethical leadership is guided by integrity and commitment to the common good, but organizational cultures and reward systems frequently do not support or incentivize such behavior.

## 4. Paradox of Spontaneity and Authenticity vs. Structural Development

Virtuous leadership requires spontaneous actions, based on authenticity. The Daoist concept of 'Wu Wei' or 'effortless action' emphasizes spontaneity, which leads to the (paradoxical) development approach of 'trying not to try'. Yet traditional leadership training programs rely on effortful, planned and structured approaches that can never reach this principle.

The main point to discuss: We must reinvent leadership development programs to develop really virtuous leadership.

At the conference in Chicago Steven de Waal will host a *Cafécito Round Table Discussion* about this topic on Friday November 8 (16:15 - 17:15 CST). He will also be present at the author meeting on Thursday November 7 (17:30 - 18:30 CST) and join the foundation of a new Member Community 'Trust in Leadership' which he will (temporarily) chair.

Steven P.M. de Waal, PhD, is a strategy consultant, entrepreneur and chairman of multiple non-executive boards. He combines his extensive experience in the boardroom with research and academic reflection. He launched one of the first think tanks in the Netherlands, Public SPACE Foundation, which aims to stimulate active citizenship and social entrepreneurship. Dr. De Waal's writing focuses on strategic thinking, practical wisdom for executives and social entrepreneurship. He has published many books and articles, and he has given numerous interviews and lectures internationally for mainly executive audiences.

His dissertation (2014) conceptualized civil leadership and researched civil leaders' values patterns in the different private-sector contexts.

He was and still is invited to lecture around the globe about his book 'Civil Leadership as the Future of Leadership' (2018). This book is available as e-book and paperback on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and in local (online) bookstores worldwide. A summary can be obtained at [www.publicspace.eu](http://www.publicspace.eu)

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