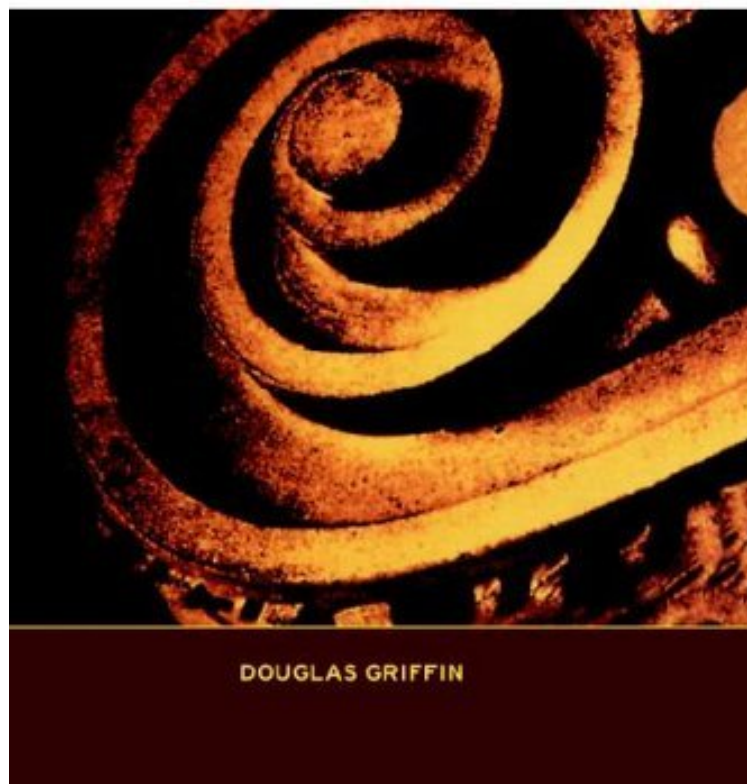


(Free read ebook) The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics (Complexity and Emergence in Organizations)

The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics (Complexity and Emergence in Organizations)

Douglas Griffin

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Douglas Griffin : The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics (Complexity and Emergence in Organizations) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics (Complexity and Emergence in Organizations):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Asa CoeyExcellent reading - thoughtprovoking,

insightful. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Relevant, realistic, full of eyeopeners
 By RJA Doornenbal
 This book forms a learned and persuasive alternative for many 'standard' approaches on leadership. If there was less repetition in it and if the style of writing was a little more fluid, I would have accorded it five stars. My own interest is in leadership within the so-called Emerging Church Movement. The insights of Griffin on 'emerging leadership' have helped me a lot. The author develops his own approach, based on complexity theory, starting with this premise: "The idea that leaders form strategies plans for change before action, and then persuade others to follow them, is clearly based on the notion of thought before action. A different notion of leadership is required when one moves to thinking in terms of participative self-organization." (21) What strikes me most about the book are two things. First, the critique of Griffin on systems thinking; second, his views on leadership and ethics. A short impression of these two themes follow now.

ON SYSTEMS THINKING Throughout the book, Griffin both values and critiques insights from systems thinking on management/leadership, for example that of Peter Senge or Margaret Wheatley. The author warns for emotive appeals for a return to ancient wisdom, supposedly now made scientific by the complexity sciences. According to Griffin, the suggestion of authors like Senge, Wheatley and others, is that an organization is a living system. This reflects a holistic philosophy which sets up a whole outside of the experience of interaction between people. People are required to submit to this whole if their behaviour is to be judged ethical. The problem with this approach, argues Griffin, is that it distances people from their actual experience. It makes it feel natural to blame something outside of their actual interaction for what happens to them. It encourages the belief that they are victims of a system, on the one hand, and allows them to escape feeling responsible for their own actions, on the other. Participation becomes participation in an idealized systemic whole, often linked to such systemic wholes such as the forces of nature or some kind of mystical union. The ethical and moral responsibility of individuals is related to this mystical whole rather than to the everyday contingencies of ordinary life in organizations. In other words the whole system is reified and ascribed intentions or qualities such as 'harmonious', 'caring', or 'soul'. Individuals so participating are 'good' or compassionate, while those who do not are characterized as 'bad' or 'selfish'. A split is created between the autonomous leader and the abstract leadership provided by the harmonious whole, and also a split between the good and the bad individuals. Thinking in this dualistic way eliminates paradox and mystifies leadership. (p. 26)

ON LEADERSHIP The role of the leader, says Griffin, emerges in the interaction. Those participating are continuously creating and recreating the meaning of the leadership themes in the local interaction in which they are involved. Groups tend to recognize the leader role in those who have acquired a greater spontaneity, a greater ability to deal with the unknown as it emerges from the known context. Ethical leaders are those who are able to understand the consequences of their actions better than others, or have proven themselves worthy of imitation because of the way they keep to the contract. Others, therefore, voluntarily agree to follow them and tend to be lumped together as followers.

CONCLUSION The book stimulates critical reflection on views about leadership and ethics, both that of others and that of your own. Also, it provides a different way of looking at both themes, in that it focuses very much on concrete behaviour of people and much less on their ideals. For someone like me who - as a Christian - tends to be (too) highly idealistic himself, this is a very helpful and sobering approach. Highly recommended!

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Not very readable
 By H. Rawlinson
 I have found it very challenging to get through this book. It is written in a very academic style and focuses considerably on previous research. I cannot understand from the discussion exactly what is being put forward as relevant understandings in today's world. I wish I had a dollar for every time the author says 'as I argued in...' or 'what I will argue in...'. This is driving me nuts. I have had a couple of tries at ploughing through this book but I just can't cope with the writing style.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the most complex global organizations ever known. Taking a complexity theory perspective, this book explores the key factor that sustains them: leadership. The book examines how leadership is currently understood primarily from a systems based perspective, as an attribute of the individual, the leadership role being to articulate values, missions and visions and then persuade others to adhere to them. It argues for a new view of ethics as co-created through identity and difference, representing the end of 'business ethics' as we know it today. Areas considered include: risk and conflicts, spontaneity and motivation. In the past we have focused on the choices of individual leaders. In today's highly complex organizations we are now coming to understand the nature of leadership as self-organizing and, as such, closely linked to ethics. This means that we can no longer understand ethics simply as centered rational choice in planning and action.

'The Emergence of Leadership offers courses in management and leadership, especially those that focus on ethics from a philosophical perspective and draw upon and develop theoretical tools, an opportunity to do serious conceptual work.' - Organization Studies
 About the Author
 Douglas Griffin is an Associate Director of the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire. He has worked for most of the last 20 years as an independent consultant in the areas of cross-cultural teamworking and organization development. During this time he has also been employed by 3M Germany in strategic personnel development and organizational learning services.