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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

BY
JOSHUA JAMES TILLEY
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

MAY 2019

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GLOSSARY

Anxiety: “the state of the human being in the struggle against that which would destroy his being.”¹

Apologetics: The defense of one’s beliefs.

Apophatic Theology: A term used to describe a method for exploring the limits of language wherein, one states their “affirmations, then negating them, and then negating the negations to ensure that we do not make an idol out of a God about whom we know nothing.”² The *telos*³ and end result is to learn what can be said of God as “we are not only told what God is not but led to reflect explicitly on what God must be, even if we have no conceptual clarity about what we assert.”⁴

Character: The disposition, acts, and attributes of an individual which are distinct from others and also perceivable, experienced, and identifiable by others.

Determinism: “theory that all events, including moral choices, are completely determined by previously existing causes.”⁵

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre and Hazel Estella Barnes, *Existential Psychoanalysis*. (Regnery Gateway, Chicago. 1969), 83.

² Kevin Corrigan, *Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite/> (Accessed June 2, 2018).

³ Edward Feser, "Teleology: A Shopper's Guide," *Philosophia Christi*, 2010th ser., 12, no. 1 (2010): 144.

⁴ *Cusanus, Nicolaus [Nicolas of Cusa]*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cusanus/> (accessed June 3, 2018).

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, “Determinism,” Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/determinism> (accessed June 4, 2018).

Doubt: A questioning of one's belief.

Emergent Property: The idea that some phenomena are “higher level phenomena—new beings, as it were—that are discontinuous, at least in some respects, with the lower forms from which they emerge. The theory of emergence is thus three things: a theory of explanatory adequacy, a theory of causal activity, and a theory of what exists ontology).”⁶

Epistemology: “the study of knowledge and justified belief.”⁷

Eschatological: “the expectation of the fulfillment towards which self-transcendence strives and towards which history runs.”⁸

Existentialism: “The philosophical theory which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of *authenticity*, is necessary to grasp human existence.”⁹

Fate: “Fate is a chain of causes (εἰμὸν αἰτιῶν), that is an inviolable order and binding together. By fate (fatum) I mean what the Greeks call εἰμαρμένη, that is, an order and string of causes (ordinem seriemque causarum), since the connection of cause to cause generates things from itself.”¹⁰

Realism: A realist epistemology with its foundation grounded in experience, which is often independent of and apart from philosophical considerations and

⁶ Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: the Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 249.

⁷ Matthias Steup, “Epistemology,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (accessed June 3, 2018): plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/

⁸ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Three Volumes in One*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), III 109.

⁹ Steven Crowell, “Existentialism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (accessed June 3, 2018): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/>

¹⁰ Susan Sauve Meyer, “Chain of Causes: What is Stoic Fate?,” *God and Cosmos in Stoicism*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 71.

ontological debates.

Freewill: One's inherent ability to choose between options.

Good: "essential nature of anything in the fulfillment of the potentiality."¹¹

Identity: The concepts that an individual ascribes to themselves as well as how they are perceived by others. Within metaphysics, personal identity deals with "the problem of the nature of the identity of persons and their persistence through time,"¹² meaning that what one believes as well as how one acts, lives, and feels makes up who they are. By definition, one's identity is essentially relative to the world and others. Not to be confused with the logical concepts of numerical and qualitative identity.

Maturity: "the willingness to take responsibility for one's own emotional being and destiny."¹³

Moral Subjectivism: "The view that moral positions are not in any way grounded in reason or the nature of things but are ultimately just adopted by each of us because we find ourselves drawn to them."¹⁴

Ontology: The study of being

Passion: "a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that people like (or even love), find important, and in which they invest time and energy on a regular basis."¹⁵ This may include and be directed toward, not just activities, but objects,

¹¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Three Volumes in One*, III 67.

¹² Sydney Shoemaker, "Personal Identity," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/personal-identity> (accessed June 10, 2018).

¹³ Edwin H. Friedman, Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Church Publishing, 2017), 9.

¹⁴ Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 18.

¹⁵ Robert J Vallerand, "The Role of Passion in Sustainable Psychological Well-Being," *Research*

individuals, ideals, beliefs, etc.

Paradigm: “a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them.”¹⁶

Penultimate: The “ultimate,” according to Bonhoeffer is “the word of God as recognized in the justification of the sinner by grace through faith.” The “penultimate,” by contrast is all that is entailed in human life as it “is justified by grace.”¹⁷

Relativism: “the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them.”¹⁸

Religion: a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.¹⁹

Religious Belief: a universalized transcendent ethical framework (worldview), which guides a person’s lifestyle as well as their interactions and relationships with others and themselves.

Self-Determining Freedom: “The idea that I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences.”²⁰

and Practice, 2:1 (2012): 1.

¹⁶ Gary Gonzales, “Rebooting the Mission: Back to the Future,” DMin Thesis, (Bethel Seminary OCLC Number 232358633) 2008, 3.

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Bonhoeffer Reader* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), Loc 12.

¹⁸ Maria Baghramian and J. Adam Carter, “Relativism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/ (accessed June 3, 2018).

¹⁹ Merriam-Webster, “Religion.” *Merriam-Webster*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion.

²⁰ Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 27.

Self-Differentiation: “the capacity to become oneself out of one’s self, with minimum reactivity to the positions or reactivity of others.”²¹

The Situation: Referred to as the *kairos* by Paul Tillich, the situation is defined as “the scientific and artistic, the economic, political, and ethical forms in which [theologians] express their interpretation of existence. The ‘situation’ theology must consider is the creative interpretation of existence, an interpretation which is carried on in every period of history under all kinds of psychological and sociological conditions.”²²

Subjectivism: “Subjectivism is defined here as a specific type of relativism in which all knowledge is seen as determined by the mental, emotional, and spiritual state of the subject excluding the historical situation.”²³

²¹ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 194.

²² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3-4.

²³ Mary Ann Stenger, “Paul Tillich’s Theory of Theological Norms and the Problems of Relativism and Subjectivism,” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Oct 1982), 360.

ABSTRACT

This thesis asks a question about what it feels like to experience authentic leadership. The purpose is to grasp the essence of authentic leadership as experienced through the lives of those who have served under and/or over those they perceive and identify as “authentic” leaders. This was done through a series of steps. This began with a literary review and a biblical review which were conducted to establish the current scholarship related to authentic leadership. Finally, a new phenomenological study was conducted in October of 2018 to expand upon these findings and essence is described.

Through the phenomenology and subsequent qualitative research, the researcher came to the conclusion that authentic leadership is provided, felt, and acted upon in different ways by different people in different cultures. Though the expression varies, the universal essence of authentic leadership is an emotional paradox coming from “anxiety” and “fear” (often experienced as pain) followed by a sense of “relief” and “peace.” Through the repetition of this process hope is established and authenticity is felt or “experienced” as a response to these trigger events.

A model of existential peace is offered to demonstrate this meaning, but no model for creating an authentic leader is presented as a phenomenology can only provide the groundwork needed to establish such a theory. A model for manufacturing or provoking authentic leadership is outside the bounds of this thesis as all cultures represent leadership in different ways requiring further research to be conducted. This thesis can serve as the foundation for such a study.

INTRODUCTION: “TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE”

A phenomenology is designed to bring “all the living of life to meaningful expression.”²⁴ As Max Van Manen explained, “Phenomenology is about wonder, words, and world.”²⁵ These moments and experiences, often beyond one’s own intention, are grounded somewhere between emotion and intuition. As a result through the ages, these experiences have often been explained through the mediums of song, story, myth, and poetry. Authentic leadership is among these experiences and Shakespeare is one of this phenomenon’s patron saints. This has led William Hazlitt and many others to believe Shakespeare “was as good a philosopher as he was a poet.”²⁶

Shakespeare wrote many tragic stories, fables of comedy, and tales of wisdom. In one of his most well-known stories, *Hamlet*, a young man by the name of Laertes is leaving home. His father, Polonius, takes this opportunity to pass a tiny morsel of wisdom to his son. It is in this moment where he receives these eternal words, “This above all: to thine own self be true.”²⁷ What truer words could someone pen then to be true to one’s self? Many scholars define authenticity based upon these exact words. Using Polonius as motivation authors Anna Elisabeth Weischer, Jürgen Weibler, and Malte Petersen would have us believe authentic people “are true to themselves, are consistent in

²⁴ Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18.

²⁵ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 13.

²⁶ William Hazlitt, [www. Absoluteshakespeare.com](http://www.Absoluteshakespeare.com), https://absoluteshakespeare.com/guides/essays/othello_characters_essay.htm (accessed Oct 1, 2018).

²⁷ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Kindle Edition: OPU, 2018), loc 315-322. Hamlet Act 1, scene 3, 78–82.

their beliefs, words, and actions.”²⁸ And this definition definitely has the ring of authenticity.

Today with our hustle and bustle and media-saturated lives, it seems like wise counsel indeed to take a moment to be true to one’s self. We all desperately struggle and strive in our information-addicted society hoping for something real to grasp.²⁹ We all want something absolute and authentic to live by and to believe in. In response, “to be true to yourself” is often sold as the core of authenticity and it is believed this maxim is the only hope of living a life of peace. The reality is that authentic living is deeper, more complex, and far more robust than simply being true to yourself. This is the most common misconception surrounding authenticity.

The above quote comes from a leadership journal claiming, “The roots of the concept of authenticity lie in an aphorism derived from Greek philosophy and expounded by Shakespeare's Polonius: ‘To thine own self be true.’”³⁰ But sadly this too distorts the story. In fact, this was not Shakespeare’s point at all. Some scholars seem to miss the context of Hamlet and this statement. With a cursory exegetical study, one comes to find that Polonius is not the wise old man these authors would have us believe. Such a conclusion comes from the reader’s decision to ignore the context in order to get what they want from the text. This is an exegetical mistake called the “pleasure principle.”³¹ Those who want to see these snippets of information as wisdom are inclined to conclude

²⁸ Anna Elisabeth Weischer, Jürgen Weibler, and Malte Petersen, “‘To Thine own Self be True’: The Effects of Enactment and Life Storytelling on Perceived Leader Authenticity,” *Leadership Quarterly* 24 (2013): 477.

²⁹ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 110.

³⁰ Weischer, “‘To Thine Own Self be True,’” 477.

³¹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 38.

this man has a depth of knowledge beyond our grasp and wisdom for the ages, but in its context Shakespeare actually wants us to understand that Polonius is a bumbling idiot. What we see is that Laertes hears his father's voice and immediately tries to find sanctuary in order to avoid the old man's incessant babbling. At no point in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is Polonius portrayed as or considered wise. By extension, these words were never meant to be a mantra for living and they have nothing to do with authenticity.

This is the telltale work of Shakespeare's irony at its finest as he puts perceivably the most "wise" words into the mouth of the simplest character. Farahmandfar and Samigorganroodi write, "Shakespeare depicts authenticity in the character of Hamlet, and it is in contrast to him that the reader finds many instances of *inauthenticity*,"³² but even these authors incorrectly define a portion of authenticity as "being true to one's self,"³³ which is to miss the point: Polonius himself is an example of *inauthenticity* and his words are the example of an inauthentic life. The aforementioned aphorism actually comes at the end of a long list of clichés meant to sound wise but with all the depth of a teaspoon. This can be easily tested and proven.

Consider this, if applied and taken at face value such a diatribe would create the vilest of egotist or the greatest of megalomaniacs. As a result, Polonius is clearly the antithesis of our hero, Hamlet, whose "main challenge is to live authentically."³⁴ To be

³² Masoud Farahmandfar and Gholamreza Samigorganroodi, "'To Thine Own Self Be True': Existentialism in *Hamlet* and *The Blind Owl*," *International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 2; (April 2015): 25.

³³ Farahmandfar, "'To Thine Own Self Be True': Existentialism in *Hamlet* and *The Blind Owl*," 26.

³⁴ Farahmandfar, "'To Thine Own Self Be True,'" 25.

“true to yourself” above all else would be to cast aside family and friends for one’s own selfish ambition and happiness. Of course one should not hate one’s self, but something must balance personal truth and authenticity.

The problem is much of the research done on authentic leadership falls into this ego-centric hole. The crux of this argument is that “authenticity does not involve any explicit consideration of ‘others,’”³⁵ but this is a mistake. This research will argue this is categorically false. According to these findings, no one can find authenticity without consideration for the Other. Anything less is simply selfish and self-centered ambition.

The authentic leader must be more than self-serving. The authentic leader must do more than simply lead for selfish gain. The authentic leader is devoted to the authenticity of others as well as themselves. For this reason, authenticity is the difference between someone who is simply in charge and the leader who is, therefore, perceived as authentic and followed intentionally. The purpose is to discover the essence of what it means to be an “authentic” leader. The plan is to understand what it feels like to serve under authentic leadership and to use this knowledge to discern this phenomenon’s essence. It is the purpose of this research paper to answer some of these questions and create a path toward a better understanding of authentic leadership.

³⁵ Bruce J. Avolio and William L Gardner, “Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005): 320.

CHAPTER ONE: TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

Why a Phenomenology of Authentic Leadership?

Christianity and leadership studies lack a clear understanding of the phenomenon known as “authentic leadership.” This project addressed this problem. In response, the researcher explored the philosophy of authenticity, researched a biblical understanding of quality leadership, conducted a literature review of the effects of authentic leadership, and provided new phenomenological research to discern the essence of authentic leadership.

Self-imposed Limits

The research was purposefully limited in several ways to ensure the most accurate results. First, the research was limited to philosophical, theological, and psychological considerations. Since all phenomenologies are philosophical in nature, philosophy was used. Considering this thesis pertains to ministry, theology was included. Finally, research was also done in regard to qualitative studies done by psychologists including the thoughts and opinions of scholars in this field.

Another delimitation limited the interviews to English speakers. This is an important limit as phenomenologies are dependent upon the researcher fully understanding the words, feelings, and experiences of the interviewee. As the researcher is not proficient in other languages, limiting the study to English speakers better ensured that the researcher could fully grasp the information gathered from the interviews.

Finally, the research was also limited to people 25 years and older and only those

with at least 10 years of work experience. The limits of age and work experience helped to guarantee a quality result since studying authentic leadership requires learning from those who have experienced both good and bad leadership to be able to discern authenticity when it is experienced. Requiring an older group with more experience simply increases the possibility of a higher quality and a more informative interview.

Some Assumptions

This paper comes with several assumptions. First, it is assumed that all human beings suffer through the same existence and “situation.” This is despite the differences between those individual lives and circumstances. Within this situation, it is assumed all human beings are striving to achieve true authenticity whether they can define it or not. This struggle is defined as an inherent need to be fully real and fully involved in the life they live. While many embrace authenticity, despite being able to define it, others reject their own self and never come close to authenticity.

It is also assumed that religion is a valid representation of this human struggle toward authenticity. For this reason, it is assumed that the human tendency towards religious activity is representative of everyone’s struggle toward authenticity. This is experienced as all human beings explore their world for something “real,” possibly even more real than their own lives. This concept and experience of transcendent reality gives one’s life meaning and provides the context for reflection upon one’s own authenticity. The final assumption is that the Bible is an accurate representation of God and the world. It is the inspired and complete word of God and an important source of knowledge making it pertinent to this study.

Additional Problems to Consider

There were several questions to consider. The first subproblem was to research a biblical understanding of quality leadership. The second subproblem was to conduct a literary review of authentic leadership. The third subproblem was to conduct new phenomenological research to better understand authentic leadership. The fourth subproblem was to analyze and distill the research in order to discern the essence of authentic leadership.

Why Study Authentic Leadership?

The Importance of this Project to the Researcher

This project is important to the researcher because he struggled with the question of leadership. The researcher has decades of experience with leaders and leading in diverse fields including retail, warehouse management, and teaching to name a few, but his experiences with other leaders have left him struggling to articulate what an authentic leader looks like, let alone what it feels like as most of his examples were negative. It is the researcher's conviction that this project will help others understand the connection between the experience of authenticity, the concept of leadership, and the practice of authentic leading. This will better prepare the researcher to equip others not just to understand authenticity, but to live authentic lives.

The Importance of this Project to Pastoral Ministry

The researcher hopes that this project will benefit pastoral ministry through understanding and training. Since all churches necessarily entail leadership, it is important that pastors and lay leaders know what the perception of authenticity provides their congregations. The project will speak to the current trend of congregations, across

the United States, shrinking in their membership as they try to live authentically in their given communities.

With some studies showing upwards of 60 percent of evangelical students leaving their Christian faith in college,³⁶ such a model could be beneficial for all if there is a link found between leader authenticity and the effectiveness of their leadership.³⁷ The goal is to establish an understanding of authenticity and to put the information into the hands of church leaders so they can understand authenticity, see how they rate compared to an objective understanding of authenticity and discern whether or not they are doing their best to encourage and influence their congregations, staff, and volunteers to live authentically.

The Importance of this Project to the Church

The project will benefit the larger Church by describing the feeling, experience, and essence of authenticity. This research will provide the language necessary to teach people how to take hold of their faith through living authentically or at least how to discern and identify authenticity when it is experienced. The hope is to create a culture of shared enthusiasm and passion for one's individual faith as well as the faith of others. The project should encourage leaders to live an authentic faith, which will affect those who follow in and outside the church since authenticity is inspirational and motivating.³⁸

³⁶ David Kinnamon, "Young Adults Disengaging from Church," *American Family Association Journal* (Nov/Dec, 2006), <http://www.afajournal.org/2006/nov-dec/1206noi.asp#young> (accessed June 6, 2014).

³⁷ R. Edward Freeman and Ellen R. Auster, "Values, Authenticity, and Responsible Leadership." *Responsible Leadership* (2011): 15.

³⁸ Skjei, *Leaders' Lived Experience of Authentic Moments*, 214.

Why Choose Phenomenology as a Method?

Phenomenology as a method was chosen as a result of the literature review. It was found that throughout the most recent studies and literature, many authors were very quick to use the term “authentic leadership,” but none tried to describe the phenomenon itself. Despite the lack of a phenomenology there is some consensus on a definition as

researchers currently define authentic leaders as those who know who they are and what they believe in; display transparency and consistency among their values, ethical reasoning, and actions; focus on developing positive psychological states such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves and their associates; and are widely known and respected for their integrity.³⁹

Though this definition is thorough it lacks the “why” of the experience which may be the reason most scholars are reluctant to define the essence of “authenticity.” This may also explain why those who do try often have to resort to using religious language. It is the opinion of the researcher that this is because authenticity is a form of transcendence.

This transcendent nature is most likely the reason authenticity often finds itself compared to a religious experience. For example, Susan Skjei applies her training in Buddhism to highlight the deeper meaning of authentic leadership⁴⁰ while Paul Tillich preferred to speak of authenticity through the lens of his Christian metaphysic.⁴¹ Regardless, the transcendent and spiritual nature of authenticity is almost undeniable⁴² and yet not well documented. As a result of its transcendent nature, authenticity affects those who lead as well as those who follow.

³⁹ Skjei, *Leaders' Lived Experience of Authentic Moments*, 213.

⁴⁰ Skjei, *Leaders' Lived Experience of Authentic Moments*, 13-214

⁴¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III 64-66.

⁴² Mark Kruger, Yvonne Seng, “Leadership with inner meaning: A Contingency Theory of Leadership based on the Worldviews of Five Religions,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 773-774.

Studies have shown the experience of authentic leadership is not limited to the leader, because the effect on the life of the follower is significant and existential as well.⁴³ Studies show the phenomenon increases the feeling of confidence, hopefulness, and optimism in a subordinate to name just a few of its established and documented benefits.⁴⁴ It is even shown that the leader themselves is positively affected by their own perception of being authentic as seen through the eyes of their subordinates,⁴⁵ yet this perception of authenticity is never defined in its essential nature only its effects are recorded. Only a phenomenology is designed for establishing an understanding of the essence of an experience. Through studying the phenomena that shape one's perception of the world one come to grasp the essence of a thing as well as its deeper meaning.⁴⁶

As a method phenomenology seeks to grasp the essence of an experience, which is the first step in being able to understand it psychologically. In other words, “phenomenology is identified as a qualitative scientific method that allows the researcher to consider phenomena, which take place in a given person.”⁴⁷ As an introduction, this method began in the writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

⁴³ Andrew Pierce, “Authentic Identities,” *Social Theory and Practice* 41, no. 3 (2015): 442-443.

⁴⁴ Weischer, ““To Thine Own Self Be True,”” 482.

⁴⁵ Sandu Frunzã, “Seeking Meaning, Living Authenticity and Leadership in Public Space. A Philosophical Perspective,” *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, no. 52E (2017): 31.

⁴⁶ F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (Eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1280.

⁴⁷ Raúl Fernando Guerrero-Castañeda, Tânia Maria de Oliva Menezes, Guadalupe Ojeda-Varga, “Characteristics of the Phenomenological Interview in Nursing Research,” *Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem* 38 2 (2017): 2.

In his first philosophical text, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,⁴⁸ Hegel attempted to create a description of the stages through which the mind goes from sense perception to consciousness to absolute knowledge.⁴⁹ Hegel's pan-rationalist theory was designed to engage all of reality and to condense it down into one system.⁵⁰ Despite Hegel's failure to establish a consistent and widely accepted system, his phenomenology lives on. As Rollo May explained, "Phenomenology is the endeavour to take the phenomena as given...the effort to experience instead the phenomena in their full reality as they present themselves."⁵¹ It is important to point out that phenomenology is not to be confused with an explanation.

The purpose of phenomenology is not to explain the world; "it wants to be merely a description of actual experience."⁵² Phenomenology, though not a source of models and explanations, is by definition the initial building block to an existential understanding of an object or concept. As John Creswell explains, "The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence."⁵³ It is commonly understood that the philosophical writings of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger expanded upon Hegel's project establishing phenomenology as a

⁴⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and M. J. Inwood. *Hegel: the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁴⁹ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1280.

⁵⁰ May, *Existential Psychology*, (New York: Random House, 1969), 16.

⁵¹ May, *Existential Psychology*, 26.

⁵² Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus, and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 43.

⁵³ John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, (London: Sage, 2007), 76.

science. This has led to phenomenology being applied to a wide-range of topics from crisis management to nursing.

Once a phenomenon is chosen and the research has been done, the phenomenology ends with a “descriptive passage that discusses the essence of the experience...The essence is the culminating aspect of a phenomenology study.”⁵⁵ Through this process, the researcher again analyzes “the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes” and combines the statements into categories or themes. Following this analysis the researcher provides a “textural description” of the experiences of the participants with an emphasis on the conditions, situations, and context in order “to convey an overall essence of the experience,”⁵⁶ but the phenomenology does not end there.

The phenomenologist does not present the reader with a conclusive argument or with a determinate set of ideas, a list of themes, a selection of essences or insights. Instead, the phenomenologist aims to be allusive by orienting the reader reflectively to that region of lived experience where the phenomenon dwells in recognizable form.⁵⁷

In the end, this researcher will present his findings so those interested may be able to understand and grasp the lived experience of authentic leadership, while humbly leaving the answer open-ended enough to make way for future research.

⁵⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 79.

⁵⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 80.

⁵⁷ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 390.

CHAPTER TWO: SCRIPTURE AND AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Leadership is a constant and consistent topic in contemporary evangelicalism⁵⁸ and even outside of the church there has been “heightened interest in leadership from a biblical perspective.”⁵⁹ Leaders have the potential to change lives and help others operate at their optimal level,⁶⁰ but this position can also easily lend itself to manipulation, greed, and self-centered service. This is why the role of a leader is so important and so dangerous.⁶¹ Since leadership entails authority leaders have the innate potential to become heroes or villains.⁶² This makes leaders some of the most beloved and hated people causing many to mistake leadership for dictatorship.⁶³ Despite the possibility of failure and the inevitability of division and strife, the Bible demands God’s people have leaders.

⁵⁸ Robert Black and Ronald McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: a commentary for Bible students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 15.

⁵⁹ J. Lee Whittington, Tricia M. Pitts, Woody V. Kageler, Vicki L. Goodwin, “Legacy leadership: The Leadership wisdom of the Apostle Paul,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 750.

⁶⁰ John Fetzner, Leadership, *Analytic and Bioanalytic Chemistry* (2005) 381: 1312.

⁶¹ Francis Yammarino, Michael D. Mumford, Andra Serban, and Kristie Shirreffs. “Assassination and Leadership: Traditional Approaches and Historiometric Methods.” *The Leadership Quarterly* 24, no. 6 (2013): 823.

⁶² Burak Oc and Michael R. Bashshur. “Followership, Leadership and Social Influence,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 24 (2013): 919.

⁶³ Fetzner, Leadership, 1311.

As the temptations and rewards are many, the church's history is inevitably filled with both good and bad leaders, male and female.⁶⁴ From Solomon's mother teaching him wisdom to Eli raising evil sons; Scripture provides both the good and the bad, the failures and the successes. As a result, leadership is beginning to be recognized as an ethical commitment. This has been linked to an increased interest in the correlation between spirituality and leadership.⁶⁵ But through all the great achievements of the past and the mistakes of those in power, we still have not discovered the essence of the authentic leader.

John Woodhouse believes that "leadership is as important in today's world as it has been in every society in every age." He adds, "Some would go further and speak of a contemporary crisis of leadership."⁶⁶ Tom Houston broke down the Bible's understanding of leadership into four main categories: elders, experts, entrepreneurs, and entertainers.⁶⁷ He explains that elders use the gift of administration to guide the larger goals of the church. The experts lead through the gifts of teaching and knowledge.⁶⁸ The entrepreneurs start new programs and plant churches. The "entertaining" leaders are relied upon heavily as the poets, writers, storytellers, singers, and musicians of the church. Yet, despite Houston's efforts, he did not actually define what it is to be an

⁶⁴ Black, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 78.

⁶⁵ Eric B. Dent, Eileen Higgins and Deborah Wharff, "Spirituality and Leadership: An Empirical Review Definitions, Distinctions, and Embedded Assumptions," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 625.

⁶⁶ John Woodhouse. *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 17.

⁶⁷ Tom Houston, "Biblical Models of Leadership," *Transformation* 21/4 October (2004): 227-228.

⁶⁸ Houston, "Biblical Models of Leadership," 228.

authentic leader or what it is like to experience this leadership. Houston simply provided a general lesson on finding and growing leaders.

Other authors use the traditional lists found in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and Isaiah 11:2. In these verses the reader can see some of the gifts highlighted from administration and prophets to evangelists and deacons, but part of the problem is “the lists of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians are not intended to be exhaustive.”⁶⁹ When compared to one another it is obvious each of these lists is incomplete. This leads one to conclude these were just some of the many gifts God gives his people. Sadly, understanding the experience of leadership as an overall subject is not a focus or topic of discussion within the writings of the biblical authors.

In several verses, the reader is introduced to the elders, apostles, teachers, and deacons, all of which may very well have several of the gifts and yet share none. Gifts such as administration and teaching may be granted to one leader but not another thus making leadership more diverse and complicated than a mere qualitative study can explain. In the end, within the lists of spiritual gifts there is no real litmus test for authentic leadership as there is no description or definition of what the experience feels like. The reader is told how the leader should act and live, but “do’s and don’ts” are a far cry from understanding a phenomenon or its essence. This has led researchers and Bible scholars alike to look beyond Scripture into the surrounding cultures for answers, all the while asking the question, “What does God have to do with leadership?”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ G.P. Duffield and N.M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 355.

⁷⁰ Woodhouse. *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, 19.

A Phenomenology of Leadership in the Bible

Problems with a Phenomenology of Leadership in the Old Testament

Leadership in the first century was in constant struggle and conflict in and outside the church. Just as there is a long history of leadership failure throughout the writings of the Hebrew prophets, Rome and Greece likewise suffered under corruption and infamy. Similarly, criminality and political scandal also plagued the early Christians just as it did the Roman courts.

Even more frustrating, despite thousands of years of poor leadership and warnings about the connection between bad leadership and heresy, the early church did not produce a surviving “how to” book for leaders. As a result, modern readers are left to discern the traits of an authentic leader from the many texts left behind. The Old Testament period fares no better as historians and biblical scholars often focus on the leadership crisis in Israel rather than the experience of leadership proper.

Much of the understanding of authentic leadership found in the Old Testament is, in fact, apophatic rather than cataphatic, meaning most of the learning comes from negation rather than affirmation. As Scripture apophatically teaches, people are to learn from the mistakes of others. Of course, Scripture gives principles, but these are sometimes seemingly haphazard and without context (such as the proverbs) leaving the leader to discern the essence of authentic leadership based upon the rare successes and constant failures of biblical characters. This is obvious to any critical scholar.

Anyone can read along as almost every patriarch from Abraham to David makes devastating mistakes in their leadership. Pithy lessons (such as “the wise man does not love money”) are used and the lives of leaders are recorded, but the problem remains:

these principles and mistakes were normally documented without the benefit of any commentary detailing how the person actually should have acted in a given or otherwise specific situation. Examples abound.

In one story Abraham, fearful for his life, lied about who his wife was. This mistake results in God intervening and causing trouble for the king who, based upon the lie, decided to take Sarah as one of his wives. There is another illustration in the example of Jephthah (if most scholars are to be believed)⁷¹ sacrificing his daughter after making an absurd promise to God to sacrifice the first thing to come out of his home upon his arrival. His attempted manipulation of God⁷² ended in murder. There is yet another instance of leadership failure found in the story of King David killing Uriah by putting him on the front lines of a battle in order to either cover up his own adultery or simply remove Uriah from the equation so he might take the man's wife as his own.⁷³ Regardless of the circumstances surrounding these events, the hopeful student of Scripture must struggle through the history in order to learn from these mistakes without the benefit of God-breathed commentary.

In the Hebrew writings, there is no intentional systematic theology⁷⁴ let alone any sort of formal breakdown of what it means to be a quality leader. Of course, many of the men and women of this period did many great things for which they are rightly praised,

⁷¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* Vol. 1, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 166.

⁷² Daniel Block. *Judges, Ruth* Vol. 6, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 365.

⁷³ E. H. Merrill, John Walvoord, and Roy Zuck (Eds.) "2 Samuel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* Vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 467. Use first names. They are easily discovered.

⁷⁴ Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology* 2nd ed, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 23.

but following in their footsteps and creating a “how to” guide for modern leaders is difficult. The ability to distill some very basic principles is a daunting task. This can be simply understood as one attempts to take the lessons learned from King David and apply them to a stay-at-home mom trying to homeschool her kids. It is equally difficult to study the life of Moses and apply its principles to the middle-aged man working in a cubicle trying to deal with the criticism of his new manager. The problem is the experiences are so diverse. In the end, stories and descriptions abound, but no phenomenology is offered.

Problems with a Phenomenology of Leadership in the New Testament

Scripture describes many different gifts and some believe that leadership should be included in the list.⁷⁵ Within the expectations for leaders, scholars agree they must not just be different, but they must be “exemplary.” Richard Baxter wrote, “The leaders of the flock must be exemplary to the rest; and therefore in this duty as well as in any other. It is not our part only to teach them repentance, but to go before them in the exercise of it ourselves.”⁷⁶ But the question is, what did New Testament authors mean when they command people to be “good” leaders? How did they define the essence of authentic leadership?

As leadership is a cultural phenomenon⁷⁷ one must consider the language of the New Testament as well as the context of the surrounding cultures if they are to understand the biblical essence of leadership. The commonly used Greek noun for

⁷⁵ Richard L. Pratt Jr., *1 and 2 Corinthians* Vol. 7, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 214.

⁷⁶ Richard Baxter and William Orme, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter* Vol. 14, (London: James Duncan, 1830), 7.

⁷⁷ Volker Kessler, “Pitfalls in ‘Biblical’ Leadership,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34 1, Art. #721 (2013), 1.

“leader,” ἀρχηγός, means “the first one to lead the way.” It is derived from the Greek ἀρχη, which means “the first,” and γός, which means “to lead.”⁷⁸ Aristotle used this word when speaking of Thales and his school of philosophy. Here Thales is called the “founder” (ἀρχηγός) of the school and the obvious leader of his philosophical training.⁷⁹ Elsewhere, in his *Laws*, Plato uses this word when he speaks of temples erected in honor of different gods; the gods are referred to by the English word “patrons.”⁸⁰ These are seen as the high leaders of their followers. This same word is used by Plato in the *Timaeus* when he refers to Athena. Here this word is translated as the “founder” of the city.⁸¹ In this case, the word was used because Athena was installed to replace “the Gigantomachy as the charter myth of Athens,” making her the leader, guide, and patron goddess.⁸² Sadly, this well-known word is scarce in Scripture.

⁷⁸ E.E. Carpenter, and P.W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 321.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* book 1, section 983b.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0052:book=1:section=983b> (accessed May 4, 2017).

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 13.

Alternate translation, “Thales, the introducer of this sort of philosophy”

⁸⁰ Plato, *Laws* book 8, section 848d
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0166:book=8:section=848d> (accessed July 28, 2018).

⁸¹ “The chief city in this district is Sais—the home of King Amasis,—the founder of which, they say, is a goddess whose Egyptian name is Neith, and in Greek, as they assert, Athena.” Remove “informational” footnotes like this one. If the material is germane, put it in the paper. If it’s not, leave it out.

Plato, *Timaeus* Tim., section 21e
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0180:text=Tim.:section=21e> (accessed July 28, 2018).

⁸² D.M. Hutchinson, “The *Timaeus-Critias* as a Re-Weaving of the Peplos Presented to Athena?” *Classical Inquiries*. <https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/the-timaeus-critias-as-a-re-weaving-of-the-peplos-presented-to-athena/> (Accessed Oct 25, 2018).

This widely used Greek word for “leader” was only used four times in the New Testament and each time only used in reference to Jesus (Acts 3:15, 5:31; Heb. 2:10, 12:2). In these instances, the word itself is often translated as “author,” “source,” “prince,” and “ruler” depending upon the translation. It is not used in the sense of leading but rather as “originating” or “founding” which is similar to the uses found in Aristotle and Plato. Though this word will not help discern the essence of authentic leadership, it does indeed point to the founder the Christian faith who is the example for all humanity (John 13:15) and its archetype (ἀρχη).

Through a study of related words, it is shown that ὑπόδειγμα is used in reference to leadership and is often translated as “setting an example.” For instance, ὑπόδειγμα is used in reference to Jesus setting the example of service by washing his disciples’ feet (John 13:15).⁸³ It can also be translated as a “model,” an “image,” or even a “copy.” This is where the leader may begin to discover hints for grasping leadership since each time this word is used, it is consistently applied in reference to the direct object’s relationship to some original thing.⁸⁴ It appears, as Baxter explained, modeling may be an expectation for authentic leadership.

In addition to ὑπόδειγμα, the most common word used in reference to a human leader is ἄρχων. Aeschylus’ writings concerning the Persians use the word in reference to the “governor” of Thebes,⁸⁵ and most of the uses by other authors are in a similar vein,

⁸³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, (Nashville: Holman Publishing, 2009).

⁸⁴ J.J. Kanagaraj, “Johannine Jesus, The Supreme Example of Leadership: An Inquiry into John 13:1–20,” *Themelios*, 29 3, (2004): 19.

⁸⁵ Aeschylus, *Persians*: Card 1, Ariomardus, governor of ancient Thebes <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0012:card=1> (accessed Aug 1, 2018).

but all lack a description of authentic leadership. Ἄρχων also has 39 uses in the New Testament. Often translated as “ruler(s),” “owner(s),” “authorities,” or “leader(s),” it is rarely used in reference to Christians. It is used concerning the Pharisees, and it is leveled as an accusation against Christ when he is called the “ruler (ἄρχων) of the demons” (Matt 9:34). In fact, it is more often used in reference to the devil than Jesus with only one instance referencing Christ himself (Rev. 1:5). With so little reference to Christian “leaders,” it is difficult to distill the essence of leadership from the text alone. Again, the lessons are often apophatic in nature.

Greek writers from the period may offer some assistance in discerning a cultural understanding as Kevin Vanhoozer explained, “The prime rule for hermeneutics, as in real estate, is ‘location, location, location.’ In the case of determining meaning, ‘location’ means context.”⁸⁶ The Greek culture of Hellenistic Rome is the New Testament’s location and context.⁸⁷ Leonhard Goppelt explained,

Palestinian-Jewish and Hellenistic culture overlapped considerably in those very circles where Christianity had gained a footing. Elements of the Hellenistic world view had made significant inroads even into Palestinian Judaism despite attempts to resist. Most important, however, was the fact that a Greek-speaking community coming out of the Jewish Diaspora was already growing up in Jerusalem almost simultaneously with the Aramaic-speaking one. This meant basically that from the very beginning Christian traditions were formulated in two languages.⁸⁸

For this reason, the researcher must consider the Greek thoughts on authentic leadership.

⁸⁶ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 112.

⁸⁷ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.: 1968), 2-3.

⁸⁸ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament: The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ* Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1982), 33.

Problems with Leadership in the Context of Hellenistic Culture

As many know, the Greeks did not agree on a definition of leadership, but despite lacking a definition, playwrights of the day may provide a glimpse of the “leadership crisis” through a Greek lens. Aristophanes, “the father of comedy,”⁹⁰ wrote a play called *The Frogs* which can provide a look into the Greek perception of leadership. This is pertinent since Aristophanes was the Shakespeare of his day. Both playwrights wrote texts ripe with subtle political undertones often set against current events. This is important as plays and poetry have the ability to connect mankind to the heart and phenomenon of the human experience. As phenomenologist Max Van Manen explains, “Phenomenology deals with narratives, stories, poetry, anecdotes, sayings—not with codes or objectivistic data.”⁹¹ Myth, subconscious thoughts, intentions, analogies, stories, and the like offer an opportunity to get a glimpse of humanity’s collective common experience. In this instance, Greek prose may enlighten one’s understanding of first century Christianity.

In *The Frogs*, Aristophanes creates a picture of a world in need of quality leaders. Throughout the play, the audience follows several characters who are potential leaders. One is the god Dionysus. As the play progresses, Dionysus switches between roles as it suits his whims; playing a slave at times and a god at others. Through the portrayal of this

⁹⁰ Edith Hall and Amanda Wrigley, “Aristophanes in Performance 421 BC – AD 2007: Peace, Birds and Frogs,” *Legenda* (2007), 1.

⁹¹ Max Van Manen, “Phenomenology in Its Original Sense,” *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 27(6) (2017): 814.

god, one can experience the perceived state of leaders during this time period: inconsistent and prideful.⁹²

Here, under the guise of correcting Dionysus, Aristophanes criticizes the leaders of Athens. Dionysus (the one who should lead) is portrayed as a boastful coward and by extension so too are Athens' leaders. Throughout the play Dionysus (in his hubris) considers himself to be the hero, but the audience comes to understand he is even unworthy of the accolades afforded a slave. Emphasizing the embarrassment of poor leadership Amanda Wrigley wrote, "Dionysos' true cowardice is demonstrated when tested: he not only hides from Empusa, but he also grows pale and soils himself."⁹³ Over and over again, Dionysus fails as a god, as a role model, and as a leader. Just as Shakespeare often modeled his characters after contemporary politicians and royalty this juxtaposition of pretending to be brave and in reality living the life of a coward was a direct critique of Hellenistic culture and its leadership.

Through the satire, the protagonist discovers the only "plausible course of action for securing Athens' salvation: Athens needs to have good, honest men as its leaders. Here, Aristophanes demonstrates that he is a poet...whose aim is didactic: to make men better in their community."⁹⁴ *The Frogs* reveals that those who do not participate in the festivals, "eliminate hateful factionalism," or take bribes are not worthy of their position. Those who are "disagreeable to the citizens," use foolish words, fan the flames of civil

⁹² Aristophanes, *Frogs* (ed. F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart), Card 354, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0032:card=354> (accessed July 20, 2018).

⁹³ Martha Habash, "Dionysos' Roles in Aristophanes' 'Frogs,'" *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 55, Fasc. 1 (2002): 4.

⁹⁴ Habash, "Dionysos' Roles in Aristophanes' 'Frogs,'" 15.

unrest, “thirst for private advantage,” betray their nation, smuggle, aid the enemy, desecrate shrines, and or take away the pay from the poets do not deserve to be leaders. The warning is that there are eternal repercussions, and these false leaders will be punished either on earth or in the afterlife. It is relevant to note that such critiques were effective.

A similar judgment of poor leadership and corruption was levied against Socrates as a result of Aristophanes’ play, *The Clouds*. This satire, according to Plato, led to doubt concerning Socrates teaching and leadership. This criticism eventually led to the death of the great philosopher,⁹⁵ which is a testimony to the fact that leadership was on the minds of the Greeks and the Romans as well. Through the popular stories told during the period, warnings were offered to those who chose to lead. Such a description informs the study of the phenomenon of authentic leadership as all cultures seem to expect leaders to lead well.

This begins with the discussion of the problem with the New Testament’s teachings on leadership. Whenever the apostles founded a church, leaders were appointed,⁹⁶ but scholars also note that not all leadership is ministerial.⁹⁷ This is ironic since the texts Christians use to understand leadership in the secular workplace are dependent upon expanding the expectations of church leadership. This is difficult.

⁹⁵ Plato Apology 19c

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DApol.%3Asection%3D19c> (accessed July 28, 2018).

⁹⁶ C.A. Smith, *Church Leadership*, D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 78.

⁹⁷ Black, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 15.

As a result, it is hard to see how being the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2) or the “wife of one husband” (1 Tim. 3:12) is applicable to the manager at Walmart or the waitress at Applebee’s. These expectations for church leadership often feel forced or at least stretched to fit a secular setting. Despite this, it is believed that biblical descriptions of leadership apply to those outside of ministry including but not limited to, “the world of business, sports, entertainment, fashion.”⁹⁸ Some biblical scholars believe modern leadership theory helps fill in the gaps.

Three Foundational Theories of Leadership

Christians know that their metaphysic begins with Christ and his love. As Bonhoeffer explains, Christ is the believer’s “Ultimate” and “center.”⁹⁹ Christ is the obvious and self-evident essence of Christian belief; Christ is its ground and its telos and therefore its metaphysic.¹⁰⁰ As Ulrik B. Nissen explains, “Ethics and Christology are necessarily related to each other... There is only one reality: the Christ reality.”¹⁰¹ As a result, despite the debate surrounding leadership theory, Christians can safely agree with Sharon Miller and Halee Scott when they explained, “Authentic Christian leadership is more cause-centered—around the cause of Christ—and focused more on developing people than on developing principles.”¹⁰² This is leadership motivated by love. This

⁹⁸ Woodhouse, *I Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, 17.

⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, 628-629.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Veatch, “The Truths of Metaphysics,” *Review of Metaphysics*, Issue 67, No 3, (1964): 377.

¹⁰¹ Ulrik B. Nissen, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Ethics of Plenitude,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring / Summer 2006): 97-114

¹⁰² Sharon Miller and Halee Scott, “Leading Ladies: Why We Need Them—In the Church and Beyond,” *Christianity Today*, 58 2 (2014): 53.

means Christians must never use another person as an end in itself, but rather the Other must be treated as a Thou.¹⁰³ Therefore, love must be the motivation even for those in positions of authority.¹⁰⁴ As Martin Buber explains, “Love is the responsibility of an I for a You.”¹⁰⁵ This leaves Christians looking for creative ways to apply their biblical principles systematically.

Though the history of leadership theory does not necessarily embrace leadership as an act of love one can see the importance of both the leader and those who follow. As research progressed scholars discovered three foundational views of leadership: the personality or trait-based theory, the situational approach, and the interactionist view.¹⁰⁶ Even though leadership can be seen as a “nebulous concept”¹⁰⁷ and is often confusing, these views can help an individual understand what it takes to be a leader and surprisingly these views have biblical support and Christian proponents.

The Trait/Personality Approach: Born Leaders

Personality theories of leadership are those founded on the idea that someone can be a ‘natural’ leader—that good leadership is a product of specific personality types, not specific skills (which is not the same as saying that skills are not important). The Great Man approach to history and leadership was the dominant view until the 20th century, and early leadership studies in the post-World War II years focused on personality traits possessed by leaders.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ William James, *The Collected Works of William James*, (Kindle Edition, 2011), loc 502.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, (London: Oxford Press, 1960), 90.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1970), 66.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Paulus, *Effective Human Relations* 3rd ed, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995), 298-303.

¹⁰⁷ Fetzer, *Leadership*, 1311.

¹⁰⁸ Jeni Mcray (ed), "Personality Theories of leadership." In *Leadership Glossary: Essential Terms for the 21st Century*, Mission Bell Media, 2015.

This view holds that leaders are born, not made. As John Fetzter put it, “A person often is said to have it or not”¹⁰⁹ and since some believe leadership is a gift, this makes sense.

According to this view, one born with leadership skills could come to hone their abilities but one born without this trait can never really achieve truly authentic leadership.

For this reason, those who are not ordained for leadership will never be able to take on this role authentically. In his commentary of 1 Corinthians David Lowery explains, “The gifts were not meant to be selected by individuals or personally solicited by them, but were instead given by the Spirit as He determined.”¹¹² This is believed to include teaching, preaching, and of course leadership in its various forms.

Since many Christians assume all traits are God-ordained it is no wonder that some would hold that leadership would be among those gifts. One’s spiritual gifts may include everything from administration to one’s ability to teach. But (it is argued) these gifts must also include the influence of the more obvious (and often overlooked) reality of gender roles. This is important as research has shown that leadership is universally associated with strong masculine roles.¹¹³ This has led many to assume that women are not fit for leadership in general as, by definition, they lack this naturally endowed ability. This problem is exacerbated by the debate surrounding a woman’s role in ministry. Some have even pointed to research showing that strong leaders have specific traits like self-monitoring, which women tend to score lower on when tested by comparison to their

¹⁰⁹ Fetzter, *Leadership*, 1311.

¹¹² David Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* Vol. 2, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1895), 533.

¹¹³ Karen Korabik and Matter Roya Ayman, “Leadership: Why Gender and Culture,” *American Psychologist*, Illinois Institute of Technology April (2010): 161.

male counterparts.¹¹⁴ More research needs to be done on this topic, because “gender can affect access to leadership positions.”¹¹⁵ Regardless, this thesis is not limited to ministry leadership so there is no reason to discriminate or limit this study based upon gender.

Those who maintain this view believe Scripture shows a strong tendency toward a trait-based hypothesis. Those who hold this opinion believe that it is in this way that God is given the glory through all human achievements because all good things (including one’s traits) are a gift from him “so that no one can boast in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:29). Christian leadership manuals often adopt this stance, encouraging the reader to “stick to their gift...especially when we are younger and full of energy.” They caution the reader, “Paul twice reminded Timothy that his call was gift-based and he should not divert from or neglect it.”¹¹⁶ According to this view, this makes biblical sense.

This explains why God may have chosen David, a man after his own heart, to lead his nation or why God may have chosen Moses to free his people. According to this theory of leadership, these men would have been chosen based upon those leadership traits God had given them to fulfill their task. In this case these men, by definition, were the only ones for the job. This litmus test begins to fail quickly when considering a phenomenological look at the stories of these men.

First of all, though he was a man after God’s own heart, David quickly fell into sin after assuming power. If all of David’s character traits were designed specifically by God, this means that God intentionally and purposefully chose David despite God

¹¹⁴ Korabik, “Leadership: Why Gender and Culture,” 162.

¹¹⁵ Korabik, 162.

¹¹⁶ Houston, “Biblical Models of Leadership,” 232.

himself knowing full well David's sin would undermine the very progress he had intended David to make. A similar problem can be seen when Abraham lies, which in and of itself cannot be a trait of authentic leadership. This again can be tested when considering the fact that God chose Saul to lead his people.

Saul was described as "an impressive young man. There was no one more impressive among the Israelites than he. He stood a head taller than anyone else" (1 Sam. 9:2). The text of 1 Samuel seems to fit the trait-based schema well since Saul is "impressive" to all, so much so that no one even compares, meaning he was simply born different. Samuel later anoints the young man and Saul begins his reign as the god-ordained king. Yet after some time, Saul begins to lose control. He begins to struggle and another young man, David, comes to replace him. It is brought to Saul's attention that this young man will someday replace him and, despite being God's "chosen" and god-gifted "impressive" leader, he attempts to thwart God's plan by attempting to murder David. Murder (it is assumed) is not a "good" leadership quality which raising the question, "why didn't God choose someone else in the first place?"

As a result, the trait-based theory of leadership has one major theological shortcoming: human sin and situation. The situation, referred to as the *kairos* by Paul Tillich, is defined as

the scientific and artistic, the economic, political, and ethical forms in which [theologians] express their interpretation of existence. The 'situation' theology must consider is the creative interpretation of existence, an interpretation which is carried on in every period of history under all kinds of psychological and sociological conditions.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I 3-4.

The situation entails one's age, gender, culture, as well as one's psychological makeup, metaphysical commitments, unconscious presuppositions, and choices. In a nutshell, the situation takes into account the existential self, one's traits, as well as one's surroundings.

As the situation is complex, it is no wonder that a study of traits alone can offer an exhaustive understanding of authentic leadership because authentic leadership has an obvious link to the character and actions of the individual as well as to the circumstances surrounding them. This may be why David maintained his integrity as a subject under Saul but failed as a father or why Moses was able to free God's people from slavery but failed to enter the Promised Land. It appears these were the right people for the job for a time but they were unable to adapt when the situation changed. It seems the wrench thrown into this theory is human freedom.

This theory seems to ignore one's responsibility and the sin nature of the free-agent. Simply put, different situations may bring out the worst and the best in an individual. For example, the recovering alcoholic would most likely struggle more than others working as a bartender. In this situation, the individual is still fully responsible for his or her actions but the situation definitely is a factor in the individual's failure or success. Based on this the question could be asked, "Would David have committed adultery with Bathsheba had he not been called by Samuel to be king?"

It seems obvious that the answer is "no" as the chances of David (a shepherd) meeting Bathsheba (high-ranking wife and neighbor of the king) would be slim at best. This does not mean that David wouldn't have cheated with someone else had he remained with his flock. The point is that despite his moral failure the ramifications of a shepherd committing adultery are almost incomparable to that of a king committing the

same act. It is hard to imagine the sin of a shepherd causing national unrest and the eventual division of an entire kingdom. It can be easily understood that, as a shepherd, David's sin would not have had such an effect on Israel. Both the situation and David's freedom were a factor. Though having the semblance of biblical support, this view is not without its opponents.

At the beginning of the 1900s, several studies came out rejecting this view and soon the trait approach was considered untenable. It was believed that "on the whole this research approach has simply been unable to produce meaningful and consistent findings for explaining differences between effective and ineffective leaders,"¹¹⁸ but despite its critics, there has been a modern resurgence of interest in "determining leaders by their natural abilities."¹¹⁹ This has been adopted by some in the Christian community. Many believe leadership is a spiritual gift which is God-ordained and therefore, by definition, not learned. Despite this belief, research has shown this view is flawed.

Studies testify to the effect of the situation on the leader as "traits associated with leadership vary depending on whether the leader is, for example, a manager, military officer, or politician."¹²⁰ Also more recent research "indicates the traits related to leadership are not culturally universal."¹²¹ Most disturbing is the fact that "using one's gifts is no guarantee of salvation or a relation with God."¹²² Matthew 7:22 testifies that

¹¹⁸ Robert E. Jones, "The Personality-Trait Approach to Leader Effectiveness," *Psychological Reports*, 65, (1985), 601.

¹¹⁹ Frank Walter, Susanne Scheibe, "A Literature Review and Emotion-Based Model of Age and Leadership: New Directions for the Trait Approach," *The Leadership Quarterly* 24 (2013): 882.

¹²⁰ Korabik, "Leadership: Why Gender and Culture," 161.

¹²¹ Korabik, 162.

¹²² Jamieson, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, 286.

many people will use their God-given gifts to do many “good” things and yet Christ will still not recognize them. This means that different people in different context, despite having the same gifts, will not achieve the same goals, let alone be the authentic leaders they were called to be.

The Situational Approach: Different Situations, Different Leaders

In his acceptance speech as the presidential candidate for the Democratic Party, John F. Kennedy spoke about racial unrest, nuclear weapons, communism, poverty, and religion. He was pushing his audience to not just consider his candidacy but to take their role as Americans seriously. Kennedy wanted everyone to consider the costs and benefits of each candidate and to vote for the right person for the job. This argument was based on the situation the United States of America found itself in at the time. He warned his audience, “Today our concern must be with that future. For the world is changing. The old era is ending. The old ways will not do.” Little did Kennedy know, he was unintentionally arguing for the situational approach.

Kennedy explained that his day was not just another day, but rather a “New Frontier.” He explained that the world had entered a new era of science and space, peace and war, ignorance and prejudice, poverty and surplus. The Cold War, riots, and inequality were reflecting a change in American culture which demanded a change in leadership. Kennedy explained, “It is a time, in short, for a new generation of leadership—new men to cope with new problems and new opportunities.” The times were changing and the situation demanded a new breed of leader and, because the United States of America was at the forefront of democracy, the whole world was waiting anxiously to see how America would respond and how the next president would lead. Kennedy finished

with these words, “All mankind waits upon our decision. A whole world looks to see what we will do. We cannot fail their trust, we cannot fail to try.”¹²³

Leadership is not just motivated by the situation; it is shaped by it. Each and every event requires a different set of skills and demands a different type of leader. Surely, it is argued, the situation which demands a leader must be the deciding factor for determining who should lead and who should follow. The *Leadership Glossary* explains,

Situational leadership theory (SLT)...is based on the idea that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership, but rather that successful leaders are flexible and adapt their style to suit the situation. By the 1990s, SLT was wildly successful in the leadership training world, and had been adopted by most Fortune 500 companies.¹²⁴

In this theory, situational variables include the character of the leader, the task itself, the organization, their position, and the authority of the leader. Though limited to situational factors, “the model has been demonstrated to have validity in predicting performance.”¹²⁵ This view answers many of the discrepancies found in trait-based theory.

Personality-based “literature has rarely utilized key theories and insights from research on psychological aging, in general, and emotional aging, in particular.”¹²⁶ Trait-based theories seem to ignore “the physical characteristics that differentiate people into different cultural and ethnic groups act as markers of status that prime stereotypes and

¹²³ John F. Kennedy, “Address of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Democratic Party Nomination for the Presidency of the United States - Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles.” | *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25966>. (accessed July 15, 2018).

¹²⁴ Jeni Mcray (Ed), "Situational Leadership Theory," In *Leadership Glossary: Essential Terms for the 21st Century*, (Mission Bell Media, 2015), Accessed Sept 15, 2018. See Turabian for how to indicate editor. This is wrong.

¹²⁵ Korabik, “Leadership: Why Gender and Culture,” 165.

¹²⁶ Walter, “A Literature Review and Emotion-Based Model of Age and Leadership,” 883.

endow privilege in the same manner that gender does.”¹²⁷ This may be why so many great leaders thrived in one role but struggled in another. As Tom Houston explains, “That is why leaders in war are very often no use in peace, like Churchill.”¹²⁸ Just as Kennedy believed he was the best man to be president in 1960, this view teaches different men and women should be asked to lead in different times and situations.

This view may shed some light on the discrepancies between Moses’ leadership as a military leader, bent on freeing the slaves, versus his role as a roaming governor of a disparate people. As this theory teaches, it may well have been the pressure of Moses’ new situation that weakened his resolve, making him more vulnerable to sin. This view may also offer the answer to why Saul was God’s choice while in his tiny village, despite later falling into ruin when the responsibility of ruling a nation was laid upon his shoulders. In both cases, the sin of the leader is the cause, but the situation may be a factor as different people struggle with sin in different ways.

SLT fills in the gaps left by trait-based theory as it was often observed that “other situational factors” were cited as the reason for “differences in research findings.”¹²⁹ For this reason, it may be that the situation is a better indicator of authentic leadership. For example, since Israel was in a constant “leadership crisis,” a better question may be, “What kind of leadership did this troubled society need?”¹³⁰ Since skills related to tasks

¹²⁷ Korabik, 159.

¹²⁸ Houston, “Biblical Models of Leadership,” 228.

¹²⁹ Jones, “The Personality-Trait Approach to Leader Effectiveness,” 602.

¹³⁰ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 19.

require a different approach than people skills¹³¹ it makes sense that the situation must be a factor, but it is obvious that this cannot be the only factor.

As was argued earlier, there are specific traits which lend themselves to leadership. This may be why gifted people like Steve Jobs and Lee Iacocca were brought in when their respective companies were on the brink of bankruptcy but struggled to lead during times of prosperity.¹³² Similarly, this may also answer questions concerning the struggle of David since he was quick to murder a man in his later role as king, despite earlier refusing to even defend his own life against Saul. As Robert Jones explains,

There is certainly something intuitively appealing about attempting to explain behavior from personality factors. But it is difficult to see how a situation as complex as individuals cooperating in a group and competing with other groups can be reduced to individuals' personalities in explaining group effectiveness. Researchers should recognize that certain personality traits in leaders will produce greater effectiveness in some situations than in others. Only by identifying the set of circumstances as well as the personality traits can we gain insights into how these two interact to produce a certain outcome.¹³³

As the research reveals the biblical answer to authentic leadership may be more complicated than just one's God-given gifts or the circumstances God has placed people in. The answer may be a combination of both.

The Interactionist Approach: The Situation and Traits Collide

After studying the first two approaches it now seems obvious there must be a synthesis of the-right-person-at-the-right-time, which leads to the right leader. This makes sense as studies of different nations reveal different standards for leadership with

¹³¹ Korabik, "Leadership: Why Gender and Culture," 166.

¹³² Verne Harnish, *The Greatest Business Decisions of All Time*, (New York: Fortune Books, 2012), 29-37.

¹³³ Jones, "The Personality-Trait Approach to Leader Effectiveness," 602.

one culture seeing another's leaders as weak or aggressive by comparison to their own.¹³⁴ Another factor is that of age and maturity, which Scripture explains is also essential to proper leadership. Recent research supports this view since it shows age has major ramifications for both emotional functioning and effectiveness,¹³⁵ though the impact of the age of followers on leaders has been “largely ignored” in recent scholarship.¹³⁶ Through cultural differences, not to mention gender and age differences, it becomes more and more obvious who a person is and the situation a person finds themselves in both play a vital role as to how their leadership is perceived.

This rings true of the Christian ethos as the authentic Christian leader is not one-sided. He or she must consider the cost to not just themselves but to others as well, as others are a necessary part of any organization. Robert Black wrote, “authentic New Testament leadership never seeks to profit personally from its own position.”¹³⁷ In this model, both the situation and the leader’s traits come together. Similarly to SLT, such a conglomeration has been tested and shown to demonstrate predictable results.¹³⁸ For this reason, it seems this view brings together all the biblical evidence from both of the prior views and puts them nicely together into one package. The problem is even this view falls short since it forgets one key component; a biblical foundation. This is why some

¹³⁴ Kessler, “Pitfalls in ‘Biblical’ leadership,” 1.

¹³⁵ Walter, “A literature review and emotion-based model of age and Leadership,” 882.

¹³⁶ Oc, “Followership, Leadership and Social Influence,” 920.

¹³⁷ Black, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 37.

¹³⁸ Korabik, “Leadership: Why Gender and Culture,” 165.

Christians are concerned about the Church's tendency to rely so heavily upon business models when doing ministry.¹³⁹

Despite these fears, some researchers believe there is a universal understanding of authentic leadership, which underpins cultural differences. Such a “meta-theory” is being researched through a study of religions¹⁴⁰ as well as an interest in an individual's metanarrative.¹⁴¹ For example, 1 Timothy makes some very bold and universal claims as to how leaders should not only lead but how they should also think and live. As Robert Black explained, “In this letter, we have the opportunity to learn from one whose words on leadership transcend generations and geography.”¹⁴² Yet how does one accurately follow Jesus as the “supreme example of leadership”¹⁴³ while taking into consideration one's own culture, background, life, traits, experience, and so on?

Myth and Metanarrative: Beyond the Interactionist Approach

One's view must ring true in the world (i.e. be testable) as well as be biblical. The one aspect that has been missing is a Christ-centered view, but how does one test for the importance of spirituality? One way is through understanding mythology. Though Max Mueller famously called mythology a “disease of language,” his disdain does not remove one ounce of the power found in harnessing myth. Myths encourage people to consider

¹³⁹ Michael Cooper, “The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul: A Contextual and Biblical Leadership for Contemporary Ministry,” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 2, no. 1 (2005), 48.

¹⁴⁰ Kruger, “Leadership with Inner Meaning,” 772.

¹⁴¹ Justin A. Irving and Karin Klenke, “Telos, Chronos, and Hermēneia: The Role of Metanarrative in Leadership Effectiveness through the Production of Meaning,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Bethel University St. Paul, Minnesota, 3 3, (2004), 30.

¹⁴² Black, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 16.

¹⁴³ Kanagaraj, “Johannine Jesus, The Supreme Example of Leadership,” 21.

the deeper meaning of one's surroundings and one's self. Every myth inevitably encourages people to think further past the story to something, not so much deeper, but rather above; something transcendent. This is the power behind the writings of Shakespeare and Aristophanes. On the topic of myth, J.R.R. Tolkien wrote, "To ask what is the origin of stories (however qualified) is to ask what is the origin of language and of the mind."¹⁴⁴ For Christians, such a search begins in their relation to their God.

Mythology, transcendence, and metaphysics are an "a priori" way of understanding a thing,¹⁴⁵ "getting at the nature of things,"¹⁴⁶ or grasping "the why we do what we do." Organizations without a strong mythology, metanarrative, or mission are often filled with emotional and scared people struggling to identify with the larger group. This leads to insecurity and destroys job satisfaction.¹⁴⁷ Thomas Paterson and Robert Waterman have written extensively about the importance of transcendent language and mythology in business. They warned, "Emotions run wild and almost everyone feels threatened. Why should this be? The answer is that if companies do not have strong notions of themselves, as reflected in their values, stories, myths, and legends, people's only security comes from where they live on the organizational chart."¹⁴⁸

For this reason, the leader should be concerned about everything that happens in their organization, but the transforming leader chooses to transcend the experience for the

¹⁴⁴ Verlyn Flieger, *Tolkien on Fairy-Stories*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 38.

¹⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

¹⁴⁶ Veatch, "The Truths of Metaphysics," 379.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 77.

¹⁴⁸ Peters, *In Search of Excellence*, 77.

sake of healthy detachment and the ability to objectively observe the organization as a whole which includes its employees. This same method is often used in psychotherapy as well.¹⁴⁹ Gregor Burns wrote, “Leadership, unlike naked power wielding, is thus inseparable from followers’ needs and goals.” He continues, “leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led, and thus has a transforming effect on both.”¹⁵⁰ Ethics comes from something supersensible.

As “imagers” of God (things made in God’s image) human beings are “manifestations” of God,¹⁵¹ but as Bonhoeffer explains, people are never “pure” manifestations; they are an invisible eschatological entity, who are limited by their own I. As individuals search for meaning, each person encounters the Other and this encounter creates an ethical dilemma since each I is met by another You who is also an I. Through this encounter, a problem arises as an I cannot perceive others as such. Bonhoeffer explains, “One human being cannot of its own accord make another into an I, an ethical person conscious of responsibility.”¹⁵² He continues, “Only through God’s active working does the other become a You to me from whom my I arises. In other words, every human You is an image of the divine You.”

In the Other, one finds one’s self and their own meaning, “since the human You is created and willed by God, it is a real, absolute, and holy You, like the divine You. One

¹⁴⁹ Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: an Introduction to Logotherapy, a Newly Revised and Enlarged, Edition of From Death-Camp to Existentialism*, (Beacon Press, 1962), 154.

¹⁵⁰ Peters, *In Search of Excellence*, 83.

¹⁵¹ Jennifer McBride, *The Church for the World: a Theology of Public Witness*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), Loc 2044.

¹⁵² Bonhoeffer, *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, 27.

might then speak here of the human being as the image of God.”¹⁵³ One’s metaphysical commitments are based upon being made in God’s image and in presenting that image to the world. This is how the Christian lives their theology. “Lived religion examines practices, beliefs, and objects to understand more clearly the human phenomenon of religion, while lived theology examines practices, objects, and beliefs in order to understand God’s presence in human experience.”¹⁵⁴ By definition, Christian religion and Christian faith must determine a Christian definition of leadership.

All three of the most traditional versions of leadership ultimately fall short since they lack the key component of leadership which is an understanding of one’s own metaphysic and transcendence; the existential aspects of the human condition, which underline each individual’s thoughts and actions. For the Christian, Christ is the key to just such a metaphysic.

Servant-Leadership: The Jesus Model

“Never before has the call been louder for leadership that is virtuous, while followers seek leaders who lead with behaviors that do not ignore them, but embrace them as whole individuals.”¹⁵⁵ Many believe authentic leaders are “urgently needed.”¹⁵⁶ This need seems to be the reason for the acceptance of servant-leadership within the church because it best fits the Christian’s metaphysic. Michael Christensen wrote,

¹⁵³ Bonhoeffer, 27-28.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Marsh, *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy*, (Oxford University Press, 2017), loc 271.

¹⁵⁵ Dirk Van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson, “*Servant Leadership Developments in Theory and Research*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

¹⁵⁶ Avolio, “Authentic Leadership Development,” 316.

Myth evokes powerful emotional responses which have a unifying effect on the receiver. In the contemplation of mythic images, one's consciousness is enlarged, enabling apprehension of new meaning and insight... Thus God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are not mutually exclusive ideas. Myth enables us to synthesize what discursive reason would show to be contradictory.¹⁵⁷

The metaphysic or story a leader submits to guides their leadership. In other words, Jesus was a servant; therefore we should be servants as well. In this way, it is believed that “from a biblical perspective, [servant leadership] is the style presented by Jesus and practiced by the early church.”¹⁵⁸

Servant leadership is viewed as a leadership style that is beneficial to organizations by awaking, engaging, and developing employees, as well as beneficial to followers or employees by engaging people as whole individuals with heart, mind and spirit...servant-leaders achieve this by emphasizing the goals of the organization, its role in society, and the separate roles of the employees.¹⁵⁹

For the Christian, Christ is the only true model of leadership since

we are made servant-leaders when we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross (1 John 1:7) and thereby we share in the life of Jesus in union with him. The necessity to absorb the life of Jesus in communion with him is sufficiently emphasized in John (6:56; 14:19; 15:4–10) and the reference to ‘having a part with’ him also conveys the same idea.¹⁶⁰

This metaphysical commitment to Christ adds the meaning and depth required for a more robust and complete grasp of leadership, while simultaneously fulfilling the command to make disciples of Christ.

Both his status and service make Jesus a leader who seeks to influence the lives of his associates by way of service done to them and thus he proves to be a servant-

¹⁵⁷ Michael Christensen, *C.S. Lewis on Scripture: His Thoughts on the Nature of Biblical Inspiration, the Role of Revelation, and the Question of Inerrancy*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979), 64.

¹⁵⁸ Valorie C. Nordbye, “Providing Relevant and Effective Leadership for Millennials,” DMin Thesis Project, Bethel Theological Seminary (1991), 98.

¹⁵⁹ Dierendonck, *Servant Leadership*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Kanagaraj, “Johannine Jesus, The Supreme Example of Leadership,” 23.

leader. Jesus' enactment of servant-leadership puts an obligation on those who received his service of love and humility to express the same love, simplicity, and service to the world (John 13:14–15).¹⁶¹

Such leaders, sometimes called “socialized leaders,” often “share power and control, empower others, and seek social or collective outcomes, as well as long-term gains for others and the larger collective. They seek to enhance others and the broader social system by building capabilities in others that transcending themselves”¹⁶² all of which are traits equated with the authentic leader.¹⁶³

This balance of servant and leader makes the servant-leader loved by those they lead, but also makes them a target for others in power as one historical study shows such leaders are more often targets of assassination than non-socialized leaders.¹⁶⁴ This anecdotal evidence rings true since Jesus himself and all twelve of his disciples were targets of assassination and persecution, but despite the consistency of such a view, not everyone is convinced of servant-leadership's stance as the Christian standard. Some recent researchers have found servant-leadership lacking.

As a counter-example Michael Cooper explains, “Leadership that focuses on being a servant can distort the task of leadership.” He describes two negative outcomes.

First is one of perception. Leadership that is perceived as focused on being a servant can be thought of as weak or indecisive. Second, the servant-leader idea underestimates the need for accountability in leadership, the wide variations in human conceptual abilities, and the general aggressiveness of people in the workplace.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Kanagaraj, 19.

¹⁶² Yammarino, “Assassination and Leadership,” 824.

¹⁶³ Weischer, ““To Thine Own Self Be True,”” 483.

¹⁶⁴ Yammarino, “Assassination and Leadership,” 836.

¹⁶⁵ Cooper, “The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul,” 49-50.

Scholars like Cooper, believe the problem with servant-leadership is that it is not robust enough to handle all the issues which a leader must deal with. It is argued that servant-leadership has the ability to describe how a leader should act in only a limited number of situations. It is believed that it offers the leader no real answer to embrace the phenomenon of leadership itself. In other words, the servant-leader model falls short because it lacks the existential integrity to be maintained in all situations. In this way, servant-leadership teaches one to lead with a servant attitude, but not how to act authentically in every given situation. Proponents of the servant-leadership model obviously disagree, especially those who hold to a Christian metaphysic.

Many biblical scholars believe all Christians are called to be leaders to some degree,¹⁶⁶ yet some people are better leaders, not for lack of having the gift, but because they are not the leader the situation requires. This makes sense as Henry Jones explained,

the gifts of the Spirit are not uniform, but display diversity in unity just as the sunlight playing on different surfaces produces a multiplicity of gleams and colours, so the Holy Spirit manifests his presence variously, and even sometimes with sharp contrasts, in different individualities.¹⁶⁷

Specific people plus specific gifts equal the best leader for a specific situation.

Different gifts rise to the top for different occasions and therefore different leaders and styles are required for these varied scenarios. For example, it is understood that “the role of Jesus is a central feature of the gospel for New Testament believers”¹⁶⁸ (i.e., the Christian metaphysic) but Jesus (as servant-leader) absolutely plays different roles

¹⁶⁶ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 18.

¹⁶⁷ Henry Donald Spence (Ed.), *1 Corinthians* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 397.

¹⁶⁸ T. D. Lea, *Hebrews, James* Vol. 10, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 361.

throughout the narrative of Scripture, not always taking on the persona of servant, but always remaining humble. Below are a few examples of the many roles Jesus played:

Jesus as son of man.¹⁶⁹
 Jesus as son of God.¹⁷⁰
 Jesus as high priest.¹⁷¹
 Jesus as Mediator (Heb. 8:6).
 Jesus as king (I Tim. 6:15).
 Jesus as warrior (Rev. 19:11-16).
 Jesus as husband (II Cor. 11:2).
 Jesus as judge.¹⁷²
 Jesus as messiah.¹⁷³
 Jesus as prophet (Luke 24:19).
 Jesus as suffering servant.¹⁷⁴
 Jesus as creator.¹⁷⁵
 Jesus as pastor.¹⁷⁶
 Jesus as healer.¹⁷⁷
 Jesus as benevolent dictator (Rev 19:11-16).

In each of these roles, we see a different need presented and a different style of leadership adopted to meet the need.

¹⁶⁹ Ian Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 515.

¹⁷⁰ Gerald McDermott, "Jonathan Edwards and God's Inner Life: A Response to Kyle Strobel" *Themelios*, 39 2, (2014), 246.

¹⁷¹ W.A. Elwell and B.J. Beitzel, "Priests and Levites," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1763-1764.

¹⁷² H.R. Balz and G. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 358.

¹⁷³ Ken Heer, *Luke: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 250.

¹⁷⁴ E.L. Wilson, A.R.G. Deasley, and B.L. Callen, *Galatians, Philippians, Colossians: a Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 311.

¹⁷⁵ M.H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*, (London: Martin Manser, 2009), 2303, 4006.

¹⁷⁶ Philip McFadyen, *Open Door on John: a Gospel for Our Time*, (London: Triangle, 1998), 72.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Beasley-Murray, "Review of Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times by Howard Clark Kee," *Themelios*, 14(2) (1989): 72.

For example, “Jesus as husband” may operate under a very basic definition of a servant-leader as would “Jesus as suffering servant,” “pastor,” and “son of man,” but his roles are many. For some, it is difficult to grasp how the role of the servant-leader is applied to Christ’s role as a warrior, judge, prophet, or king, but despite the difficulty it can be easily seen that a heart for service can still be at the center of each. These roles demand more authority and power than the role of a simple servant may afford, but what it means to be a servant or a “suffering servant”¹⁷⁸ can absolutely guide the whole enterprise.

For example, being a king or a warrior involves judgment: making demands, claiming undeniable power, and even killing when necessary. These extremes have caused some to doubt whether the role of servant-leader is adequate. As a result, some believe such a model can “distort the task of leadership.” For this reason, servant-leaders can be “perceived as weak or indecisive” and such leaders often underestimate “the need for accountability” overlooking the “general aggressiveness of people in the workplace.”¹⁷⁹ Despite these criticisms, Christ was able to live as a servant while confronting persecution, pain, and suffering in addition to enjoying peace, comfort, and jubilation. Though he confronted anger and aggression and experienced the love of family and friends, Jesus was always a servant-leader. Though Christ set the example this does not mean adopting the persona of a servant makes decisions easy.

As life is often difficult, leaders must sometimes choose between two morally questionable actions all the while maintaining their commitment to the mercy and the

¹⁷⁸ Russell L. Huizing, “Identifying Leaders: The African Eunuch as a Model of Christian Leadership,” *Oral History Review*, Oxford University Press (10 July 2017), 252.

¹⁷⁹ Cooper, “The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul,” 49-50.

love of Christ. The ministry of Bonhoeffer testifies to this paradox. Historians record how “as a Christian he lied, stole and plotted the assassination of Hitler. This double life that Bonhoeffer led was a problem to his conscience, and indeed, made him suspect even in church circles.”¹⁸⁰ Despite the struggle, this need to fight when called to do so did not destroy his role as a servant-leader, but rather it is in such adversity that his roles as servant and leader both were allowed to shine.¹⁸¹

Due to his role, Bonhoeffer was considered to be suspect by many German Christians who had come to embrace the Nazi government as god-ordained.¹⁸² Yet, despite one’s commitment or rejection of fascism, Bonhoeffer’s decision to plot the assassination of the legally-elected chancellor seems hard to squeeze into a servant-leader model. It is also complicated further every time the Protestant church celebrates Luther sending his “Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences” to the Archbishop of Mainz. In this act, Luther publicly declared himself in opposition to a number of practices by those in authority, despite the clear command in Scripture to obey one’s elders and king. Again, in such acts of disobedience, it is difficult to imagine the servant-leader model being robust enough to embrace lying and killing if need be, yet God as leader and servant has commanded both.

It has been argued by some that to believe Jesus only ever operated as a servant-leader is to fall into one of several theological pitfalls.¹⁸³ Some believe Christians often

¹⁸⁰ David W. Clark, “A Preliminary Investigation and Critique of the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” Master’s Thesis, (Loyola University Chicago, 1968), 31.

¹⁸¹ See the Appendix for more information.

¹⁸² Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 41-42.

¹⁸³ Kessler, “Pitfalls in ‘Biblical’ Leadership,” 2.

engage in fruitless attempts to construct a pure biblical leadership theory and that such attempts always result in failure. This researcher believes this critique is too heavy-handed. It is true that no matter how one defines their theory, it will never be free of one's own culture, because "there can never be a culture-free gospel,"¹⁸⁴ but this does not therefore mean all theories are inherently wrong. As one matures and learns more, the role of leader will inevitably grow as well, but all theories are only as good as their foundation and metaphysic.

¹⁸⁴ Kessler, 1.

CHAPTER THREE: A REVIEW OF AUTHENTICITY AND LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Authenticity has been a hot topic in the last ten years especially in business and leadership journals.¹⁸⁵ A review of the history into the study of authenticity reveals it has always been directly connected to leadership and, more specifically, to authority. A closer look at our modern understanding shows us our current definitions fall short and are in need of redefining. As a strategy is “urgently needed,”¹⁸⁷ the researcher presents here what he believes is a more accurate understanding of authenticity based upon a literary review of the topic.

History of Authenticity and Authority

As phenomenology is interested in the “diversity of human experience”¹⁸⁸ from both the past and present it requires one to start broad and to slowly narrow the focus.¹⁸⁹ Therefore the research begins with the oldest known use of the word “authentic.” The Greek word ἀθηντικὸς has its original sense in “self” (autos) and “being” (hentes) and is often translated as “authoritative.”¹⁹⁰ This use can be seen in the Gnostic text, ἀθηντικὸς

¹⁸⁵ Joan Marques, Satinder Dhiman (eds), *Leadership Today: Practices for Personal and Professional Performance*. www.springer.com. (accessed June 2018).

¹⁸⁷ 316

¹⁸⁸ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 146.

¹⁸⁹ Van Manen, 75.

¹⁹⁰ Etymology Online, “Authentic (Adj.)” Etymology Online, <http://www.etymonline.com/word/authentic> (accessed June 12, 2018).

λόγος (Authoritative Teaching).¹⁹¹ Despite the text never being widely accepted by the Church,¹⁹² it is a testimony to the word's earliest known use. In this text, ἀθηντικὸς can either be understood as a “speech of authority,” a text which is an “authentic presentation” of a tradition, or it can be used in the sense of being an “original copy” of an authoritative document.¹⁹³ This is a positive use of the word because the origin in question is assumed to be “good” and “wise.” By extension, the teaching presented in the text is also good and wise as it represents the authority from which it was either given or inspired. The expectation being that the authority of the accepted inspiration would be transferred to the text itself since the transcript itself is equal to the authority it represents.

Elsewhere ἀθηντικὸς is often found to be used in a negative sense. When the word was used by one individual against another, it was always used negatively, being translated as “heavy-handed” or “prideful.”¹⁹⁴ In Euripides’ play, *The Trojan Women*, the word is used in reference to her husband’s “murderer.”¹⁹⁵ This word was also used by Basil where the action was in reference to the “anathematization of Dianius.”¹⁹⁶ In yet another instance the word is used by Chrysostom as a warning to husbands to not “abuse”

¹⁹¹ George W. MacRae (translator), *Authoritative Teaching -- The Nag Hammadi Library*. [www.gnosis.org](http://gnosis.org). <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/autho.html> (accessed July 1 2018).

¹⁹² C.T. Friedeman, “Authoritative Teaching,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁹³ 3. subst., ἀθ. τό, original copy, PFam.Teb.31.13 (ii A.D.), v. ἔκβασις.

¹⁹⁴ Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀθηντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014), 147.

¹⁹⁵ Euripides, “The Trojan Women by Euripides,” *The Internet Classics Archive*. [www.classics.mit.edu](http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/troj_women.html). http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/troj_women.html, (accessed June 24, 2018).

¹⁹⁶ Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀθηντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12,” 166.

their wives.¹⁹⁷ The examples continue because the negative uses of ἀθέντη often imply treachery, “murder,” and/or “violence.”¹⁹⁸

Cynthia Westfall argues this word was only ever positively applied to individuals who were understood to have some form of ultimate authority such as God or the Catholic pope. Westfall argues that this change of usage may have been a deliberate misuse by the Catholic Church to establish papal authority through a comparison of the pope with God.¹⁹⁹ According to Westfall’s research, ἀθεντικὸς was only ever considered to be good when applied to those with obvious authority over others. The problem with this hypothesis is it ignores the earlier uses in reference to Caesar and even the extension of such authority as seen at Qumran.

Westfall seems to either ignore or be ignorant of the evidence that this word does in fact find positive usage as can be seen in the writings of Cicero because he uses it in reference to news he received on “good authority.” In one instance, Cicero explains he believes and trusts that Caesar will be bringing much-needed judgment upon Carbo and Brutus. It is later confirmed, based upon the authority he trusts that both men were brought to justice and eventually killed as promised.²⁰⁰ In addition, the word is used when Pompey is set to invade “Germany by way of Illyricum”; again the news was trusted on

¹⁹⁷ John Chrysostom, Hom. Matt. 57:239. 45-54.

¹⁹⁸ Perseus Digital Library, “ἀθέντη.” *Greek Word Study Tool*. Perseus Digital Library. www.perseus.tufts.edu. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=au%29qe%2Fnth&la=greek&can=au%29qe%2Fnth0#lexicon> (accessed June 15, 2018).

¹⁹⁹ Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12,” 159.

²⁰⁰ Cicero and E. Shuckburgh (Ed.), *The Letters of Cicero: the Whole Extant Correspondence in Chronological Order in Four Volumes* (Medford, MA: George Bell and Sons, 1909), 347.

“good authority.”²⁰¹ Through the earliest human uses of the word, leadership and αὐθεντικὸς have always gone hand in hand.

Scientific Study and the Perception of Authentic Leadership

Scientific studies have shown a direct correlation between perceived authenticity in leaders and several positive benefits for both the leader and the follower as a result of follower’s perception. Leaders who are believed to be “authentic” are understood by their followers to be more “responsible,”²⁰² “ethical,”²⁰³ and “in control of their moods.”²⁰⁴ Authenticity is often seen as the number one difference between a good and effective leader and a basic overseer. Sandu Frunza explains, “We tend to attribute the quality of leadership to those managers who prove to be bearers of the marks of authenticity.”²⁰⁵ As the review will show, the benefits do not end with the follower.

Leaders who are identified as authentic score higher in tests of “emotional intelligence, self-monitoring ability, and political skill.”²⁰⁶ With emotional intelligence comes the display of authentic emotions, which have been linked to the creation of a contagious sense of passion.²⁰⁷ This has a strong effect on the “creativity, persistence, and absorption” the follower, which leads

²⁰¹ Cicero, *The Letters of Cicero*, 384.

²⁰² Freeman, “Values, Authenticity, and Responsible Leadership,” 16.

²⁰³ Frunzã, “Seeking Meaning, Living Authenticity and Leadership in Public Space,” 29.

²⁰⁴ William L. Gardner, Dawn Fischer, and James G. Hunt, “Emotional Labor and Leadership: A Threat to Authenticity?,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 20 (2009): 467.

²⁰⁵ Frunza, “Seeking Meaning, Living Authenticity and Leadership in Public Space,” 31.

²⁰⁶ Gardner, “Emotional Labor and Leadership,” 476-477.

²⁰⁷ Melissa S. Cardon, “Is Passion Contagious? The Transference of Entrepreneurial Passion to Employees,” *Human Resource Management Review* 18, no. 2 (2008): 79.

to people setting more challenging goals, using more creativity in tackling those challenges, and persisting longer in tasks, even when overcoming obstacles...giving entrepreneurs the power to do whatever it takes to realize their visions, to guide their thoughts, actions, and pursuit of activities, and to work on tasks with tenacity.

This includes an improved success rate when followers “pitch their ideas” and when they solicit investors to “raise funds from venture capitalists.”²⁰⁸

Such leaders also often have a better grasp of who they are as individuals.

Freeman and Auster explain, “living authentically means asking hard questions about [one’s own] aspirations, not taking them at face value, understanding the connections to past, present, and future that they are based on.”²⁰⁹ This pursuit leads to an increase in the leader’s own “felt authenticity” as well as “the favorability of follower impressions, and the perceived authenticity of the leader by the followers.” The benefits continue as “authenticity of the leader impacts the favorability of followers’ impressions and subsequent trust in the leader. Furthermore, leaders experience feelings of relative authenticity, which, in turn, relate to their overall sense of well-being.”²¹⁰ Current research suggests authenticity is beneficial for not just those who perceive it, but also for the individual who lives it.²¹¹ As implied by Cicero and supported by modern scholarship,²¹² trust must accompany a leader if their authority is to be considered authentic.

²⁰⁸ Cardon, “Is Passion Contagious?” 78.

²⁰⁹ Freeman, “Values, Authenticity, and Responsible Leadership,” 21.

²¹⁰ Gardner, “Emotional Labor and Leadership,” 468.

²¹¹ Raffo, “Reflection and Authentic Leadership,” 182.

²¹² Gardner, 468.

When confronted with the new research many scholars are reconsidering authenticity and how it relates to those in authority. These scholars are rejecting the concept of authenticity as a quality and embracing authenticity as a process one chooses.²¹³ “We see authenticity as a creative project, one where we strive to create a life imbued with the process of trying to live in an authentic way.”²¹⁴ Freeman and Auster continue, “Being conscious of that freedom when choosing to realize a particular project is the real meaning of authenticity.” As a result some researchers have come to redefine the

authentic leaders as those who know who they are and what they believe in; display transparency and consistency among their values, ethical reasoning, and actions; focus on developing positive psychological states such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves and their associates; and are widely known and respected for their integrity.²¹⁵

It appears a new way of explaining authenticity may be beneficial as three aspects emerge from the review of the literature.

Existentialism and Aspects of Authenticity

The Situation

Authenticity is not perceived in a vacuum. Authenticity transcends cultures, belongs to groups and individuals,²¹⁶ and is ontological,²¹⁷ but despite its paradoxical connection to and transcendence of this world, it can still be grasped as a singularity

²¹³ Freeman, 19.

²¹⁴ Freeman, 16.

²¹⁵ Susan Skjei, “Leaders’ Lived Experience of Authentic Moments (Chapter Ten),” *Leading with Spirit, Presence, and Authenticity: A Volume in the International Leadership Association Series Building Leadership Bridges*, Kathryn Goldman Schuyler (ed) (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central), 213.

²¹⁶ Pierce, “Authentic Identities,” 436.

²¹⁷ Farahmandfar, “To Thine Own Self Be True,” 26.

lending itself to the phenomenological project. This getting to the “heart of things” is called the “kairos moment” by phenomenologist Max Van Manen.²¹⁸ Every moment that provokes this intuition or feeling of authenticity involves the situation one finds themselves in. These situations are sometimes called “trigger events.” These events happen in a place and are perceived through a subcultural lens, which is eventually interpreted in contrast to the follower’s own history and past experiences all of which encompass an individual’s worldview and life.

This same understanding plays out in both the modern and ancient use of ‘authenticity’ since it pertains to the context as well as the players in that world or situation. The experiences and situation create trust. For this reason, Cicero “trusts” the news of Pompey’s invasion of Germany based upon authority. We see this same trust played out in other scientific studies as “the favorability of follower impressions of a leader is positively related to follower’s trust in the leader.”²¹⁹ As the study continues it becomes apparent that the situation is more and more prominent in the perception and application of authentic leadership and that this trust is situationally dependent.

This existential nature of authenticity becomes apparent as researchers argue the perception of authenticity in the follower and the feeling of being authentic in the leader themselves are both partially dependent upon the situation as “context is domain specific”

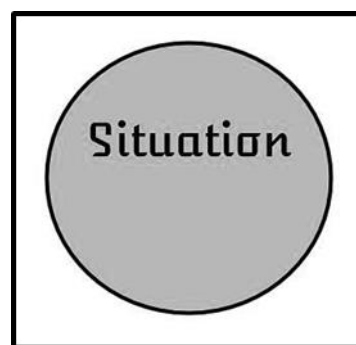


Figure 1. The Situation

²¹⁸ Van Manen, “Phenomenology in Its Original Sense,” 822.

²¹⁹ Gardner, “Emotional Labor and Leadership,” 472

(Figure 1). Therefore, all studies of authenticity (including studies of leadership) must take into consideration the situation since a leader must be able “to accurately gauge the emotional norms of the situation” in order to act authentically.²²⁰ Authenticity must embrace and act within the confines of the world in which the leader and their followers live, otherwise the action could be misconstrued as “phony,” “inauthentic,” “hypocritical,” “disingenuous,” and or lacking sincerity.²²¹ The situation provides the background, foreground, and stage for all events and this aspect of existential nature of authenticity extends to the role of a leader as well.

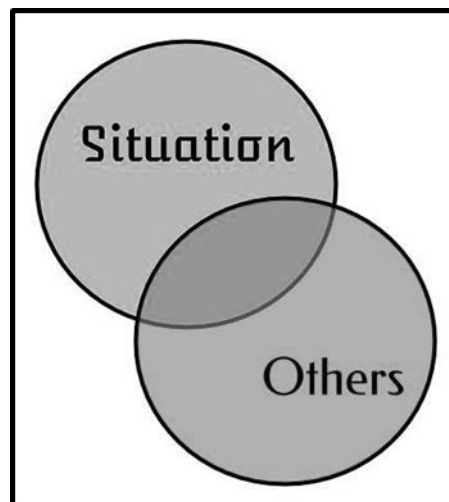


Figure 2. The Situation and Others

The Other

As an endeavor, authentic leadership must understand perceptions and judgments as being considered “arrogant,” “humble,” or “confident” only have value in the face of others without which there would be nothing to be arrogant, humble, or confident about. Therefore, the self and the Other provide the content and the world (or situation) provides the context.²²² Such concepts lack meaning outside of an Other to reflect the action back on, a rejection of this can result in “social atomism.” A rejection of the Other can drive one to become “more entrenched” in an instrumental stance resulting in an

²²⁰ Gardner, “Emotional Labor and Leadership,” 472.

²²¹ Gardner, 467.

²²² Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 49.

anthropocentrism, which creates a moral nihilism where the Other becomes an object; a means to an end.²²³ Any denial of the Other results in a “fragmentation” of identity, which can cause the destruction of sympathy and the creation of selfishness.²²⁴ As such, if the action is perceived as negative or “phony,” the action is deemed to be *inauthentic* (Figure 2). This would go against one’s own authenticity as William Gardner explained. “We call individuals authentic leaders who are not only true to themselves, but lead others by helping them to likewise achieve authenticity.”²²⁵

As a result of this raw potentiality, with the Other also comes the possibility of doubt,²²⁶ anxiety,²²⁷ and shame.²²⁸ For this reason, the Other is an inevitability which must be considered. As the Other is here to stay, “life can seem easier if you reject morality,” but to do so is to not live authentically.²²⁹ Though the Other will at times be embraced and at other times tolerated, it is undeniable that each individual must accept their ethical commitment to the Other if they are to be an authentic leader. Ethics are essential to authenticity.

²²³ Taylor, 59-6.

²²⁴ Taylor, 113.

²²⁵ William L. Gardner, Bruce J. Avolio, Fred Luthans, Douglas R. May, and Fred Walumbwa. “Can You See the Real Me? A Self-based Model of Authentic Leader and Follower Development.” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005): 344.

²²⁶ Benjamin Young, “A Qualitative Study of Doubt in the Evangelical Tradition,” DMin Thesis, Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, 2015. Accessed March 21, 2018. CLIC Thesis (9910123312903692).

Leo Tolstoy and Jane Kentish, *A Confession and Other Religious Writings* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1987), 118.

²²⁷ David E. Roberts, *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), 46-47.

²²⁸ Lewis B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don’t Deserve* (Harper San Francisco, 1993), 17-27.

²²⁹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 57.

With the Other ethics comes into view,²³⁰ opening up the mind of the individual to a realm of metaphysical commitments they did not consider before the encounter with the Other. Through the advancement of modern research, in conjunction with ancient understandings of leadership considered earlier, it seems this ethical consideration and commitment to others should be the driving force which guides the lives, words, and actions of leaders. As leaders lead others, authentic leadership must include taking this call to the Other seriously.

This is because the Other and the self are both equally involved in the authentic moment and its interpretation, therefore ethics must also be considered when determining an action to be authentic.²³¹ For this reason, a negative evaluation or condemnation of the Other will only be usurped if the need for ethical justice is higher, which is a transcendent quality. Based upon this, extremes such as allowing one's self to be harmed or harming another can actually be deemed authentic (seen as self-sacrifice or self-defense) despite the harm to the self or the Other. Paul Tillich explains that even godly attributes such as mercy (denying your own right to justice) can drive someone to be a criminal if not done correctly.²³² In this way, authenticity is deeper than mere actions and therefore an emergent and transcendent property, which coexists with ethics.

As a transcendent property, authenticity must not be an ideal hidden within the essence of a thing, but rather an ideal found above and beyond the object as authenticity is a raw potentiality contained within the ontological commitments which pertain to the

²³⁰ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 50.

²³¹ Frunza, "Seeking Meaning, Living Authenticity and Leadership," 29.

²³² Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 13-14.

self, the Other, and the situation they find themselves in. In the case of human authenticity, the self and Other can make a comparison to this ideal and judge its credibility based upon the “original way of being human.”²³³ This decision to pursue authenticity therefore finds its basis in all ethical responsibility because one’s freedom is one’s transcendence (i.e. “the ghost in the machine”).²³⁴ Inevitably, authenticity is not a state of being, but rather an all-encompassing human endeavor. Since all truth follows from the existence of the thing itself,²³⁵ authenticity becomes the ontological pursuit of the human essence and that which it “images,” which must incorporate one’s metaphysic. According to this understanding, authenticity is found in those fleeting moments when the situation, the Other, and the self align for the same purpose and with the same meaning.

Bill George’s experience can testify to the importance of the Other. During an interview, George explained that his selfish ambition had limited him even as a college student. It was a few of his fraternity brothers who finally let him know that no one wanted to follow a “self-centered” leader and that he needed to “pay more attention to others.” He eventually applied this wisdom to his business acumen changing his focus from shareholder happiness to customer needs and employee satisfaction. Embracing the Other made all the difference with George going so far as to call ambition and ego a

²³³ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 61.

²³⁴ Michael S. Gazzianiga and Megan Steven, *Neuroscience and the Law: Brain, Mind, and the Scales of Justice* (New York, NY: Dana Press, 2005), 52-54.

²³⁵ Jacques Maritain and Galantiere Lewis, *Existence and the Existent* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1956), 20-21.

“demon I’ve struggled with throughout my career.”²³⁶ He actually began to listen to the hourly-wage employee on the floor, and this changed everything for him.

The Self

The self must live despite one’s limits. Authenticity demands individuals make free choices independent of outside pressures and anxiety, but such a course of action could be based in deception if insincere.²³⁷ Every individual must sincerely consider their responsibilities to the Other, which are part of one’s natural limits. This ethical commitment permeates the authentic decision because others can never be used as an end in themselves as

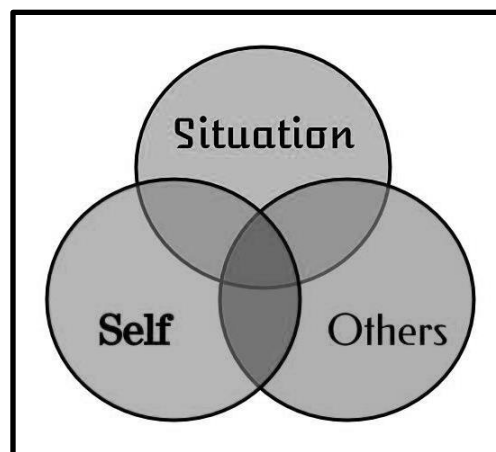


Figure 3. The Situation, Self, and Others

such an action negates the authentic human aspect of a choice, being that all human beings are equally human ontologically. To deny human equality, at least in the sense of being equally human, would be to live inauthentically because to do so would be to live a lie. Therefore the action must consider the Other before being executed.

In this understanding, authenticity must center itself between the poles of selfishness (treating others as objects) and martyrdom (treating self as an “object-for-others” as Sartre explains). Authentic action must seek equilibrium and strive to balance the ethical commitments which naturally occur. This is an ontological problem found in

²³⁶ Bill George, “Why it’s Hard to do what is Right,” *Fortune* 148 (6): 95-100.

²³⁷ Gardner, “Emotional Labor and Leadership,” 471.

all human agency. It is the struggle between love, justice, and power.²³⁸ When done authentically, such a struggle has been shown to create trust for both the self and the other. This balancing act within relationships is referred to as the “rhythm of rightness”²³⁹ as the power struggle between the self and Other is in a constant state of flux and realignment. When pursued, this leads to self-efficacy²⁴⁰ and humility (see figure 3).

As authenticity is a process without the luxury of measurable progress, this level of uncertainty needs to be approached with courage²⁴¹ providing the necessary limits, which keep “the human mind from voyaging into the delusion of omniscience”²⁴² which reinforces the humility needed to grow. One must make an effort to differentiate between one’s ideals and goals from that of the Other,²⁴³ while taking into consideration the Other’s own goals and ideals. The inability to know the difference can cause shame and hinder growth.²⁴⁴

The ideal is authenticity and the goal must be the more general concept of maturity and growth itself. The next question is to determine what the purpose of this growth must be. The only answer can be true, authentic humanness as defined by one’s metaphysic. Only in defining the goal as growth into essential humanness can one avoid

²³⁸ Tillich, *Love, Power, Justice*, 2.

²³⁹ Terry D. Hargrave and Franz Pfitzer, *Restoration Therapy: Understanding and Guiding Healing in Marriage and Family Therapy* (Brunner-Routledge, 2011), 37.

²⁴⁰ Albert Bandura. “Self-Efficacy Defined.” [www.uky.edu](http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/BanEncy.html).
<http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/BanEncy.html> (accessed July 1, 2018).

²⁴¹ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), 23.

²⁴² Friedman, “*A Failure of Nerve*,” 52.

²⁴³ Gardner, “Emotional Labor and Leadership,” 467.

²⁴⁴ Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 9-10.

the shame of mistakes while still embracing the confession and repentance necessary for progress as all such action “presupposes participation in something which transcends the self.”²⁴⁵ Paradoxically, the immediate acceptance of forgiveness for one’s self and the Other becomes a part of the journey as both the shame of guilt and the anger of revenge hinder progress.²⁴⁶ Choosing one’s course forces a change of perception and this transcendence is the only option.²⁴⁷ This daily struggle of choosing can reframe the journey of authenticity into a sense of adventure and excitement²⁴⁸ leaving the struggle of Sisyphus²⁴⁹ to be redefined as a journey of “self-discovery and artistic creation,”²⁵⁰ embodied in the pursuit of full human-hood.

As phenomenology is concerned with essences, it must be understood that to know an essence is to search for “that which a thing is,”²⁵¹ but because human authenticity is here defined as the pursuit of essential humanness, it does not come naturally. One’s own essence is perceived as a subject through one’s own consciousness, imposing a separation of objectivity dependent upon one’s own subjectivity,²⁵² but though this seems nebulous, research shows this is not a lost cause.

²⁴⁵ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 165.

²⁴⁶ Smedes, 135.

²⁴⁷ Marjorie Grene, “Authenticity: An Existential Virtue,” *Ethics*, Vol. LXII, July 1952, 266.

²⁴⁸ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 74.

Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 200.

²⁴⁹ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 64.

²⁵⁰ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 61.

²⁵¹ Maritain, 70.

²⁵² Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 76-77.

Through authenticity, humanity sees the kairos it is in as a struggle, but this perceived hell (Sartre) can be recaptured as an adventure (Tillich) if one embraces the pursuit of what it means to be fully human and one's own responsibility to the journey through one's metaphysic proving, once and for all, the importance of myth. In reference to the ethical standards found in leadership, Robert Greenleaf explained,

This self-respect and integrity, in turn, produces the ability to be both kind and courageous with other people-kind in showing a great respect and reverence for other people, their view, feelings, experiences, and convictions, but also courageous in expressing their own convictions without personal threat.²⁵³

This courage is essential to the process of becoming authentic²⁵⁴ and this perception of the world, be it hell or adventure, is dependent upon one's metaphysical commitments and worldview.

Which brings the study full circle to one of the original uses of ἀθεντικός; used in the positive sense it relays the authenticity of an original copy of an authoritative document.²⁵⁵ Just as Cicero's

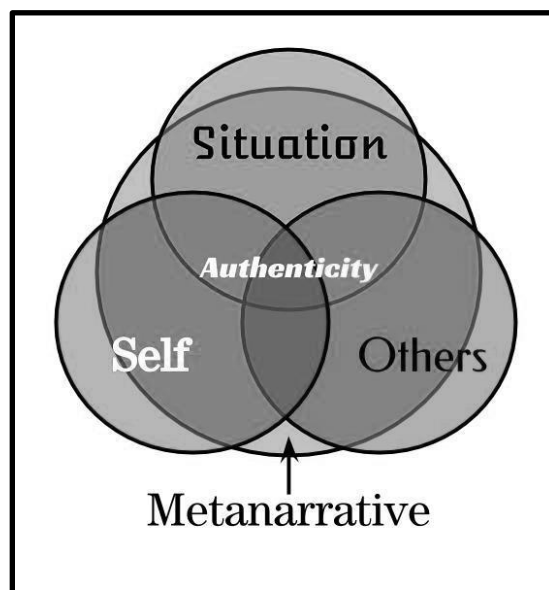


Figure 4. Existential Authenticity

news was only as valuable as the authority behind it, authenticity is only authentic by comparison to this archetype. In the same way, for Plato, all objects in the world were

²⁵³ Robert K. Greenleaf and Larry C. Spears, *Servant Leadership: a Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Paulist Press, 2002), loc 70-175.

²⁵⁴ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 139.

²⁵⁵ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 275.

seen to be only as “good” as they reflected the perfection of the forms.²⁵⁶ By analogy, a person is only authentic by comparison to what it means to be essentially human. As such, the essence of mankind is the goal and authenticity is measured by this ideal alone. All pursuit of this perfection begins with this image.

This pursuit is subjectively chosen (as a worldview), but can, by the above criteria, be objectively judged. For this reason, the authentic leader must act in such a way as to accurately and effectively meet the ethical requirements which pertain to the Other. Leaders must also live in such a way as to take into account the self and choose to proceed within the confines of the situation; all of which are guided and maintained within one’s metaphysic and metanarrative.

For example, a group of researchers performed a study of authenticity at six faith-based universities in the United States. They found they could predict the expectation of authentic leadership through measuring the responsibility, openness, and availability of several full-time employees. At the end of the study the researchers declared, “leaders in Christian higher education are expected to invest time in prayer, study of the Bible, and church communities...”²⁵⁷ But what the researchers failed to note was it is not that the university simply “expected” their employees to embody these activities, but rather these activities are the natural byproduct of a traditional Evangelical Christian metaphysic. One’s metaphysic is the foundation for the worldview which expects such conduct. The metaphysic establishes the expectations.

²⁵⁶ One does not need to ascribe to Platonism to understand the analogy.

²⁵⁷ Heidi R. Frederick, James A. “Andy” Wood, George R. “Bud” West, and Bruce E. Winston. “The Effect of the Accountability Variables of Responsibility, Openness, and Answerability on Authentic Leadership.” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 25, no. 3 (2016): 312.

Conclusion

Authentic leadership involves three existential aspects which must be explored: the self, the Other, and the situation. The self lives in its own context. It is confronted by the Other and the world (or situation) is the kairos of it all. Without the Other, authenticity is misunderstood as an individualism of self-fulfillment which is a shallow version of authenticity “sinking to the level of an axiom.”²⁵⁸ Such a proposition falls short of being a universal ideal for one to pursue.²⁵⁹ Also, without the world there is no context. Based on this research, a new understanding and model is needed.²⁶⁰ As a result of the biblical study and the literature review, this researcher believes authenticity is not just a quality or a process, but an emergent property that arises from the intersection of a human being’s existential journey towards full humanity and the application of the wisdom gleaned in the process all guided by one’s metaphysical commitments (see figure 4). It is deemed authentic since it brings consistency to all aspects of the leader’s life; who they are and who they believe they should be.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 17.

²⁵⁹ Taylor, 14-15.

²⁶⁰ Taylor, 48.

²⁶¹ Archibald D. Hart, *Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions*. (New York: W Pub. Group, 1989), 153.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONDUCTING A PHENOMENOLOGY

Introduction

The problem this project is addressing is the phenomenon of authentic leadership. The tools used by the researcher were personal interviews, phone conversations, field notes, audio recordings, a follow-up questionnaire, and observations. The primary data consisted of long distance phone interviews with individuals currently in positions of leadership. These interviews were normally conducted on a one-to-one basis but included one additional phone interview with a couple who had spent the past 25 years as missionaries in Mexico. They called from Guatemala.

Choosing a Methodology

Given the complexity of human perceptions, the researcher decided to follow a qualitative approach to gather and analyze the data. The original objective was to use a grounded theory with a plan to create a complete model of how an authentic leader should and would lead, but after consulting the writings of Edmund Husserl, Jean Paul Sartre, Rollo May, and reading *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* by Max van Manen, it became abundantly clear that the topic was too broad for such an endeavor. The topic of authenticity, by itself, has a varied past and is debated as the literary review testifies. After speaking with both the campus and on-site advisors, there was agreement; the original topic was too broad, this led the researcher to abandon the grounded theory. This led to the conclusion that the creation of a grounded theory and subsequent model be left to further research. Since the

researcher's training is in philosophy and "phenomenology is originally and essentially a philosophical discipline,"²⁶³ it was decided the only one reasonable choice was to continue the thesis by conducting a phenomenology.

It is the opinion of the researcher that a phenomenology is also a better choice as it transcends borders. As an existential endeavor, it "invites us to fashion a universal psychology of mankind,"²⁶⁴ and since leadership is a universal experience, it is necessary to search for an existential outlook because cultural mores change not just between nations, but between regions. This subjective and cultural aspect must also take into consideration the many subtle differences between subcultures within those regions. Through phenomenology's focus on the perception of authentic leadership one may be able to discern how to bring the "feeling" of authenticity to different cultures universally through an understanding of the perception of leadership rather than relying upon a westernized version based upon a pseudo-biblical business model.

Edmund Husserl wrote,

Pure phenomenology represents a field of neutral researches, in which several sciences have their roots. It is, on the one hand, an ancillary to psychology conceived as an empirical science. Proceeding in purely intuitive fashion, it analyses and describes in their essential generality--in the specific guise of a phenomenology of thought and knowledge the experiences of presentation, judgement and knowledge, experiences which, treated as classes of real events in the natural context of zoological reality, receive a scientific probing at the hands of empirical psychology. Phenomenology, on the other hand, lays bare the 'sources' from which the basic concepts and ideal laws of pure logic 'flow,' and back to which they must once more be traced, so as to give them all the 'clearness and distinctness' needed for an understanding, and for an epistemological critique, of pure logic.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 22.

²⁶⁴ Gordon Allport, "Comment on Earlier Chapters," in *Existential Psychology*, ed. Rollo May, (New York: Random House, 1969), 96.

²⁶⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations Vol 1*. Translator J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge,

For these reasons, a phenomenology best fits the project requirements.

Beginning a Phenomenology: Bracketing

As the researcher had decided to conduct a phenomenology, precautions were taken in the hopes that his own biases and preconceived notions would not infect the project. This is essential because phenomenology is not just philosophical; it also dives into the psychological realm.²⁶⁶ For this reason, it is necessary for researchers to take steps to distance one's own beliefs and feelings from the study itself as all studies find some grounding in one's culture. This is often referred to as bracketing. This is indispensable to the project because the goal of the phenomenology is to experience the phenomenon and not to simply observe it from one's own perspective.²⁶⁷ Mark Bevan explains, "Bracketing or abstention requires a researcher to become aware of his or her own natural attitude, immersion in their lifeworld, and how it is taken for granted."²⁶⁸ For this reason, the researcher took steps to remove his past experience from the equation.

As phenomenology deals with lived experience²⁶⁹ and is a philosophy without presuppositions,²⁷⁰ the researcher needed to struggle to leave aside what he thought he knew and listen to what was actually being said. This was done by following Paul Leedy's suggestions to

2001), xxiii.

²⁶⁶ Allport, "Comment on Earlier Chapters," 97.

²⁶⁷ May, *Existential Psychology*, 26.

²⁶⁸ Mark T. Bevan, "A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing," *Qualitative Health Research* 2014, Vol. 24(1): 138.

²⁶⁹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches*, 77.

²⁷⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches*, 78.

1. Identify statements that relate to the topic.
2. Group statements into “meaning units.”
3. Seek divergent perspectives.
4. Construct a composite.²⁷¹

By following this plan, the researcher hoped to securely set aside his own beliefs and to consider what was being said purely from the descriptions and stories given to him through the eyes, minds, words, and body language of the interviewees.

The Phenomenological Interviews

The method used in this phenomenology was privately executed and publicly recorded interviews. Eleven total interviews were conducted which is more than enough to establish a “heterogeneous group” as the recommended number, for a phenomenology, is between three to fifteen participants.²⁷² These consisted of a meeting between two people (an interviewer and interviewee), a conversation based upon the pre-written questionnaire, and a follow-up demographic survey with two additional questions pertaining to leadership.

As the interviewer is an instrument designed to listen and engage the speaker, the researcher also backed up the dialogue with the use of an audio recorder as well as note transcription to capture all statements. Though every word is important, phenomenology involves more than just listening. As Raúl Fernando Guerrero explained, “phenomenology seeks to apprehend the phenomenon itself, not information about the phenomenon. It is not an exploration of the actual consciousness of the experiences of a

²⁷¹ Leedy, *Practical Research*, 142.

²⁷² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 78.

person, but rather of the experience itself.”²⁷³ With this in mind, the researcher tried to pay special attention to not just what was said, but how the answers were given.

In preparation for each meeting, the interviewer wore similar clothes, positioned himself in such a way as to listen well, and followed a script to remain consistent throughout the interviews and study. The researcher practiced active listening by asking further questions to follow up on the answers received. This method was followed after Ken Blanchard’s famous EAR model: Explore, Acknowledge, and Respond. This included repeating back the answers to the interviewee in an attempt to fully understand what the speaker meant. This also included stating the answers back using different words to allow the speaker to better articulate their point and for the interviewee to have the opportunity to correct the researcher’s understanding of the story. The conversation followed the script below which were often repeated verbatim. Notes were taken during the interviews and additional transcripts were created. The interviews lasted around one hour, not including the time it took for the follow-up surveys to be filled out by the interviewee.

The Questionnaire

The questions consisted of a set of established requests and questions to create a consistent interview process. These requests and question were,

1. I want you to imagine a leader who you would consider to be authentic or genuine.
2. Can you think of a specific event where you experienced this person leading extremely well?
3. Can you describe the circumstances surrounding that event?

²⁷³ Guerrero-Castañeda, “Characteristics of the Phenomenological Interview in Nursing Research,” 3.

4. How did it make you feel having experienced this event?
5. What was the aftermath of the event?
6. Are there any other times that come to mind?

The interviews and conversations led to the addition of two extra questions:

7. Within your family of origin, have you ever felt this way?
8. Have you ever served under someone who was right for the time?

As people would often struggle to articulate their feelings in the moment, this led them to rely on past experiences to explain what they felt like. These additional questions were the result of considering the answers that multiple interviewees gave by analogy.

For example, in the instance of question #7 about “one’s family of origin,” several interviewees compared the feeling of authentic leadership to family events from their past, this was also followed by the use of familial language in reference to the group or organization the leader belonged to. This led to the creation of question #7. Question #8 followed from several stories of leadership done well, but after follow up questions were asked, it came to light that some of these leaders eventually failed or left when the job or situation changed. Both follow up questions confirmed what was found in previous studies that (a) there is a familial feeling or connection (i.e. a sense of trust) to authenticity and (b) leadership is often situational.

When an interviewee was struggling to think of a specific leader, the researcher offered the idea of thinking about a time when “conflict was done well.” This suggestion came from Rollo May’s stance on authenticity and conflict. He wrote,

The existential approach is the achieving of individuality not by by-passing or avoiding the conflicting realities of the world in which we immediately find ourselves—for us, the Western world—but by confronting these conflicts directly

and, *through* the meeting of them, achieving one's individuality (italics original).²⁷⁴

As the existentialists argue, conflict is often the catalyst for testing one's mettle.

Abraham Maslow explained, becoming an authentic person "implies that such a person, by virtue of what he has become, assumes a new relation to society and, indeed, to society in general. He transcends his culture."²⁷⁵ Regardless, even in the cases where there was no prompting, without exception, all the leadership stories were the result of witnessed conflict.

Though unplanned, this was not shocking since the courage to do what needs to be done is often what separates the leader from the follower. Maslow continued, "The existentialist's study of the authentic person and of authentic living helps to throw this general phoniness, this living by illusions and by fear, into a harsh, clear light which reveals it clearly as sickness even though widely shared."²⁷⁶ Such struggle in the face of harsh conflict is often the topic of choice for the therapist since traumatic events have the most potential to "stick in one's mind" since they leave a lasting impression. As a result, conflict was the most easily recalled event for those trying to come up with examples of quality leadership in action.

In addition to bracketing and preparing a written transcript, the researcher wanted to be an active listener so he paid special attention to his own well-being. This has been found to increase one's ability to be attentive while conducting a phenomenology.²⁷⁷ This

²⁷⁴ May, *Existential Psychology*, 51.

²⁷⁵ Abraham H. Maslow, "Existential Psychology—What's in it for Us?," in *Existential Psychology*, ed. Rollo May, (New York: Random House, 1969), 55.

²⁷⁶ Maslow, "Existential Psychology—What's in it for Us?," 60.

²⁷⁷ Guerrero-Castañeda, "Characteristics of the Phenomenological Interview in Nursing

included getting adequate sleep and eating well. In addition to attempting to appear to be as professional as possible, the locations for the interviews (conducted in person) were visited prior to the meeting to ensure conversations would be easy, comfortable, and confidential. This attention to detail required one meeting to move locations because the venue had a problem with its heating system resulting in a less than comfortable 60 degree seating area. The meeting was moved and the interview was successful.

Breakdown of Significant Statements

Through the description found in John Creswell's *Qualitative Inquiry* and notes taken from *Phenomenology of Practice* by Max van Manen, the researcher planned on following several specific steps to ensure a quality result for the study. Upon completing the interviews the researcher began by attempting to understand the experience of authenticity from the perspective of the interviewees by following these steps.

1. Following the interview, the researcher will develop a list of "significant statements...treating each statement as having equal worth."²⁷⁸
2. The researcher will next group these statements "into larger units of information, called 'meaning units' or themes."²⁷⁹
3. The researcher will follow this analysis with a description of the "what" of the experience according to the descriptions given by the participants.²⁸⁰
4. The researcher will follow this "what" with a description of "how" the experience happened to establish the structure of the situations, which housed the experience of this phenomenon.
5. Finally, the researcher will bring the analysis to fruition by attempting to describe the phenomenon in its situation, all the while planning to relay its

Research," 3.

²⁷⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 193.

²⁷⁹ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 27.

²⁸⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 89.

essence to the reader.²⁸¹

Once the initial interviews were conducted and surveys were taken, these steps were followed by a rigorous study and breakdown of the significant statements, which involved a process called “coding.” The purpose of coding is to reduce the phenomenon down to its most basic elements. When coding is finished the researcher can see the value of choosing to conduct a phenomenology. “The rewards phenomenology offers are the moments of ‘seeing meaning’ or ‘in-seeing’ into ‘the heart of things,’”²⁸³ but the validation for trusting this information is found in the analysis of the research.²⁸⁴ This validation comes through identifying significant statements.

Significant statements are those which are seen to unite the content of the interviews. These are words, phrases, and ideas which unify the varied narratives of the different individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon. Identifying significant statements allows the researcher to begin the process of further reducing the interviews, questions, and content into themes.

Themes are more specific chunks of information which are found to repeat themselves among those who have experienced a specific phenomenon. These are reduced ideas and feelings (often simply a word or phrase) which are found in the stories of different individuals who have no connection or relationship to one another. Since there was no connection or relationship between the interviewees, once discovered, these themes are more than likely (or possibly) the underpinning universal aspects of a given experience. Before moving forward, it must be understood that “empirical generalization

²⁸¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 193.

²⁸³ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 68.

²⁸⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 259.

is not the aim of phenomenological research.”²⁸⁵ The purpose is not generalization and description, but discerning an essence. When these themes were solidified and analyzed one could finally come to help others grasp the essence of the experience itself.

Conclusion

To conclude, a phenomenology best fits the skills and experience of the researcher as well as the project topic itself. This form of study lent itself to discerning the essential nature of authentic leadership as the understanding of experiencing an authentic anything, let alone a “leader,” is existential. Finally, phenomenology provided the tools needed to accomplish the goals which were set at the beginning of this thesis and helped to establish the language and method needed to carry it out.

²⁸⁵ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 250.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to discern the ontological makeup of authentic leadership. This is why existentialism and its roots in phenomenology are the perfect soundboards for the discussion. Existentialism itself “is concerned with delineating authentic from inauthentic existence.”²⁸⁶ Considering the fact that phenomenology has no universal method²⁸⁷ and after taking Paul Leedy’s suggestions²⁸⁸ under consideration, in conjunction with Max Van Manen’s descriptions and methods found in multiple phenomenological papers, the researcher chose to follow the process below (Figure 5).

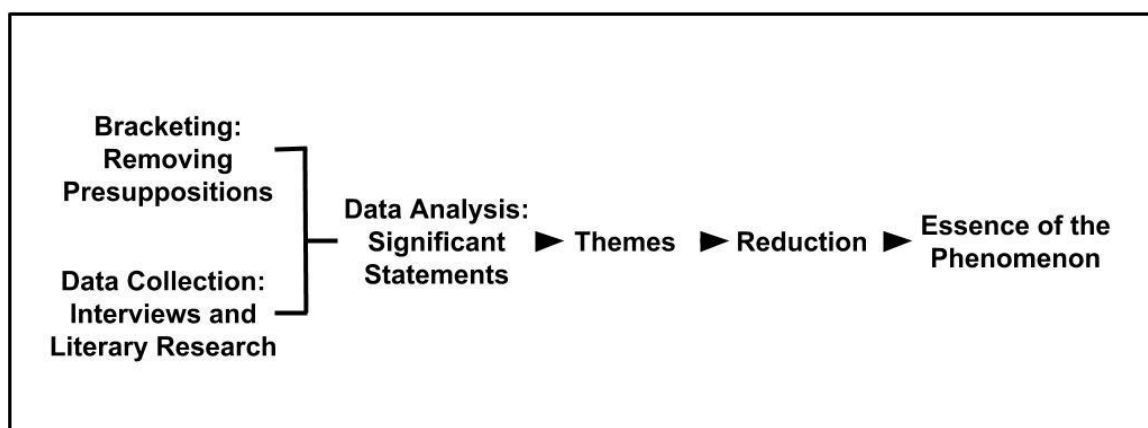


Figure 5. The Process of Bracketing

Each step was specifically chosen, designed, and developed with the goal of discerning a universal essence of authentic leadership. Since all scientific endeavors involve steps,

²⁸⁶ David F. Wells, *The Search for Salvation* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 76.

²⁸⁷ Bevan, “A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing,” 138.

²⁸⁸ Leedy, *Practical Research*, 142.

phenomenology begins with bracketing.

Bracketing

The purpose of bracketing is to remove one's own biases and preconceived notions. The goal is to set aside one's personal opinions and culture in order to achieve a pure and objective result. This is essential because if the phenomenology is done well, it will enable the leader to understand the experience of the phenomena as it was relayed by those who have experienced the phenomenon directly.²⁸⁹ Because most people “do not think about, or phenomenologically reflect on our experiences while we ‘live’ them,”²⁹⁰ most people allow their worldview or metanarrative to shape both their lived experience and their interpretations of their lived experience without their knowledge. For this reason, “phenomenology also reminds us that these constructions themselves are always in danger of becoming imperatives, rationalities, epistemologies, and ontologies that need to be bracketed, deconstructed, and substituted with more reflective portrayals.”²⁹¹ Bracketing is the process of intentionally removing one's own biases toward the topic at hand. For this reason, the researcher will give a brief breakdown of his experience of leadership.

The researcher has worked and served in some form of leadership or in some leadership capacity for over 20 years. These industries included working in a prefinishing factory, mowing lawns, managing prison inmates, supervising cashiers at a big box retail store, serving as a teaching assistant while studying as a graduate student and so on. The

²⁸⁹ May, *Existential Psychology*, 26.

²⁹⁰ Van Manen, “Phenomenology in Its Original Sense,” 811.

²⁹¹ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 13.

researcher has also taken classes on management through college as well as management and leadership training courses through various employers. The researcher has studied leadership, has been a leader, and has served under leaders.

This job history and experience has led the researcher to hold that leaders are often angry, passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and even lenient to a fault. He has seen supervisors receive awards of excellence and others get into fist fights with subordinates while on the job. Being called an “idiot” or seeing others called names and chastised publically was common. This varied and diverse background, combined with a family history of divorce, has left the researcher very confused as to what it means to be an authentic leader. With this bit of life experience, the researcher feels that leaders should be team players and yet be the obvious authority for the sake of accountability. He also feels that a leader should care about his or her followers and/or subordinates. Compassion and strength seem to be the words that come to mind.

The researcher must also admit that he has served in full-time ministry for the past ten years. This has definitely affected how he perceives leadership since his metanarrative is heavily based upon a Christian worldview and this presupposition infects all his perceptions and experience. For this reason, the researcher tends to filter his experiences through his particular biblical beliefs and he tends to think in terms of “Christ-like” leadership. He also strongly depends upon his particular theological presuppositions to fill in the blanks of his experience. This includes assuming that all people are sinners in need of a savior. These experiences also include serving in a non-denominational church, studying for his baccalaureate degree at a non-Christian state university, finishing his master’s degree at an Evangelical Free Seminary, and currently

serving as a Converge church pastor in Iowa City, Iowa.

In order to move forward, the researcher worked hard and struggled to ignore his presuppositions and worldview with the hope of being as objective as possible. This meant trying to even lay aside his Christian worldview for the sake of recording the experiences of others as they were given since several were non-Christians. Through research and study, he has found that the best ways to remove his own opinions from the equation were to approach the process outlined in figure 5 with no intentions or motives beyond understanding the experiences of others. This resulted in a literary review based upon a wide and robust level of research including divergent opinions as well as a broad study of the phenomenon of biblical leadership leaning towards a higher level of criticism. The researcher held back from hypothesizing results so that the study itself would guide the process. In this way, the research would provide a set of questions for his interviews, rather than his presuppositions guiding the conversations. He followed this with a consistent presentation and question-based process for each interview with a plan to not provoke a response that may inadvertently confirm his already ingrained presuppositions.

Delimitations

The interviews were conducted with these three intentional delimitations:

1. The research was limited to philosophical, theological, and psychological considerations.
2. The research was limited to English speakers.
3. The research was limited to individuals 20 years and older.

These limits were put in place to provide the most consistent and informed responses.

The first allowed for the use of the researcher's philosophical, theological, and

psychological training and provided the language needed to bring the study to fruition. The second ensured a clear response and adequate understanding of the answers given. The third was designed to provide the researcher with individuals who were more likely to have experienced the phenomenon in question.

Demographics

The demographic information was gathered through the follow-up questions.

1. What are the initials of your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
5. What state do you currently reside in?
6. What is your job role?
7. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?
8. What is your total household income?

For question one, the survey simply asked for initials in order to differentiate the surveys, this was an optional question which two of the interviewees chose to ignore. This left the list incomplete, but this was not necessary to the outcome of the project. The second question pertained to age (8.33% of the group were 25-34 year olds with the second smallest age range being 65+ at 16.67%). The rest of the age groups were distributed evenly with 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64 taking up 25% each. The third question was interested in gender with the group being split 75% to 25%; men to women.

The fourth question pertained to the interviewee's highest education level completed showing half of those interviewed had at least a graduate level of education. The fifth question asked about state of residence. The project consisted of two Floridians, five Iowans, one Minnesotan, one New Mexican, one South Carolinian, one

Wisconsinite, and one person from Illinois. The sixth question asked about job role or career. The seventh question was concerned with race/ethnicity. This was the weakest category as of the twelve interviewed only one was non-white. This was a disappointment because the goal was to have a more diverse response. Many people of different backgrounds and ethnicities were contacted, but it was these twelve who answered the call. Though the lack of racial diversity is unfortunate, nothing in the literature demanded a “diverse” grouping based upon race or ethnicity. Since the interviews are looking at the universal aspects of a phenomenon, race and ethnicity should have nothing to do with the experience itself. This was confirmed in the study because all the individual responses and experiences were consistent with the other interviewees.

The eighth question was concerned with income. These two questions were created before the research had been done with the goal of finding a more diverse study group, but as the research came to fruition, it was determined that income was also not a factor.

Interviews

There were a total of eleven interviews done with a total of twelve interviewees. Three were done in person, the remaining eight were conducted either via phone or a web service, and one was conducted with a married couple together. All the interviewees had a previous relationship with the researcher, but none of the interviewees were in positions of authority over the researcher nor were supervised by the researcher. Also, none of the interviewees were members of the researcher’s church.

The questions were determined based upon the literature review and research done, but none of the interviewees were given the questions or topic prior to the

interview. The interviews were conducted at varying times and in different locations based upon the preferences of the interviewee though when done in person the accommodations were vetted and assessed for efficiency and privacy in mind.

The interviews consisted of an informal greeting followed by an immediate introduction to the topic at hand to ensure the interviews could be conducted in a timely manner in order to respect the time of those being interviewed. All of the interviews began with the initial request, “I want you to imagine a leader who you would consider to be authentic or genuine.” This request was sometimes rephrased based upon the interviewees' questions concerning the purpose of the topic. Special attention was paid to not influence the answers.

When the interviewee said they were ready to answer they were asked, “Can you think of a specific event where you experienced this person leading extremely well?” The interviewee was instructed to describe this event in the form of a narrative by simply telling the researcher the story. All respondents were able to retell at least two separate stories for two separate individuals. These stories consisted of leadership seen from over, under, and from the side (see table 1); meaning that some stories pertained to leaders under the interviewee’s authority (under), some stories were experienced by the interviewee from a leader with authority over them (over), and one interviewee only retold the stories of two individuals whom he had simply witnessed leading well neither of which held any authority over the storyteller, nor were they under his authority in any way (from the side).

In the end, of the 23 stories told, sixteen stories were told about someone who was over the interviewee in authority either as a manager, boss, or pastor; four of the

narratives pertained to those individuals under the authority of the interviewee all of which were witnessed, by the interviewee, as “the boss” of the individual in question; while three were stories (from the side) were of people who “led well” and in these cases the interviewee had no prior relationship with nor authority over the leader in question.

Table 1. Interviewee relationship to the leader

Interviewee was Over the leader	Interviewee was Under the leader	Interviewee witnessed the event from the Side
4	16	3

All the events were witnessed and or personally experienced by the interviewees.

Once this question was answered, depending upon the depth of the story, the researcher followed up with the question, “Can you describe the circumstances surrounding that event?” This question was only asked if the individual did not provide adequate background for the researcher to understand the circumstances surrounding the event itself. The stories included overseas deployment for two Air Force officers, the reaction of one pastor to the discovery of adultery among his staff, the creation of a Bible camp, the oversight involved in an international organization, travel to Mexico, ministry in Chicago, the oversight of a women’s minister, and child molestation allegations to name a few. After asking clarifying questions, and when the researcher felt comfortable with his understanding of the situation surrounding the event, he moved on to ask, “How did it make you feel having experienced this event?”

This question was hard for several of the interviewees but is essential to grasping the existential experience inherent within a phenomenon. Some of the interviewees expressed concern over feelings being involved at all as one interviewee explained that leadership “should be emotionless.” Regardless, with some pushing and prodding, the

researcher was able to get everyone to describe their feelings. For those who struggled with their emotional vocabulary, the researcher received simple one word answers such as feeling “prepared,” “confident,” or “scared.”

Others used a plethora of words to describe their experience such as “thrilled,” “proud,” “pleased,” “comfortable,” and “pissed off.” Those more comfortable with speaking this way explained their feelings further by adding statements like, “he lowered my stress level,” “he took charge,” “she gave me hope for the future,” and “I felt like a person, not a member of an organization.” Without prompting, some used very descriptive analogies such as family, surfing, and sports. For example, when referring to leadership one interviewee responded, “All surfers get the same wave, but how you ride it is an art.” Still, others provided the long-term effect the leadership had on them stating things like his “fingerprints are now on me...his leadership is still affecting me.”

Following the consideration of emotions the interviewees were asked, “What was the aftermath of the event?” All but two individuals had included the repercussions of the event without being asked in their retelling of the event in question. These answers included several people being promoted, several being fired, some being moved to different positions, and one gentleman was even hired by the interviewee after having witnessed him (from the side) “taking charge” and “going up and above.” The aftermath of each event was varied as one would expect. The human experiences were as diverse as the lives of the individuals interviewed.

This question was followed with, “Are there any other times that come to mind?” This question was only asked if someone was unable to think of a second instance at the beginning of the interview. After being asked a second time, all the interviewees were

able to think of at least one additional instance. This question resulted in a better variety of stories.

After the first two interviews, two questions were added:

7. Within your family of origin, have you ever felt this same way?

8. Have you ever served under someone who was right for the time?

These questions were added because the first two interviewees made reference to their families while being interviewed despite not having been asked about their family of origin. It was interesting to the researcher that throughout the process, some, but not all, of the interviewees used familial language when describing a leader they had served under. Terms like “father-figure” and references to “trust” often had a family connection. Often interviewees referred to the organization they belonged to as a “family.”

One interviewee described her intimate connection to her superior by describing their brainstorming sessions as a “Vulcan mind-meld”²⁹² in order to showcase the closeness she felt. One interviewee made a direct link to his family by saying he saw this same type of “patience” displayed in his leader while growing up under the authority of his mother. He stated, “Mom taught me patience. Mom had a quiet confidence.” This was an unexpected turn for the researcher, but since the researcher was determined to follow the experience wherever it may lead, he added this question to accommodate the interviewees’ responses.

The second additional question was also surprising and unplanned. As the interviews progressed and the individuals were asked about the aftermath, it became clear that despite the perceived quality of the leader, often the leader was no longer in their

²⁹² This is a reference to the close relationship between Capt. Kirk and Dr. Spock from the TV series, Star Trek.

original position. One interviewee referred to his boss' leadership style as a "dictatorship." He explained, "His mentality was 'here is my foot and it will go up your ass if you don't do your job,' he was good for the time, but if you put that person into a different situation it would be a wrong way of leading." This interviewee explained that he followed the same dictator-style of leadership when he moved to a different state and took a new position. According to the story, months after applying this style of leadership, which provided great results for his previous employer, the interviewee realized very quickly that the leadership he admired in Wisconsin would not serve him well in Kentucky. He explained, "I got stuff done in a very efficient manner, but people were quitting." This resulted in him taking a training course on management and having to "evolve and adapt to the environment."

Over and over again individuals were relaying the update for their favored leader with the added bonus of many changing positions. When asked the follow-up question, "Have you served under someone who was right for a time?" One interviewee responded with a solid, "Absolutely." He followed this with an additional story explaining how a leader he worked with had been with the organization since its beginning, but as the group was achieving unexpected success this man, who was "great at his job" and someone "everyone loved," soon found himself let go. The interviewee explained, "the position was bigger than his gifts." It was understood that his "job outgrew him" and, despite having been a fabulous employee when the organization was in its infancy, he was no longer a good fit in its adulthood.

In yet another instance, another interviewee told the story of an organization which had been without a CEO for over a year. The leadership below the position were

trying their best, but without someone to “corral them and cast vision” there was a tangible “lack of unity.” A new leader was temporarily hired into the position to “build bridges,” “deal with specific conflicts,” and to “put out fires” all the while not “doing a major overhaul out of respect for the next person.” In this instance it was understood that his gifts and experience were what the organization needed to “right the ship,” but not what was needed for leading the entire organization long-term. The interviewee continued, “He lacked the vision casting for the role we needed, but he played the interim role very well and he stepped down very graciously when [the new CEO] was hired.”

This new question and its subsequent responses were unexpected by the researcher but was foretold in the literary review. This is exactly what one would expect if one were to take into consideration the importance of both the individual, those they lead, and the situation they are leading in. As the history of leadership entails a dependence upon the perceived authority of the leader, this perception cannot be removed from the situation itself, which determines the meaning and limits of that authority. This question seems to confirm the results found in the biblical and literary reviews which point to the idea that authentic leadership is an emergent property.

Significant Statements

Significant statements are those which are seen to unite the content of the interviews. These are words, phrases, and ideas which unify the varied narratives of the interviewees. Identifying significant statements allows the researcher to begin the process of further reducing the interviews, questions, and content into themes. For this process, the researcher consulted his field notes and interview manuscripts. The transcripts were produced using a program which analyzes the recordings taken during the interviews and

creating a pdf file. The transcribing program did an adequate job, but the researcher had to listen to several of the interviews over again to discern the discrepancies between his own notes and the transcript account.

Once the transcripts and field notes were compiled, compared, and combined, the researcher began the process of coding those notes looking for common statements and themes. This resulted in a stack of papers covered in markings and seemingly random notes, which led to four significant statements. This process is by definition sloppy, but effective as these notes were converted into an organized file with the interviewee's initials at the top (when available) in order to differentiate them.

This file condensed over 100 pages of notes and transcripts into a manageable 23-page document with each interviewee being separated by a divide and with descriptions arranged according to the newly discovered significant statements. As can be seen in figure 6, this process resulted in an easy to grasp compilation of thoughts and feelings surrounding the varied experiences of those interviewed.

A.E.			
Reputation/Attributes:	Conflict/Challenges:	Emotions:	Metanarrative/Myth:
“Reputation preceded him”	“Exacerbated”	“Relief”	“Christ-like”
“Honorable”	“Fatigued”	“Supported”	“I matter”
“Successful”	“Felt ill-equipped”	“Personally Cared for”	“Significant”
	“Overwhelmed”	“Honoring”	“Confirmed”

Figure 6. Condensed Significant Statement

Words which were repeated were condensed into one single word. For example, multiple uses of “honor,” “honoring,” and “honored” were reduced to “honor.”

Statements such as “I felt relieved,” “relief,” or “relieving” were reduced to the singular “relief.” Through the process of reduction the four categories appeared. This list included the reputation and/or attributes of the perceived leader, the feeling associated

with the conflict or challenges, the emotions that followed the lived experience of the leader, and an overarching sense of metanarrative, myth, story, or some form of transcendence felt by the follower.

Category 1 was found to be significant as many of the interviews intentionally featured statements concerning the reputation of the leader in question. Statements such as “his reputation precedes him,” everyone knows she is “honest,” he exudes “integrity,” and she was always a “good listener” were common. Those who were emotionally close to their leader were very quick to explain what a great man or woman he or she is or was. These interviewees very much wanted this conversation to include a thorough description of their leader’s integrity. The high level of respect was prevalent.

Category 2 was determined by the fact that every single story was based on some problem to be solved or some conflict to be dealt with. Such conflicts or problems were sometimes external or internal. Gossip, strife, or incompetence was a constant struggle for some, but in many instances the strife was caused by the leader. In these circumstances, the leader purposefully injected conflict and/or challenges into the life of the individual for their personal and professional growth.

Category 3 was chosen since the emotions were key to discerning a common thread throughout the many diverse stories. A regular smorgasbord of emotions were recorded. Most of the interviewees included similar responses with complete agreement. This list included being “supported” and “relieved” with “peace” topping the list.

Category 4 was an unexpected turn of events as transcendent language was often used and an overarching metanarrative was included in the description. For example, for those in some form of full-time Christian ministry, it was almost impossible for the

interviewee to describe the perceived authentic leader as anything other than “Christ-like.” Terms like “shepherding,” “our mission,” and “servant-leadership” were common among the self-identifying Christian interviewees. Similarly, transcendent language was used in the non-ministry related interviews as well with statements such as “he made me feel significant,” “I felt free to be real,” “she saw something in me I didn’t see,” and he gave me “hope for the future.” In the former and latter instances, even when ministry was not the context, the speaker couldn’t help but use language that involved the “mission” of the organization (metanarrative, story, myth) or the fact that this exceptional leader “saw something in me” (transcendence).

Though these significant statements were profound and enlightening, as each individual was compared to the others the reduction became more intense, narrow, and specific. These significant statements and stories began to reveal a deeper level of themes.

Identifying Themes

In this study, themes are more deeply distilled chunks of information which are found to repeat themselves among all of those who have experienced a specific phenomenon. These are significant statements further reduced into foundational or fundamental ideas, which were sometimes simply a word or phrase which described a feeling one had when they experienced a specific event or phenomena. The significant statements were taken from a wide range within four main subcategories and further reduced into three: (a) the feeling of being challenged, (b) emotions of fear and peace, and (c) one’s metanarrative and feeling of transcendence.

The first big reduction came with completely dropping the “integrity and/or

reputation of the leader” category. This may seem counterintuitive (and was a surprise to the researcher), but it necessarily follows from the interviews since there were constant contradictions between the stories of the interviewees. Several of the interviewees’ stories were in conflict and disagreement with one another as it pertained to the integrity of the leader. One person actually contradicted his own statement, claiming integrity was “essential” only to later contradict this view in retrospect as he reflected upon a leader he served under who had a bad reputation around his military base.

What the researcher came to find was that several of the perceived “authentic” leaders in question were actually known to be of “low-integrity” being described as an “asshole” and “rude.” These same “authentic” leaders were sometimes called “dictators” who were intent to “F’ you up” (original statement, not a paraphrase or censorship). One individual said they respected their leader, but “didn’t like him.” One interviewee confirmed the contradiction when he said at the very beginning of the interview, “If leadership has any value at all, it’s based upon a person’s integrity,” only to answer the final question (#8) with, “You can’t equate the character with leadership, because I have met awful people who were great leaders and great people who were awful leaders.”

It became abundantly clear that what a person thinks of someone personally does not determine whether or not they are perceived as an authentic leader. This was further confirmed as several stories were of leadership viewed from the side, which by definition had no previous relationship with those involved.

The second reduction was from “Conflict and Challenges” to simply “the feeling of being challenged.” Two separate interviews described their initial emotion toward their authentic leader as “pissed off.” Others, going for a more subtle approach, used adjectives

like “exacerbated,” “fatigued,” I felt “ill-equipped,” “overwhelmed,” “vulnerable,” “uncomfortable,” “awkward,” with some saying they felt “a lot of fear.” This was because in all the instances of conflict, the leader had either directly orchestrated the struggle or intentionally left the subordinate to struggle through the conflict. It became more and more obvious that those universally perceived as “authentic” leaders were causing quite a bit of stress to their followers.

In every story where the interviewee was under a leader, the follower (interviewee) was subject to some form of trauma, pressure, or conflict. In one instance the interviewee recalled his first boss putting him in charge of the whole store. This resulted in a sense of “fear” and “discomfort.” In another story, one man recalled how his 1st Sergeant set him in charge of a platoon of men, put them in the middle of a jungle to practice war games, and, unbeknownst to him, ordered two of his own men to refuse to comply to his command. This resulted in him feeling “pissed off.” Time and again, leaders were found to intentionally challenge their subordinates or followers. They would “intentionally” put the individual “in charge” of something, make them “uncomfortable,” allow them to be “vulnerable,” and let them work through the “fear,” despite expressing they felt “ill-equipped” or “scared.”

This was also true for those who were over the leader in question as the interviewee (now the leader) had purposefully put a subordinate leader (under them) into a position where they had to act in and live through a difficult situation. In one instance, the interviewee (leader over) forced the subordinate leader (under) to confront a situation that had arisen at their church. This was hard for the subordinate leader as the interviewee explained the subordinate leader was overly “kind” and a “people pleaser.” As a result,

the interviewee (leader over) refused to intervene on the subordinate leader's behalf, forcing a confrontation. Even in one of the instances of a sideways leader, the interviewee watched as the leader put pressure on a group of parents and students. In this instance, the leader intentionally "involved everyone" and "forced them out of their comfort zones." This leader "pissed off" the interviewee and made him feel "uncomfortable," but afterward he explained how this leader "helped him feel comfortable" and this made him "feel good."

Conclusions

The research data in this project came from interviews, field notes, surveys, and literary research. The data were broken down into significant statements and four main larger and broad themes were found. Through coding and reduction, these themes were broken down further into three specific categories. The selective reduction was the result of reading between the lines and slowly but surely bringing the thoughts of eleven different individuals into union with one another. This reduction resulted in three reduced categories:

- (A) the feeling of being challenged;
- (B) emotions of fear and peace;
- (C) one's metanarrative and feeling of transcendence.

The phenomenology served the researcher well as themes were found and an essence bubbled to the surface. It is the opinion of the researcher that the next steps toward grasping authentic leadership in its essence lay in the culmination of the literary review, biblical study, and the three reduced categories discovered through the interviews.

CHAPTER SIX: PAIN, PEACE, AND ONE'S METAPHYSIC

The problem this project addressed is the phenomenon of authentic leadership. In response, the researcher explored philosophy, researched a biblical phenomenology of authentic leadership, conducted a literature review of the current scholarship, and finished by conducting a new phenomenological research study with the intention of discerning the essence of authentic leadership. The project provided the researcher with a better grasp of the topic and allowed him to organize and distill the essence of what it means and feels like to experience authentic leadership. The conclusion to this study follows.

Discoveries from Theological Reflection and Literature Review

Conclusions from the Theological Reflection

The first subproblem was to conduct a biblical study to understand Scripture's view of authentic leadership. This led the researcher to learn several new ideas about leadership in reference to Scripture as well as in reference to business models, which are routinely used by churches across the globe. Through the study, the researcher was surprised by the debate among Christians about which leadership style was the most "biblical" with some simply rejecting the idea of any "biblical" model citing that all models are inherently cultural.²⁹³ Below are some of the highlights of what was learned with an application to follow.

²⁹³ Kessler, "Pitfalls in 'Biblical' Leadership," 2.

Authentic Leadership is a Human Problem

One of the most obvious issues to arise from the study was the ancient critique of leadership found in both the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the surrounding Greek and Roman culture as recorded in the poetry and plays of Aristophanes.

Woodhouse's comment that "leadership is as important in today's world as it has been in every society in every age"²⁹⁴ testifies to this. Such a statement means there is a universal need and drive to find authentic leaders and this need spans across cultures and time. It appears that there is a sense of "authentic leadership" which each human being is striving for and perceives, but it must be admitted that this authentic leader is shaped by the culture, position, and place. This discovery lends itself to the importance of conducting a phenomenology. This philosophical endeavor's sole purpose is to discern the essence of an experience and, if an intuitive essence is discovered, embrace it universally.²⁹⁵

There is No One Type of Leader

Scripture outlines several different types of leaders and describes many distinct roles one can play. This teaches that Christian leadership is more robust and complicated than simply "being a good leader." Knowing there is no exhaustive list of "spiritual gifts" in addition to the fact that different roles require different gifts makes the struggle for authentic leadership seem almost insurmountable and even "nebulous."²⁹⁶ The hard truth is different roles require different gifts, which means almost anyone could possibly be a leader if their gifts and roles aligned in a given situation.

²⁹⁴ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, 17.

²⁹⁵ Veatch, "The Truths of Metaphysics," 373.

²⁹⁶ Fetzer, *Leadership*, 1311.

There is No “How to” Book of Biblical Leadership

The almost countless mistakes that were made by the Christian leaders (even those in the “hall of faith” found in Hebrews 11) cannot be the ground of a study on the phenomenon of authentic leadership. The experiences described in Scripture are raw, trustworthy, and unfiltered, but are often retold not from the perspective of the players themselves. This can leave the scholar and student both at a loss as to how to correctly apply the Bible’s many commands and examples (both good and bad) to the everyday lives of people.

Despite the lack of a phenomenology, the Bible does provide the Christian with the archetype of a leader in the form of Jesus Christ. In Christ, the believer finds the embodiment of the type of “authority” found in the writings of Cicero as well as a foundation for the trust this level of authority naturally involves. This is no surprise since Scripture teaches Christ is the “author” and “source” of being and authenticity itself. It is no wonder that human “leaders” were rarely the heroes in Scripture as all such leadership inherently is flawed, showing Ecclesiastes,’ Aristophanes,’ and Shakespeare’s critiques to be warranted.

Three Theories of Leadership

The trait-based theory, situational approach, and its interactionist conglomeration all have their pros and cons; their limits and opportunities. The trait-based approach provides a biblical understanding of God’s many gifts given to humanity for the sake of its own growth and well-being. It is from God’s pure and unselfish love that men and women enjoy the abilities they so often take for granted, but this view is limited as was seen. The fact is, despite God’s many gifts, people fail and are moved from one role to

the next, often finding success in one situation only to find failure in the next.

For every King David, the modern historian can point to a Churchill. Each character in history has their own quirks and personality, but nonetheless many have shown the inability to thrive through the pressure of a changing world. It would be easy to simply blame sin, pride, and fame, but for many this was not the entire story since it was simply the situation which changed and presented the opportunity for sin to take hold. Despite these changing situations, sin is still the responsibility of the individual since the leader did not mature with their position. Though in such a situation the responsibility falls on the free-agent, this still implies that had David remained a prince in Saul's court he may very well have never sinned with Bathsheba and had WWII continued for another 25 years, Churchill may very well have died a hero to even his most staunch critics. The situation is absolutely a factor.

For these reasons, the situation presents itself as a strong contender for the mantle of determining the leader, but again this limited view fails the test as it was not able to take into consideration the gifts and freedom of the individuals involved. It blames the environment for the moral failures of the individual. It may not be the situation that is the problem, but rather the leader's lack of skills which may be to blame. For this reason, the military leader may need to change their tactics once entering the private sector or the pastor-turned-school-principal may need to adjust their servant-attitude if faced with disarming or killing an active shooter. The situation is no doubt a major aspect of authentic leadership, but the situation cannot be the deciding factor, which leaves a mix of the two.

Often referred to as the interactionist approach, this is where one's gifts and the

situation collide. This seems to ring true of Scripture because both the situation God puts one in, as well as the gifts God grants the individual, come together to create something unique and new. In this view, God is given all the glory because everything involved is God's doing.

In this case, it may very well be that the situation and one's experience activates the gift itself as William James explained,

Although the religious question is primarily a question of life, of living or not living in the higher union which opens itself to us as a gift, yet the spiritual excitement in which the gift appears a real one will often fail to be aroused in an individual until certain particular intellectual beliefs or ideas which, as we say, come home to him, are touched.²⁹⁷

In this scenario God gets the glory, but again this view is shallow since it lacks the very metanarrative the researcher must add to make it "biblical." In this case, the concept of God and his gifts must be inserted into the interactionist view to make it fit the "biblical" metaphysic.

Myth and Metaphysics

Throughout Chapter Two there are some major assumptions made because the Scripture is assumed into the models presented, rather than the models coming out of the text itself. This lacks the hermeneutical standards of the highest scholarship as it is by definition eisegesis. The models were created for businesses, not Christians. Of course, it is possible these models found their original inspiration in Scripture. It may very well be that the authors subconsciously had in mind their youth, sitting in a Sunday School class, learning about the exploits of Samson and the humility of Josiah, but this further proves the point that a metanarrative is essential to give any of these views meaning.

²⁹⁷ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (General Books, 2009), Loc 7074.

In this case, whether one adopts a materialist view wherein human existence came about by a series of accidents or the Buddhist's view which argues existence itself is a prison, one's metaphysic must be considered when determining what one perceives to be "authentic," therefore this makes the interactionist view a shallow husk of an opinion apart from the story into which it fits.

What about Servant-Leadership?

In servant-leadership, Jesus is the archetype and therefore the basis for the metaphysical commitments found in the gifts and situation. It is Jesus' love that guides the Christian leader. It is Christ's own servanthood that leads the leader to stay strong, toe the line, and stay the course. It is the image of Christ that the leader clings to for their solace, peace, and comfort. Such a leader, guided by the humility of a servant, has the potential to rise to any challenge. As earlier stated, not all agree.

The major flaw some see in Greenfield's Servant-Leadership paradigm is the very world in which it was created, a world filled with all manner of pain and misery. So corrupt is existence that the author of Ecclesiastes believed much of the work being done by man was designed to merely "keep them occupied" and simply "pursuit of the wind" (Ecc 1:12, 17). But despite its opponents, in the midst of a world deep in sin, the servant-leader can thrive. This is why Jesus took on many roles as there was an existential need for each in a given setting and given situation. Therefore, it is the belief of the researcher, the key component overlooked in such a critique of a servant-leadership model is the acceptance of freedom found in the transcendence of humanity. Freedom to choose leads a man or woman to take on the appropriate role or persona or set of skills needed depending upon the ethical considerations contained within an interaction with another.

Highlights from the Literature Review

The second subproblem was to conduct a literary review of authentic leadership from both philosophical and psychological research. This study led the researcher to consider the history of humanity's struggle with authentic leadership and the authority that naturally comes with it. As confirmed in the biblical study, all aspects of leadership have been found to be corruptible in all cultures and in all times. This potential led researchers to be able to calculate the probability of a leader being assassinated or at least attacked based purely on their style of leading.²⁹⁸ Assassinations and death threats were the results of perceived corruption, which entails the inherent authority and potential for manipulating others. This leads one to embrace the reality of leadership as inherently ethical.

Effects of Authentic Leadership

The first tested and verified effects of authentic leadership are found in the leader's ability to transfer their mood and or emotions onto their subordinates. This leadership increases stamina, responsibility, and effectiveness in several measurable areas. The opposite effects are also an inherent possibility. The effects do not end with the follower as the leader themselves receives back their own "felt authenticity," which increases their own abilities and sense of well-being or lack thereof.²⁹⁹ With psychological states like confidence, trust, resilience, optimism, and hope being the after-effects of experiencing authentic leadership, there is no doubt authenticity should be the goal of every leader.

²⁹⁸ Yammarino, "Assassination and Leadership," 823-825.

²⁹⁹ Gardner, "Emotional labor and leadership," 468.

Existentialism

It is the opinion of the researcher that existentialism offers the most gratifying study of authenticity because authenticity is and always has been an existential pursuit with authors such as Charles Taylor, Albert Camus, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard using existential categories and language throughout their studies and writings. Taylor, in his study of *The Ethics of Authenticity*, depended almost entirely on existential language.

Though some consider existential philosophy to be “nihilistic,”³⁰⁰ it is the researcher’s opinion this is not so as many Christians from Kierkegaard to Paul Tillich to Gabriel Marcel testified to the truth of existentialism and proudly held to and promoted their existential views. It is no wonder that existentialism finds a home in authenticity and biblical narrative as even Thomas Aquinas found solace in existentialist philosophy. E. L. Mascall wrote, “In St. Thomas...existentialism becomes the deliberately and consciously adopted guiding principle of Christian philosophy.”³⁰¹ Here, based upon his phenomenological project and following in the footsteps of Thomas, the researcher began to narrow his literature review and focus.

The Situation

The situation is a standard in existential philosophy. The situation (the *kairos*) is the moment in time in which every human being finds themselves; it is the playground of existence. It is in the situation that much of life has meaning and it is through repeated situations that trust is built. Therefore, authenticity (including authentic leadership) must take into consideration the situation as a leader must be able “to accurately gauge the

³⁰⁰ Barbara Helen Pell, *Faith and Fiction: a Theological Critique of the Narrative Strategies of Hugh MacLennan and Morley Callaghan*, (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 1.

³⁰¹ E.L. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy*, (London: Archon Books, 1967), 10.

emotional norms of the situation” in order to act authentically.³⁰² The situation is the stage on which the leader must play their role as Rollo May explained, “It is never possible to bypass the influence of the human person in a situation.”³⁰³ The situation is essential to humanity’s ability to lead.

The Other

The Other is yet another staple in existentialist theory. Speaking of shame, Sartre explains, “the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other.”³⁰⁴ Speaking of giving a gift, Gabriel Marcel explained “to give is to give to someone. Only a being can give to another being.”³⁰⁵ Leo Sweeney explains in his, *A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism*, that the concept of otherness is even essential to understanding the godhead.³⁰⁶ Kierkegaard goes a step further arguing that the Other is not just the harbinger of shame or the recipient of our giving, rather the Other is a necessary aspect of one’s own existence since love towards the Other is a duty everyone must embrace or deny.³⁰⁷ The Other is essential to one becoming their authentic self making the Other essential to one becoming an authentic leader.

³⁰² Gardner, “Emotional labor and leadership,” 472.

³⁰³ May, *Existential Psychology*, 38.

³⁰⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hazel Estella Barnes, *Being and Nothingness: a Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 222.

³⁰⁵ Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1984), 99.

³⁰⁶ Leo Sweeney, *A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 170-182.

³⁰⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 44.

The Self

The self is often the last portion of authenticity dealt with by existentialists as the self has no meaning without the Other and the situation which shapes it. Of course, this is not all the self is, but this is the life long struggle each self must embrace because the decision to either accept or reject the Other will determine one's ethical commitment. This affirmation of life is the defining moment for the existentialist. This can also be seen in Deuteronomy's demand to either choose life or death (Deu 30:15-20). Freedom is implied as one must choose, not just how to live, but what they will live for.

Martin Buber called it "affirmation of himself." He believed, "Man as man is an audacity of life, undetermined and unfixed; he therefore requires confirmation, and he can naturally only receive this as an individual man, in that others and he himself confirm him in his being-this-man."³⁰⁸ On the importance of self, Erich Fromm in his denial of both Nietzsche's "egotism" and the Kantian sense of duty, explained, "The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self." He adds, "Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others."³⁰⁹ The Other, often seen as a "foreigner" in the Old Testament, was to be pursued as an I for their own sake.³¹⁰ This was to be a free choice and based in love. This leads to the researcher's final conclusion.

³⁰⁸ Martin Buber, *Good and Evil: Images of Good and Evil*, (New York: Scribner, 1953), 136-137.

³⁰⁹ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: an Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), 123-129.

³¹⁰ See Appendix.

Freedom and Authenticity: the Process of Becoming More Human

Through the review, it became abundantly clear that no leader is ever perfectly authentic all the time in all situations.³¹¹ Since authenticity is dependent upon multiple factors, the researcher came to understand authenticity, of any kind, is a process. This is why, when confronted with the most recent research, many scholars are reconsidering authenticity and now rejecting authenticity simply as a quality and embracing it as process one chooses.³¹² As Robert Freeman and Ellen Auster explained, “We see authenticity as a creative project, one where we strive to create a life imbued with the process of trying to live in an authentic way.”³¹³ They continue by adding, “Being conscious of that freedom when choosing to realize a particular project is the real meaning of authenticity.” Rollo May would most likely concur as he believed, “The existential approach puts decision and will back into the center of the picture.”³¹⁴ This is the transcendence of humanity as one chooses to live despite the situation.

This ability to look down upon one’s own experience and choose was considered essential to the earliest philosophical writers as pre-Socratics such as Heraclitus explained “thinking is common to all,” believing the philosophers must choose to search out the truth, because “nature loves to hide.”³¹⁵ The Stoic philosopher Seneca explained, “We are all chained to Fortune. Some chains are golden and loose, some tight and of base

³¹¹ Gardner, “Can You See the Real Me?” 345.

³¹² Freeman, “Values, Authenticity, and Responsible Leadership,” 19.

³¹³ Freeman, 16.

³¹⁴ May, *Existential Psychology*, 43.

³¹⁵ Marc S. Cohen, Patricia Curd, C.D.C. Reeve (Eds), *Reading in Ancient Greek Philosophy*. 2nd ed, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 27-28.

metal; but what difference does it make?” He goes on to explain that despite fate, humans must still choose what they can. Seneca continues, “All life is bondage. Man must therefore habituate himself to his condition, complain of it as little as possible, and grasp whatever good lies within his reach.”³¹⁶ This is humanity’s freedom.

The ability to take into consideration one’s self, one’s relationship to the Other, and the situation itself are the stuff of philosophers since these concepts were discussed by Socrates, argued by Plato, and debated by the later empiricists and rationalists. C.S. Lewis explained, “What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to the experience.”³¹⁷ David W. Clark explained, “Philosophy clarifies the modes of reflection, and, as such, it is useful to theology.”³¹⁸ This drives home the realization that one’s metaphysical commitments can and do shape one’s perception of the world, therefore such commitments must be chosen, rather than simply adopted since they will inherently shape one’s perception and influence one’s decisions. This is a choice on the part of the individual.

Though some, like Bertrand Russell, held that the concept of free will is a religious idea often used to instill fear rather than freedom,³¹⁹ this does not change the importance of one’s ability to transcend their experience and choose. John Dewey strongly disagreed with Russell’s critique. He wrote, “It is, then, a sound instinct which identifies freedom with power to frame purposes and to execute or carry into effect

³¹⁶ Seneca, *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca: Essays and Letters of Seneca*, (London: The Norton Library, 1968), 93.

³¹⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 2.

³¹⁸ Clark, “A Preliminary Investigation and Critique of the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” 40.

³¹⁹ Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian: and other essays on religion and related subjects*, (New York: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1957), 39-41.

purposes so framed.” He explained that anyone who does not embrace their freedom is a slave.³²⁰ Noted atheist, Steven Pinker, concurs explaining that we all frame our experience through our worldview and this framing shapes our experience.³²¹ The question is, can someone get to the core and essential nature of an experience despite one’s worldview influencing them? Phenomenology says, yes. Transcendence of one’s worldview, though difficult, is possible.

This ability to transcend and consider outside influences is what separates humankind from the animals. Aristotle called human beings “rational animals” saying that the key to the virtues was the practice of justice, courage, and the like. It is only in choosing to practice that one becomes virtuous.³²² The biblical and literary review provides the culmination of this debate and establishes the importance of creating a model for understanding all aspects of authenticity in action if one is to attempt to be a part of the process of becoming authentic. This led to the creation of a model of authenticity proper (figure 4). Here the situation, Other, and self are seen to intersect with authenticity being the intersection of each aspect of the individual, but with the addition of the metanarrative or metaphysic as its guide. As this model reveals, it is only in the intersection of these three aspects, guided by one’s metaphysic, wherein the potential for authenticity emerges.

Max Van Manen explains the importance of models. He wrote,

Models are like phenomenological examples. So, to reflect in a hermeneutic

³²⁰ John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 67.

³²¹ Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*, (New York: Viking, 2007), 260-261.

³²² Aristotle, James Alexander, Kerr Thomson, Hugh Tredennick, and Jonathan Barnes. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. London: Penguin Books, 2004, 31-38.

phenomenological manner on the meaning of some object is to examine it as an originary model. Some models are more appropriate or better suited to get at the originary meaning of objects. And so, models must be well chosen as interpretive examples because the essence of the object has to be in the model.³²³

Rollo May gives a real-life example of how the situation, Other, and self come together for the benefit of the patient. Arguing for this existential connection between the authentic therapist and patient he wrote,

This can be seen clearly in the relationship between a client and a therapist. The goal of the therapist is to enter the situation the client finds their self in and enter this story as an authentic self. The Other remains other, but an I and Thou relationship ensues as the Other is understood to be their own real self in this shared situation. It is only in this way that the client can ‘discover what is real in him.’³²⁴

Here one can grasp a real-life scenario wherein one might apply the above existential model and see authenticity as an emergent property, which rises up from the collision and conflict found in one’s everyday experience and existence.

Bringing Together the Field Research

The third subproblem was to conduct new phenomenological research to better understand authentic leadership as a phenomenon. Research was done and interviews were conducted. Through these interviews themes arose and through these themes an essence began to emerge.

Bracketing

The process of bracketing was difficult, but essential for the researcher to accomplish his goals. The removal, or at least the denial, of one’s own presuppositions is a laborious task as a researcher forces themselves to confront their past, deal with their own preconceived notions, and finally to deny all of this experience for the sole purpose of

³²³ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 186.

³²⁴ May, *Existential Psychology*, 88.

understanding, recording, embracing, studying, and analyzing the experience of another. The researcher had not reflected on the fact that much of his experience serving under leaders was unreliable at best and awful at worst. This left the researcher at a loss for words but may have been the best situation for someone to objectively grasp the experiences of others.

Interviews and Identifying Themes

After securing a “heterogeneous group” of individuals, the researcher took field notes, recorded the conversations, and later transcribed these interviews. Through the process of identifying significant statements these lengthy interviews were broken down into a manageable 23 pages of notes. These notes were further distilled and reduced from four significant statements down to three identifiable themes.

Feeling Challenged. The first theme was based upon the narrative and conversations involved. This feeling of “being challenged” was grounded in a number of stories wherein the individual was forced, by their leader, to either take on a task they felt ill-equipped for or by allowing them to deal with a difficult task that arose naturally. Though this “pissed off” several of the interviewees and made them feel “overwhelmed” this did not change the perception of the leader’s authenticity, rather it intensified it through the emotions experienced.

Emotions of Fear and Peace. It was through the “vulnerability,” “fatigue,” and “fear” of conflict that the interviewee began to learn to trust their leader and to trust themselves to get the job done. It is believed that this was an emotional transference felt between the leader and the follower. Since the leader not only expressed their trust by allowing the individual to suffer through the situation, they also showed this trust by

putting the follower in charge of a task they themselves felt “ill-equipped” to accomplish. It was through the authority and trust of the leader that the subordinate was able to appropriate this same sense of self-trust. In time, this sense of self-trust came to fruition by not only being given a difficult task but by conquering the conflict itself. This experience reinforced the trust in both themselves and the leader causing the experience to transcend its situation and enabling the follower to embrace the process of their own growth.

It was shortly after the fatigue and pain that the follower was flooded with emotions described as “relief,” “support,” “honor,” “significance,” and “peace.” It appears that through the trust of the leader and their own ability to lean on the leader’s authority, the follower was challenged, tested, and shaped through the process. This trigger event reinforces the trust for the leader as a repeatable event, which instills a sense of hope for the future, while simultaneously providing the subordinate with a sense of peace knowing they could most likely meet future challenges set before them. This peace and hope also provided the follower with a sense of honor and significance, which transcended the moment and infected all their future pursuits.

Metaphysics and Transcendence. The experience of authentic leadership in action provoked a strong sense of transcendence in all those involved making it a strong candidate for universal application. Several interviewees explained their leader “saw something in me I didn’t see” as they felt they were “confirmed” in what they were doing, declaring the leader’s “fingerprints are now on me...his leadership is still affecting me.” This transcendent language speaks to an intuition which is ineffable by bringing the supersensible world into the flesh-and-blood reality one lives in. This has always been the

work of the Christian as E. L. Mascall explained, “To combine transcendence and creation in one coherent system was the work of the great tradition of Christian philosophy.”³²⁵ As was explained earlier, authenticity is the goal of Christianity.

The interviewees believed and felt their leader was able to “see” invisible attributes within themselves and this led several to state this same leader was still having an effect on them today. In this case, without knowing it, the interviewees were explaining in some mysterious way this leader’s authenticity was capable of transcending time and space (despite distance, time, and even death). This feeling of transcendence came hand-in-hand with a sense of “significance,” a feeling that “what I do matters,” which came from the followers experience of feeling “free to be real,” “hope for the future,” and “the joy that comes from being a part of something bigger and participating in it.” The transcendence itself was not the key component, it appears that the necessary feelings are “validation,” “participation,” and a sense of “purpose” that comes from the transcendence itself.

Anecdotal Evidence

Phenomenologist Max Van Manen wrote, “Anecdotes recreate experiences, but now already in a transcended (focused, condensed, intensified, oriented, and narrative) form.” He continues, “Stories or anecdotes are so powerful, so effective, and so consequential in that they can explain things that resist straightforward explanation or conceptualization. Anecdotes bring things into nearness by contributing to the vividness and presence of an experience.”³⁴⁶ For this reason, the researcher believes, to get a full

³²⁵ Mascall, *Existence and Analogy*, 15.

³⁴⁶ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 250-251.

grasp of this concept, from a phenomenological perspective, one should consider a real-life example (story) of authentic leadership in action. As such an anecdote is not necessary to the research it is located in the Appendix. For those interested in a look at the application of such a model this may be helpful.

In the story, the reader will learn about the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and why the researcher considers him to be an authentic leader par excellence. Bonhoeffer's struggles with his seminary, Nazi Germany, and himself are described as the reader dives into a look at Bonhoeffer's legacy from the perspective of his commitment as a leader. It becomes clear from Bonhoeffer's own writings that the Other, the self, the situation, and a concrete dependence upon one's own metaphysics are necessary to authentic leadership. Fear and pain are considered and peace is the result. Detractors are listed and applications pertaining to ethics and hermeneutics are considered, but the judgment and conclusions of the paper, as well as its validity, are left to the reader.

Weaknesses and Strengths

At the beginning of this phenomenology, as instructed by Max Van Manen, the researcher intentionally aimed wide and asked open-ended questions. The purpose was for the study to be "generally broad and open ended so that the subject has sufficient opportunity to express his or her viewpoint extensively."³⁴⁷ Since phenomenology aims to understand phenomena as "a direct description of our experience as it is,"³⁴⁸ it is ever so important to bracket one's own beliefs away in order to grasp the experience of another without judgment or discrimination. For this reason, there are strengths and

³⁴⁷ Bevan, "A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing," 137.

³⁴⁸ James Ash, "Geography and Post-Phenomenology," *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 40(1) 48–66 (2016), 48.

weaknesses to conducting a phenomenology.

Weaknesses of the Project

The greatest weakness for such a study is, by definition, phenomenology's inability to provide the researcher with a tangible model for recreating the phenomena in question in order to explain it himself.³⁴⁹ This inevitably leaves every phenomenology waiting to find its fulfillment in the work of another. As this thesis ends, the researcher finds himself desperately wanting to continue on in the process, possibly to bring the study to fruition through a grounded study, but as the researcher learned, this would be limited. Through this study, the researcher learned that how a leader acts or how they are perceived does not necessarily relay whether or not that person is perceived as an authentic leader. The authentic leader must be experienced in the situation. No doubt, the authentic leader is born with specific gifts and able to hone those skills, yet any attempt at a grounded theory would only result in an American model, which would only hold for a specific group region or subculture, therefore one could comfortably create a model of authentic leadership for a specific field or place, but not for leadership as a whole.

For example, Valorie Nordbye claimed, "85 percent of Millennials prefer to work under a boss who practices a servant-leadership style."³⁵⁰ Such a statement would be more accurately stated as "85% of [American] millennials prefer to work under a boss who practices a servant-leadership style." This project has shown that, despite a theory being biblically sound, the perception of leadership is without a doubt cultural and situational.

³⁴⁹ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 27.

³⁵⁰ Valorie C. Nordbye, "Providing Relevant and Effective Leadership for Millennials," DMin Thesis Project, Bethel Theological Seminary (1991). 96

With a little digging one can uncover the fact that Nordbye's study consisted of 261 surveys with only 18 of those being those born outside the United States. This cultural element should be obvious as even these 18 were, without a doubt, were influenced by American culture since everyone interviewed was a current student in an American college.³⁵¹ Such studies are great for people trying to be the leaders that American millennials need, but such studies, though helpful, do not get to the heart of leadership. This phenomenology can only apophatically point out the flaws in other research and offer an overarching theme for future research. For this reason, part of phenomenology's greatest weakness is also its greatest strength.

Strengths of the Project

Phenomenology forces one to separate oneself from one's presuppositions including one's culture. "Critical self-questioning is a reflective process that remains self-conscious. Self-consciousness requires a critical view of bracketed knowledge that includes beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes that present themselves in relation to the phenomenon, and is maintained throughout the interview."³⁵² As a philosophical endeavor, phenomenology holds the promise of something deeper than American culture and something more profound than what can be listed in the latest business magazine.

Max Van Manen explained, "the phenomenologist is driven by a pathos to discern the primordial secrets of the living meanings of the human world."³⁵³ This is the greatest strength of a phenomenology; the ability to discern the essence of a phenomenon. It is the

³⁵¹ Nordbye, "Providing Relevant and Effective Leadership for Millennials," 84.

³⁵² Bevan, "A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing," 139.

³⁵³ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 17.

hope of this researcher that this study will equip leaders, across cultures, to study their own gifts, their own life, and their own situation to become the authentic leader God has called them to be.

In Conclusion: The Culmination of all the Research

The fourth subproblem was to analyze and distill the research in order to discern the essence of authentic leadership. It is the researcher's belief that the essence of authentic leadership is an existential experience consisting of trusting one's leader, being challenged, suffering through the fear of failure, experiencing the relief of success, followed by the peace that accompanies a deep sense of self-worth, an understanding of one's value to others, and embracing the feeling and knowledge of one's ability to overcome future situations.

As Machiavelli explained in *The Prince*, "it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, then to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."³⁵⁴ As such, leadership is difficult and painful at times but also ultimately a valuable and transcendent experience. As Andrew Pierce explained,

one's individual identity is constructed in large part by reference to the groups to which he or she belongs, and a group's identity is constructed by and through the contributions of its individual members. Thus individual and collective identity are mutually constitutive.³⁵⁵

Therefore, the authentic leader connects the individual to the big picture and the world at large giving an individual a sense of self-worth by forcing the follower, in their own freedom, to prove to themselves they not only have what it takes, but others need what

³⁵⁴ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (London: Arcturus, 2008), 32.

³⁵⁵ Andrew J. Pierce, "Authentic Identities," 442

they have to offer. This instills a transcendent sense of hope and peace as the individual struggles and succeeds knowing they are valued and trusted as an individual.

As can be seen in figure 4, when in alignment, the situation, self, and Other converge upon the individual's metanarrative potentially granting the follower a harmonious sense of peace and hope. The peace comes from this collision. This peace is preceded by an intense period of fear and angst. This pain, self-doubt, and internal struggle provoke a guttural feeling of dread and even hopelessness which is eventually overcome and conquered in the all-encompassing moment of excitement, courage, and peace.

Dread and pain are some of the feelings all people will eventually experience when they are confronted with either the possibility (or inevitability) of failure and or the realization of death itself. Failure itself is a picture of one's own impending death and instills in the soul a sense of one's limits. Death is every person's greatest fear because it is our ultimate and ever-present limit. Friedrich Nietzsche believed that "life is one long illness."³⁵⁶ William James wrote, "In short, life and its negation are beaten up inextricably together...the two are equally essential facts of existence; and all natural happiness thus seems infected with the contradiction."³⁵⁷ This paradox holds that pain is essential to growth and no peace comes without the potential for pain. One's metaphysic must answer the problem of pain and all such experiences have the potential to become authentic.

It seems humanity carries within itself this sense of two worlds; one of existence

³⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of Idols*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.

³⁵⁷ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 137.

and one of nothingness, which is simply the sense of being finite. Tillich says this experience of being finite is “carrying within one’s being the destiny not to be.”³⁵⁸ Sartre explained, “the true meaning of fear is apparent; it is a consciousness which, through magical behavior, aims at denying an object of the external world, and which will go so far as to annihilate itself in order to annihilate the object with it.”³⁵⁹ In authenticity, life and death are experienced through peace and pain.

The brilliance and power of authentic leadership is the ability to enable the follower to see meaning in the suffering³⁶⁰ and the potential for growth through pain. As Victor Frankl explained, “What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment.”³⁶¹ Since the experience is real and the situation possibly universal, this sense of trust in one’s self feels repeatable, creating hope for the future. This sense of accomplishment and self-trust intellectually is and emotionally feels repeatable granting an overarching holistic sense of hope despite the inevitability of future pain. This sense of hope is what follows from the sense of peace. Since peace is a fleeting experience, hope is the reminder that peace is always a possibility in the future.

A Biblical Twist on Leadership and Application

The world’s answer to the question of leadership must be different from the Christian’s as both are operating based upon two distinct and divergent metaphysics. As

³⁵⁸ Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 39.

³⁵⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, (New York: Carol Publishing Company, 1993), 64.

³⁶⁰ Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: an Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Beacon Press, 1962), 136.

³⁶¹ Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 131.

such, one's metaphysic impacts one's decisions because any worldview must be subjectively chosen and objectively embodied. This knowledge of and commitment to one's metaphysic is the ground of authenticity as it embraces life and even gives death meaning.

Authenticity³⁶² is fundamental to Christian faith because God is interested in authentic worship and sincere devotion (2 Cor. 2:9). It is in faith that "eternity meets time" and "God meets man in any human heart."³⁶³ Since one's identity is influenced by many factors (environment, biology, and one's own choices), any endeavor to ground one's faith is by definition an existential one. For this reason, a theology of authenticity is needed since one must choose to have a relationship with God and this choice entails an all-encompassing metaphysic. This means that one's relationship to one's God must define the individual as "putting on Christ" is a daily decision (Rom. 13:11). Also, it can be seen that participating in the kingdom of heaven is a lifelong endeavor.³⁶⁴

But how does one judge whether this "putting on Christ" is authentic? How does the leader know whether they are leading others into an authentic relationship with the savior? Wisdom texts deal with this question. The reader is told that each individual is to choose life over death. The Christian is also promised that, despite humanity's flaws, God's *telos* will ultimately come to fruition; *good* will be blessed and the *evil* will be punished. Regardless, this knowledge doesn't change the fact that life seems paradoxical because it often feels hopeless (Ecc. 2:14). When facing this paradox the struggle can

³⁶² Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age*. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 128.

³⁶³ Soren Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, (London: A. and C. Black Ltd., 1958), 61.

³⁶⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III 359.

drive even the most devout believer to wish they were never even born (Job 3:1-12). For this reason, the Christian often asks whether or not one can actually live an authentically biblical life. It is the opinion of the researcher that the answer is “yes” and leadership plays a key role.

To live authentically, partially, is a life given over to embracing the anxiety and the doubt that is a part of our essential being.³⁶⁵ Life is struggle, so the Christian must embrace this paradox and live in spite of their suffering.³⁶⁶ Entering into and participating in the kingdom of heaven is the solution. In God’s kingdom, the world, one’s neighbor, and one’s self are transformed and continually made new through participation in faith³⁶⁷ despite the pain of existence. The eschatological meaning this view affords gives purpose to life and this begins with leaders, their authority, and their power both of which are representations of God’s essential nature with Christ as the archetype.³⁶⁸

Leaders are those who choose to lead and such a choice has ramifications for those who follow. Leaders should lead by example; by not just teaching, but by choosing intentionally to establish purpose and encourage an understanding of meaning.³⁶⁹ As such, the only real choice is to live despite our situations, which implies courage, meaning, and purpose are paramount (1 Cor. 9:19-23) to effective leadership because most individuals adopt their purpose through the modeling of leaders. This relationship between the leader and the follower (leader and disciple) must also be chosen since the

³⁶⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II 73.

³⁶⁶ Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 136.

³⁶⁷ Tillich, III 140-142.

³⁶⁸ Tillich, III 385.

³⁶⁹ Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 153.

meaning and purpose must be intentionally embraced.

Through the interchange between the leader and the follower, trust is established, and the subjective nature of the leader's enthusiasm and excitement is appropriated by the follower.³⁷⁰ Studies on the transference of the leader's mood³⁷¹ and the adoption of passion by subordinates³⁷² support this view. Other studies also add answerability, accountability, and openness to authenticity,³⁷³ while often ignoring repentance is what gives these virtues their value.³⁷⁴ This is because the Christian view of repentance implies a life-long process of growth as many leadership scholars confirm. The leader and follower both matter in the equation since the leader is nothing without the follower and the follower needs the leader to grow.

Leadership is so essential to life that Jude warns his readers that leaders must be biblically vetted by their followers. He explains all believers must "contend for the faith" (Jude 3) because ungodly leaders can corrupt and destroy the church. Jude explains followers have just as much responsibility to choose who they follow as leaders have to lead with integrity. The reason is false leaders abound. Meaning and purpose can be manufactured, false, and ultimately meaningless, but despite their truth-value all such beliefs are put on like a garment (Gal. 3:27) eventually becoming a part of one's identity.

³⁷⁰ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, Loc 159-166.

³⁷¹ Thomas Sy, Stéphane Côté, and Richard Saavedra. "The Contagious Leader: Impact of the Leader's Mood on the Mood of Group Members, Group Affective Tone, and Group Processes." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, no. 2 (2005): 296.

³⁷² Cardon, "Is Passion Contagious? The Transference of Entrepreneurial Passion to Employees." 79.

³⁷³ Frederick, "The Effect of the Accountability Variables of Responsibility, Openness, and Answerability on Authentic Leadership," 305.

³⁷⁴ McBride, *The Church for the World*, 194.

The hope of this research is to help people see the need, recognize the possibilities, and to intentionally choose for themselves whom they will serve (Deut. 30:11-20, Josh. 24:14-15) since what metaphysic they will embrace and how they will lead is a matter of freedom. This is the groundwork for Christian authenticity and one's ethical commitments.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 27.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTIONS

Reflections on the Dissertation

As the biblical review revealed, leadership is diverse therefore the goal of the Christian should be discipleship, not basic leadership. All Christians are to lead. Throughout Scripture, the word “leader” is overwhelmingly used in reference to groups and mobs with a major emphasis on the negative effects they bring. Leaders stoning someone or working together to murder Jesus are just a few examples of “leaders” and their function in the New Testament. This project led the researcher to reconsider the role of leadership.

Through this phenomenology, it appears that leadership is not a gift someone is born with, but rather a leader is a person with the conviction to solve a problem and the courage to try. Though often assumed into the spiritual gifts lists found throughout the New Testament “leadership” is not listed and, it is the researcher’s opinion, the reason is that leading is an expectation for all. In verses like Romans 6:16, Christians are taught to understand they are all following and leading; they are either going down the path of sin or leading and following the road to righteousness. The sad reality is the Christian often rejects the reality of the subjective nature of life and the relative nature of one’s existence and perceptions unwilling to admit that human beings have a responsibility to not just follow, but to perceive the world correctly.

Second Corinthians 2:14-16 illustrates the subjectivity inherent in spiritual matters. Paul explains,

But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ and through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To some we are an aroma of death leading to death, but to others, an aroma of life leading to life. And who is competent for this?

This example expresses the deep understanding of the apostle Paul and the subjective nature of not just one's walk with Christ, but also the walk of those outside of God's kingdom. Both the self and Other matter.

When one witnesses the leadership, trust, perseverance, and courage found in a faith that cannot be shaken they ask themselves wherein lies that resolve; what makes that person different? The metanarrative, the way the path is perceived, matters. To some individuals the believer's life is a sacrifice to Christ, a sweet smelling aroma that fills the air and is palpable to those who experience a person's faith. They not only want to know more about this life, but they also want this experience to be their own. On the other hand, there are those who witness the same stamina and the same strength and they interpret this resolve as weakness. Whether weakness of mind or heart, it does not matter, the fact is that some groups reject the sweet smell of a life saved. Some experience the salvation of others as the pungent smell of death. Where the former takes in the fragrance as life-giving, the latter only sees pain and suffering. It is the responsibility of the leader to discern this image and to change to accommodate the culture and in doing so they "become all things to all men."

The subjective nature of life is key to understanding the rise and fall of leaders as each nation, subculture, and situation dictates who would be best perceived as an authentic leader. A set of steps to follow is inadequate. It seems that through the fall humanity lost their connection to their God and simultaneously gained the need for

leaders since our natures could not be trusted to self-regulate. The fall led to the need for governments, politics, and public policies all bent on helping its people progress with the underlying metaphysical presupposition that, if left to themselves, human beings would fall back into their animal nature or, in other words, their sin. Hobbes' Leviathan is just one example of this opinion.

This explains the discrepancies between cultures and the perception of one leader as weak within one role and the same leader, in another, having their bust cast in bronze. It appears that specific circumstances mixed with specific traits colliding with a specific upbringing mixed with a specific set of skills allowing for one to strive in times of war and fail in times of peace. This helps the leader understand how one person can lead a company to economic success in one market but bring it crashing down when they are unable to keep up with the inevitability of change. For this reason, the leader, a byproduct of the fall, is not special in and of themselves, but simply the right person at the right time.

The biblical metaphysic brings a new light to this equation because Christ's life and death was recorded, not just as a reminder of the Messiah, but as an example to follow. Christ is humanity's archetype.³⁷⁶ The life of Christ was put in place for the benefit of the Other, not his own. Christ's life and death, followed by the Holy Spirit, guides his followers. It is the purpose of the Spirit to lead and for the Christian to follow and lead others into an authentic relationship with their creator. I Timothy 5:1-2 illustrates this need to mutual submission as Paul wrote, "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and with all propriety, the younger women as sisters." Following and leading is an expectation for

³⁷⁶ Carl Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 9 (Part 2): Aion: Researches Into the Phenomenology of the Self*, (Princeton University Press, 2014) 37.

every believer.

Time and again believers are told (whether young or old, male or female) to respect and submit to one another. This mutual submission and focus on one's own repentance and forgiveness leads the believer to set aside the existential need to rule the Other in exchange for ruling one's own soul. As the church developed through the end of the 1st century there were clear cut roles such as elder and deacon, but in these roles the authors of the text shied away from calling them "leaders" preferring the description of shepherd and servant. It is understood that throughout the kingdom of God it is submission to the role, not the leader himself, which is emphasized since the individual is seen as a cog in the machine; very important, but also very dispensable as well.

This subjective status and humble stance allow for the person who leads to not take them self too seriously, knowing and embracing the fact they will someday be replaced. This sense of humility is what separates pride from hubris. David DeSteno explains, "pride is thought to have two forms: an authentic and a hubristic one."³⁷⁷ The point being the choice is up to the leader. This also teaches the leader to invest in themselves as God's (albeit temporary) person for this time and this place. This doesn't mean that leadership is a complete loss, but it does help one to know they must always grow and mature if they are to be effective as a leader.

The Impact of the Project on the Researcher

Authentic leadership is experienced only when a leader knows who they are, understands their responsibility to the Other, takes into account the situation they live in,

³⁷⁷ David Desteno, *Emotional Success: the Power of Gratitude, Compassion, and Pride* (New York: Mariner Books, 2019), Loc 1584.

and challenges their followers to grow (sometimes causing pain and fear). It seems the leader must not only embrace all three aspects of who they are but also must be intimately acquainted with the follower and their metaphysical commitments. This is because the concepts of “good” and “evil” often are more complicated than most are willing to admit. When struggle, growth, and success come together to create a sense of peace the experience of authentic leadership is the result and this is good, but this is counter-intuitive for some.

This denies Kant’s categorical imperative. According to this view, “good” is not contained within an action necessarily but in the all-encompassing truth behind the being of the person and the world itself. This ethic is ontological since it is based in the essence of being, but not deontological because it is not based upon the action. In this way, *good* is messier than one would like it to be. It is therefore objective as there is a truth to be had, but also subjective as one's actions are based on the perception of good because all people function based upon their own belief which is determined by one’s metaphysic. The struggle set in place by the leader must consider the follower and their abilities in order to produce the experience of authenticity taking into account the Other’s metaphysical commitments.

This has led the researcher to posit a theory of authentic leadership; it is this researcher’s belief that the experience and phenomena of authenticity is an emergent property contained within the intersection of the self, the Other, and the situation all being framed within one’s metaphysical commitments. For leadership to be authentic the leader must take these aspects into consideration, force the follower to struggle through what they feel and believe all the while supporting them through the process, which when

accomplished gives them a sense of peace. This view has led the researcher to reconsider much of his ministry and his current context.

Many ministers struggle to grow their churches, struggle to reach their goals and struggle to meet the needs of their families. If this theory is true, this means that many of these struggles may be beyond the minister's control. It may very well be that the place, the people, and the pastor do not match, despite the brilliance of the minister or the location of the facility. A church's lack of growth may not be a matter of drive or commitment or knowledge, but rather a matter of context. It may be that some ministers struggle in their current position because they are not the right pastor for the situation. They may be a great person, an amazing teacher, and they may serve the Lord faithfully, but they may not be who the situation needs or who the people need or both.

This is a hard truth. This means that some ministers may need to call it quits. Some clergy may need to move on for the sake of their ministries. There are some who just should not be in ministry at all, not that they are not faithful, but some of those in ministry may better serve the kingdom in a secular job or in the private sector. This also may mean that the congregation may be the problem for some pastors. Even the physical location may be to blame.

Rather than making the problem simpler, it is the opinion of the researcher, this study has multiplied the potential for confusion. This study has identified multiple facets to being an "authentic" leader all of which are equally capable of either growing or destroying one's potential. This is not necessarily a bad thing. This study may equip leaders to pinpoint the problem. This research may help leaders to better diagnose the issues and enable them to with a clear conscience identify what needs to be worked on in

their context. This may give some the ability to confront sin where it is and this may also help leaders reassess their effectiveness in an objective manner. This has definitely forced the researcher to reconsider his ministry.

As the study concludes, the researcher is going to have to make some hard decisions about his future. He is currently struggling to grow his congregation numerically and financially. Though the numbers are growing slowly, there may come a time in the next few years where he may need to reassess his choice of career. The researcher loves teaching and loves ministry, but is he the right man for the job? Is he the right person for this context, this place, this city, this ministry or would he better serve a different congregation or even in a different career completely?

Plato explained, “Knowledge has for its natural object the real—to know the truth and reality.”³⁷⁸ Before him Xenophanes taught, “By no means did the gods reveal all things to mortals from the beginning, but in time, by searching, they discover better.”³⁷⁹ Through this project the researcher has searched, learned, and grown; all that is left is to apply the wisdom acquired. Since all real philosophers have a passion to see, understand, and apply the truth,³⁸⁰ this phenomenologist has a lot of work ahead of him.

³⁷⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 183

³⁷⁹ The teaching of Xenophanes as recorded by Stobaeus.

Cohen, *Ancient Greek Philosophy*, 22.

³⁸⁰ Plato, 183.

APPENDIX

BONHOEFFER: AN EXAMPLE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Bonhoeffer was a real leader. He led with conviction and was willing to give his all for those he served. Early on in his ministry, he spoke out against the Nazi regime at a time when doing so meant possibly losing his position. Later he defied and fought against Hitler when being caught meant certain death. As a leader, he was as authentic as they come. He was not perfect, but in the end he was willing to not only strive for the truth; he was willing to die for others. There is much to learn from the leadership of Bonhoeffer and this phenomenology may help the reader to understand what it feels like to experience such leadership.

A phenomenology is designed to bring “all the living of life to meaningful expression.”³⁸¹ These phenomena and experiences, often beyond one’s own intention and consciousness, are based somewhere between emotion and intuition. As a result, through the ages, such experiences have often been explained through the mediums of song, story, myth, and poetry. Ancient barbs singing about the battles of kings to modern folk singers singing about the pain of loss; this is how the phenomenon is often understood. Authentic leadership is among these experiences and, as the reader will learn, the story of Bonhoeffer can give us a glimpse into what it feels like to experience authentic leadership.

Leadership and the Metanarrative of the Gospel

As a leader, Bonhoeffer began his ministry knowing he was sharing an amazing

³⁸¹ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 18.

gift with others. For this reason he taught that the pastor, the highest church leader, should present the gospel as a gift to be received. He would sometimes teach new pastors to look at their sermon as if they were presenting a child with a juicy red apple.³⁸³ The point is that the fruit of the gospel is and should be enticing, but it is more than just as a tasty treat, it must also edifying and spiritually nutritious. This gospel, like the apple, must be accepted as a gift and cannot be forced against another's will.³⁸⁴ Unlike a dictatorship, there can be no coercion for the believer; love does not force itself upon anyone.³⁸⁵ Love is a gift and Christian leaders are gift givers.

The knowledge of the gospel does not end there. The gospel is not just for you, but also for those around you.³⁸⁶ The Christian cannot forget God is not necessarily only for them and whatever they are doing; he is for others as well. The Christian can be wrong, often need correction, and sometimes need to be disciplined. As they grow in their faith, they must come to appreciate the gospel for more than its nourishment, but also for its correction. Inspired by Bonhoeffer's theology, Isabel Best wrote, "As Christians, we must read the Bible not only 'for' ourselves, for nourishment and encouragement, but also 'against' ourselves at times, to hear what God in Christ is really saying."³⁸⁷ Despite being "saved," the Christian still needs the gospel daily as repentance

³⁸³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Isabel Best, *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Vol 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), loc 34.

³⁸⁴ Bonhoeffer and Best, *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, loc 312.

³⁸⁵ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979), 105.

³⁸⁶ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 112.

³⁸⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, loc 290.

is a necessary part of one's growth and this growth affects others. It is not only about you.

The individualistic ideal teaches one's "faith is all about me." This view is a product of bad theology at best and plain old selfish pride at worst.³⁸⁸ Charles Taylor explains, "The dark side of individualism is a centering on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others or society."³⁸⁹ People sometimes forget they are responsible *to* others as well as themselves and this is a key to understanding biblical leadership.

In the story of Cain and Abel, God asked Cain where Abel is and Cain responds with a defiant, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The answer to what Cain believed to be a rhetorical question is "yes," but how did humanity lose its way? Bonhoeffer explains this as a matter of leaving aside the concrete reality of Christ (i.e. the gospel) in exchange for spiritualized idealistic universal morality.³⁹⁰ He preached, "We must end this audacious, sanctimonious spiritualization of the gospel ... millions have become estranged from the gospel for this reason!"³⁹¹

Best points out that, "Bonhoeffer realized that the church's message was no longer being taken seriously by much of the modern world, and was looking urgently for ways to communicate the gospel in a disillusioned and secularized society."³⁹² The leaders of the German church had come to teach an idealism rather than the risen Christ,

³⁸⁸ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 112.

³⁸⁹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 4.

³⁹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 35.

³⁹¹ Bonhoeffer, 37-38.

³⁹² Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 42.

which led to a rejection of the historicity of Scripture and later arguments for racial superiority.³⁹³ Similarly, Bonhoeffer was dealing with people hiding behind their idealism, pretending to be theological, all the while claiming to be enlightened. At one point, Bonhoeffer recounted his utter disgust when a class full of students began to laugh when the professor read from Luther's "Bondage of the Will." Charles Marsh explains, "The spectacle of an educated person taking seriously the ruminations of a neurotic sixteenth-century monk struck them as comic."³⁹⁴ Bonhoeffer was furious because the seminary and its leaders had "forgotten what Christian theology in its very essence stands for."³⁹⁵

Bonhoeffer believed that the congregations of the world should demand more from their leadership. Bonhoeffer explained, "There is really only one question for a congregation to ask of its pastor: Are you offering us the eternal word of God, the word of life, wherever you can, in the pulpit and in daily life? Or are you giving us stones instead of bread? Are you giving us placebos that are perhaps more pleasant to take but do not satisfy our souls?"³⁹⁶ Nietzsche agreed with this criticism.

Existential Critique and Influence

Through the teachings of Nietzsche and some of the early existentialists, it was understood religion was nothing more than a delusion or as Marx put it the "sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is

³⁹³ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, " 19.

³⁹⁴ Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 105.

³⁹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Vol 10* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 309-310.

³⁹⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 89.

the opium of the people.”³⁹⁷ Religion was considered to be an old standard set up by failing regimes bent on domination rather than enlightenment. According to Nietzsche, religion served a purpose for a time but had long since lost its meaning. As he understood it, religion’s sole purpose was to keep people from straying too far into the unknown and dangerous world. It also protected humanity from itself by installing a “god” with his morality and judgment. The all-seeing eye was designed as a deterrent against evil. With the dawn of science, Nietzsche believed, it was time for mankind to put aside such childish concepts and part of Bonhoeffer’s genius was to embrace this critique. Rather than blame the philosopher for the corruption of God’s church, he recognized the blame lay directly at the feet of the church leaders as they had come to give out spiritual stones to the starving masses rather than bread. The leaders had failed to provide a God of substance to the masses and people were flocking to science to fill this god-shaped need.

He attacked, not the existentialists, but dreamers within the church itself. In response to Nietzsche’s critique, he wrote,

We are not dreamers and are not those who walk with their heads in the clouds, that we don’t just let things come and go as they are, that our faith is really not the opium that lets us stay content in the midst of an unjust world, but that we, especially because we set our minds on things that are above, only protest all the more tenaciously and resolutely on this earth.³⁹⁸

Bonhoeffer laid the responsibility for the church, the penultimate, right where it belonged; at the feet of its leaders.

As this is a leadership problem, he tried to reconcile the mistake and correct this theology of individualism, which breeds idealism. Such a view lends itself to pride and

³⁹⁷ Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” *Works of Karl Marx 1843*, www.marxists.org. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm> (accessed Nov 1, 2018).

³⁹⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 51.

naturally turns the Other into an object. Bonhoeffer explained, “Idealist individualism’s notion of spirit as being-for-itself is unchristian, as it involves attributing to the human spirit absolute value that can only be ascribed to divine spirit.”³⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer taught his students and his congregations that one’s commitment to Christ here on earth is found in one’s commitment to the Other, but such a realization is only seen through Christ,

if we come together as the crucified and risen ones of Jesus Christ, as those who have lost our prideful human life in order to win it anew in Christ, as those who were sentenced to death but pardoned—then we will find one another, then we would look into one another’s eyes and would recognize one another completely anew, as we are recognized by God.⁴⁰⁰

Therefore, the self and the Other are necessary for understanding the Christian’s role.

As Bonhoeffer explained, “The cross is not the private property of any human being, but it belongs to all human beings; it is valid for all human beings.”⁴⁰¹ For this reason, if the Christian is to be focused, they must be outward focused. This can be seen clearly in Christ’s command to love one’s enemy. “Everything depends on this: that whenever we meet an enemy, we immediately think: this is someone whom God loves; God has given everything for this person.”⁴⁰² As all leadership works directly with others, all leadership is inherently ethical and ethics are based upon one’s metaphysic.

Leadership and Ethics

Ethics is still a hotly debated topic today and much of the debate depends upon one’s metanarrative. Alain Badiou explained that the current renewed interest in “the old doctrine of the natural rights of man is obviously linked to the collapse of revolutionary

³⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 24.

⁴⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 48.

⁴⁰¹ Bonhoeffer, 196.

⁴⁰² Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 196.

Marxism, and of all the forms of progressive engagement that it inspired.”⁴⁰³ He goes on to explain the conversation concerning ethics proper begins with “the idea of a natural or spiritual identity of Man.”⁴⁰⁴ Even within the worldview of Badiou, it is only by positing some form of spiritual identity and metanarrative that man has any “right” to non-evil. Apart from some higher or spiritual meaning, human beings are reduced to nothing more than speaking animals, but if humanity goes back to its roots, they find it is this ability to reason that sets humanity apart.

The term “ethics” was first used by Aristotle to bring to fruition the teachings of both Socrates and Plato. Aristotle argued that ethics and “moral goodness” were a result of habit, which is related to the Greek word *ethos* often translated as “character.”⁴⁰⁵ Aristotle goes to great lengths to establish an ethic based not on nature, but reason itself. According to Aristotle, moral virtue is neither inherently within nor contrary to nature, but rather learned and built through action. Aristotle explained, “the virtues we do acquire that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments. Similarly, we become just by performing just acts...”⁴⁰⁶ For this reason, he believed ethics must be practiced to be learned.

Through habit, Aristotle began to establish the foundation for living a moral life, but he quickly admits that morality is more subjective than most are willing to admit.

Now questions of conduct and experience have as little fixity about them as

⁴⁰³ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (New York: Verso, 2001), 4.

⁴⁰⁴ Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, 6.

⁴⁰⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 31.

⁴⁰⁶ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 32.

questions of what is healthful; and if this is true of the general rule, it is still truer that its application to particular problems admits of no precision. For they do not fall under any art or professional tradition, but the agents are compelled at every step to think out for themselves what the circumstances demand, just as happens in the arts of medicine and navigation. However although our present account is of this kind, we must try to support it.⁴⁰⁷

The point is that ethical choices are deeper and more complicated than an algebra question.

The problem is that ethical choices cannot be based purely on hard and fast rules.

Ethical decisions are often dependent upon the situation the agent finds themselves in. He continues,

This is why some thinkers actually define the virtues as forms of impassivity or tranquility. But they are wrong in speaking absolutely instead of adding ‘in the right (or wrong) manner at the right time’ and any other due qualifications.⁴⁰⁸

Charles Taylor argued that one must consider the disposition of the Other as well as the situation itself when attempting authentic actions. This must be understood because the irony is even perceived acts of love could lead to evil outcomes if one is not diligent to consider both the self and the Other.⁴⁰⁹

Similar to Bonhoeffer’s struggles with German idealism, Aristotle found that many of his own contemporaries were establishing and following various versions of idealism. He believed such ideals were accepted as an excuse to avoid doing the hard work of discerning right actions. He added,

the course that most people follow: they have recourse to their principles, and imagine that they are being philosophical and that in this way they will become serious-minded – behaving rather like invalids who listen carefully to their doctor, but carry out none of his instructions. Just as the bodies of the latter will get no

⁴⁰⁷ Aristotle, 33.

⁴⁰⁸ Aristotle, 36.

⁴⁰⁹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 14.

benefit from such treatment, so the souls of the former will get none from such philosophy.⁴¹⁰

The application and practice makes the difference.

Aristotle explained, “failure is possible in many ways ... but success in only one. That is why the one is easy and the other difficult; it is easy to miss the target and difficult to hit it.”⁴¹¹ Plato, in one of his letters, considers the complexity of knowing the right path. He explained,

It is only when all these things, names and definitions, visual and other sensations, are rubbed together and subjected to tests in which questions and answers are exchanged in good faith and without malice and finally, when human capacity is stretched to its limit, a spark of understanding and intelligence flashes out and illuminates the subject at issue.⁴¹²

Plato believed the soul is naturally endowed both intellectually and morally and this essential nature comes with the responsibility to understand things as they are and to use them as they were designed. In his *Ethics*, Aristotle extends the teaching of proper use to mankind as well, but the individual must not, as the existentialists argue, simply treat others as objects of study.

Bonhoeffer explained,

Every philosophy of value, even where it regards the value of the person as the highest value, is in danger of taking away the value of persons as such, as God’s creatures, and acknowledging them only insofar as the person is the ‘bearer’ of objective, impersonal value. But in so doing it closes itself off from the possibility of understanding personal-social basic-relations.⁴¹³

As philosophy developed, many came to realize that knowledge of the self is not

⁴¹⁰ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 38.

⁴¹¹ Aristotle, 41.

⁴¹² Plato and Walter Hamilton, *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1973), 140.

⁴¹³ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 24.

synonymous with knowing the Other. It was discovered that in the very act of studying the Other, the philosopher makes the Other an object therein dehumanizing them.

One must admit, “If I call the individual the concrete I, then the Other is the concrete You.”⁴¹⁴ But to say that we *know* this would be disingenuous as the “knowing” is only superficial as we are separated from the Other by an “unbridgeable gulf.”⁴¹⁵ The philosopher knows the Other only by extension from their own self. For this reason, one inevitably assumes the Other is very much like themselves and, as a result, the ethics one follows are naturally self-reflective. Inevitably, individuals rarely take into consideration the infinite world contained within the mind, experience, and history of the Other. For this reason, one can begin to see that ethics is often more subjective than objective.

The existentialists built upon the ethics of Aristotle and brought in a more robust concept of the self, the Other, and the situation. Through existentialism, it is argued that human life is more intertwined than anyone originally comprehended. They now believe one’s experience of the Other is an infinite chasm which cannot be crossed and the Other’s experience of *me* immediately objectifies *my* existence as well. In other words, the Other is swallowed up in the I of one’s experience. As a result, to live a life that is “ethical” one must practice ethics, but what Aristotle failed to see was knowing you don’t know (or that you can never know) another can guide one to recognize the gap between the self and the Other and such an understanding can help compensate for this deficiency.

Bonhoeffer taught both his students and his congregation this lesson in many

⁴¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, 25.

⁴¹⁵ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 109-110.

different ways. He taught his congregation if one lives in hate, “You will harm not the other but yourself ... therefore, for the sake of the other and for the sake of your responsibility for the other—do not repay anyone evil for evil.”⁴¹⁶ Philosophically he taught his students,

The You-form is fundamentally different from the I-form in the sphere of ethical reality. But since the You, too, stands before me as a person, as a thinking and acting mind, we must understand the You as an I in the general sense, i.e., in the sense of self-consciousness, etc. These two I-forms should be strictly distinguished.⁴¹⁷

Psychologically he explained,

I myself can become an object of my own experience, but can never experience myself as You...Psychology and epistemology find their limitation here; the ethical personhood of the other is neither a psychologically comprehensible fact nor an epistemological necessity.⁴¹⁸

And theologically, he believed, “One human being cannot of its own accord make another into an I, an ethical person conscious of responsibility” but, “God can make every human being a You for us. The claim of the other rests in God alone; for this very reason, it remains the claim of the other.”⁴¹⁹ In other words, the Other and the self are inherently related.

Detractors

Emile Durkheim would have disagreed with this assessment of leadership and ethics. In his book, *Moral Education*, he argued,

In all significant life situations, we do not refer back to the so-called general principles of morality to discover how it applies in a particular case and thus learn

⁴¹⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Sermons*, 196-197

⁴¹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 25.

⁴¹⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 26-27

⁴¹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 27.

what we should do. Instead there are clear-cut and specific ways of acting required of us.⁴²⁰

As to the subjective nature of some ethics, he would respond, “On the contrary, morality is a totality of definite rules; it is like so many molds with limiting boundaries, into which we must pour our behavior.”⁴²¹ Durkheim believed morality itself is the constant need in the life of mankind. He firmly believed and taught that life was “indeterminate” and “unstable” and morality was to be the grounding force in one’s life. He argues the purpose of morality is to determine one’s conduct and to remove all arbitrariness. This is because, “morality is basically a constant thing, and . . . it remains ever the same.”⁴²² Durkheim is not alone.

Some other detractors believe, similar to Aristotle, how we lead is built by habit, but the foundation for such an ethic is where Bonhoeffer departs. While Durkheim, and possibly Kant, would say, “One must obey a moral precept out of respect for it and for this reason alone,”⁴²³ Bonhoeffer would reply, “The world belongs to Christ, and only in Christ is the world what it is. It needs, therefore, nothing less than Christ himself.”⁴²⁴ The metaphysics are the difference. For Bonhoeffer, Christ led humanity to a deeper understanding of one’s commitment to one’s self, to others, and to the world at large. Christ is mankind’s metaphysic, it is in Christ that all people were freed from the law and given over to the spirit.

⁴²⁰ Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education* (New York: Dover Edition, 2002), 26

⁴²¹ Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 26.

⁴²² Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 27.

⁴²³ Durkheim, 30.

⁴²⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (New York: Fortress Press, 2015), 17.

Humanity is now free from the law of sin and death and given over to the Spirit of Christ and the law of life (Romans 8:2). As Paul taught,

Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death. But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law (Rom 7:4-6).

This freedom is the chance to live as Christ called humanity to live, in the love of God, this means trying with all the discernment and teaching one can muster to live right with God's love as the guidepost. Bonhoeffer explained, "it is justified and possible only for those who have already taken simple obedience seriously at some point in their lives, and so already stand in community with Jesus, in discipleship, in expectation of the end."⁴²⁵ As one's knowledge and wisdom grow, so does one's discernment.

Ironically, Aristotle came so very close to this concept in his ethics when he wrote on the topic of friendship. He wrote friends are a help to the young and the old, to the weak and the strong. In one sense, he believed this was very practical. Quoting Homer's *Iliad*, he explained that "when two together go they are better able both to see an opportunity and to take it."⁴²⁶ But deeper than this he had begun to grasp the love that comes from within and guides our lives. He explained,

One can see also in one's travels how near and dear a thing every man is to every other. Friendship also seems to be the bond that holds communities together, and lawgivers seem to attach more importance to it than to justice...[but] between friends there is no need for justice, but people who are just still need the quality of friendship; and indeed friendliness is considered to be justice in the fullest sense. It is not only a necessary thing, but a splendid one. We praise those who love their

⁴²⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, loc 10004.

⁴²⁶ Aristotle, *Ethics*, 200.

friends, and the possession of many friends is held to be one of the fine things in life. What is more, people think that good men and friends are the same.

Aristotle was never closer to the truth of God's love than this. Human beings have been called by Christ to love one another. This is how Jesus fulfilled the law because if one lives a life guided by love there is no need for laws. There is no need for justice to demand its penalty when love guides one's actions. There is no need for punishment if love is the bar one is trying to reach. There is no need for warnings against jealousy, anger, gossip, promiscuity, drunkenness, and all manner of sin if love is one's schoolmaster.

The role of the Christian leader is simple, but not easy. Christians are called to love one's self enough to invest in their own growth and their own well-being so that they are able to pour into others. If people love others as they love themselves they would fulfill love's commandments. As Calvin commanded, "Keep yourselves in the love of God. He has made love as it were the guardian and the ruler of our life; not that he might set it in opposition to the grace of God, but that it is the right course of our calling when we make progress in love."⁴²⁷ If leaders were guided by love they would have a better chance of leading well. They would be slow to act and quick to ask for forgiveness and if others were guided by love, they would be quick to grant forgiveness.

The Christian Metaphysic of Christ's Love

Heraclitus asked the rhetorical question, "What understanding or intelligence have they? They put their trust in popular bards and take the mob for teachers, unaware

⁴²⁷ John Calvin and Joseph Owen, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 447.

that most people are bad, and few are good.”⁴²⁸ The scriptures confirmed it; all are sinners and all need forgiveness. Love is the key.

Human beings have the innate tendency to do evil, but this doesn't negate one's responsibility to others. Plato taught the concept of human responsibility and the value of human life as he described the destruction of a dead body by thieves. He wrote,

There is something mean and greedy in plundering a corpse; and a sort of womanish pettiness in treating the body as an enemy, when the spirit, the real enemy, has flown, leaving behind only the instrument with which he fought. It is to behave no better than a dog who growls at the stone that has hit him and leaves alone the man who threw it.⁴²⁹

People, at their core, are responsible and valuable. It is not the body, which is to blame.

Building upon the foundation of these great men, Bonhoeffer went further. He pushed aside the idealism of the German elite and began to teach and embrace an all-encompassing faith which was even willing to make mistakes for the glory of God. German liberalism was simply an attempt to transcend the literalism of orthodox Christianity. The purpose was to provide a reasonable understanding of Christ's death. This reduced one's relationship with Christ to an ethical commitment rather than a loving relationship. Such a view destroys faith and attempts to establish a morality based upon pure reason alone.

Jennifer McBride argues,

Thus, the church's election is not for itself as if salvation's reach ends there, but like Christ, the church exists for others. It exists to participate in the healing of this world...Christians intend to be witnessing to Christ, but their Proclamation become self-referential, offering little more than an invitation to become like us—

⁴²⁸ Cohen, *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, 26. The words of Heraclitus as recorded by Proclus.

⁴²⁹ Plato, *The Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 172.

to think like us and act like us.⁴³⁰

One can see the issue is not simply theological, but also a matter of projection. People often assume they are the best, whoever they are. They want others to be like them and, when theology enters the equation, this selfish prejudice is given God's authority. Now they want the Other to be theological like them, to act like them, despite the fact that the purpose of the Christian faith is to become more like Christ. It is obvious that bracketing one's own existence and becoming like Jesus is more complicated than it sounds.

Jesus himself threw a wrench into Christian theology when he asked a man "why do you call me good?" (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19). This seemed like a simple question, but it soon became an intense teaching moment. He explains that no one is good; only God, but the real question is how can one call anyone good if God is the bar? Paul Tillich clarifies the distinction. He wrote,

He rejects the term 'good' as applicable to himself in isolation from God and puts the problem in the right place, namely, the uniqueness of his relation to God. His goodness is goodness only in so far as he participates in the goodness of God. Jesus, like every man, is finite freedom. Without that, he would not be equal to mankind and could not be the Christ. God alone is above freedom and destiny.⁴³¹

The fact is being good is only true purely through one's relationship to God. This would mean that one cannot know what "good" truly is apart from this relationship. We are limited apart from him.

The situation all human beings face is the reality of one's own limitations. Every human being has a horizon they cannot transgress. This limits one's freedom and fetters all to fate. This leaves each individual to inevitably fall upon their own understanding of right and wrong. Bonhoeffer explained, "The necessary result of a one-sided

⁴³⁰ McBride, *The Church For the World*, Loc 436-445.

⁴³¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

epistemological philosophy thus was rational persons deciding their own ethical value, having self-empowered entry into the ethical sphere, and bearing within themselves their own ethical motives as rational persons.”⁴³² Humanity cannot go beyond these limits apart from Christ’s power and that power comes from a relationship with Jesus.

In his commentary on 2 Peter, Peter Davids explained,

In rabbinic Judaism the human impulse or drive was to be controlled by the Torah, the law. By meditation on these scriptures one could set the appropriate boundaries and overcome the impulse to evil. Corruption could be controlled. In 2 Peter we hear nothing about the role of Scripture until Ch. 3, and there we discover that Scripture can be misused as well as used. Instead, escape from corruption comes through ‘our knowledge of him,’ that is, Jesus, and through his ‘divine power.’⁴³³

Christ is the concrete reality that grounds one’s perception of this world including one’s ethics. Bonhoeffer continues, “It is a Christian insight that the person as a conscious being is created in the moment of being moved—in the situation of responsibility, passionate ethical struggle, confrontation by an overwhelming claim; thus the real person grows out of the concrete situation.”⁴³⁴ Leading is complicated and it necessarily entails the self, the Other, and the situation.

Analysis and Discussion of Research

Through careful analysis of Bonhoeffer’s leadership style, as understood through the narrative of biographies and his own teaching, one can clearly see that the three aspects of authenticity bubble to the surface especially as they pertain to one’s ethical commitment to one’s followers. Though Bonhoeffer himself did not directly make these

⁴³² Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 22.

⁴³³ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 176.

⁴³⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 24.

distinctions of leadership, they become obvious to the onlooker experiencing the phenomenon of authenticity through a study of his leadership. Three facets of leadership bubble to the surface.

1. The Self: Bonhoeffer taught that one should be grounded in who they are and that they must understand and embrace their role as a leader.
2. The Other: Bonhoeffer firmly believed that the Other needed to be considered in any and all ethic decisions.
3. The Situation: Apart from considering the situation one finds one's self in, there is no way to discern the right course of action. Therefore, one cannot lead well apart from an intimate knowledge of one's own situation.

This leads to the experience of authentic leadership as (A) the feeling of being challenged, (B) emotions of fear and peace, (C) one's metanarrative and feeling of transcendence all come together in the very act of applying authenticity to one's leadership style.

Three Aspects of Authenticity

1. In the case of point one, Bonhoeffer time and again not only talked about individual responsibility but the importance of embracing one's vocation as a believer. This means that an individual must put Christ first as one's top priority (as one's ultimate) while simultaneously accepting one's place in the penultimate. This is the difference between cheap grace and costly grace. Accepting Christ means submitting to God completely as one gives themselves over to him. Bonhoeffer tells the story of Peter to illustrate this point. He wrote,

Grace is costly, because it forces people under the yoke of following Jesus Christ; it is grace when Jesus says, 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Twice the call went out to Peter: Follow me! It was Jesus' first and last word to his disciples (Mark 1:17; John 21:22). His whole life lies between these two calls. The first time, in response to Jesus' call, Peter left his nets, his vocation, at the Sea of Galilee and followed him on his word. The last time, the Resurrection One finds him at his old vocation, again at the Sea of Galilee, and again he calls: Follow me!

Between the two lies a whole life of discipleship following Christ. At its center stands Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ of God.⁴³⁵

The knowledge of one's self is paramount if one is to know how to live authentically.

2. The second point pertains to the Other. Bonhoeffer time and again makes a direct link between the self and the Other as can be seen through the love for one's enemies. He wrote,

An ethical category must be related to the individual as a specific person. Precisely the social element, however, is thereby excluded, but posited simultaneously. *The human being, by virtue of being an individual, is also the human race.* This is the definition that does justice to the human spirit in relation to the fundamental social category. When, in the simple act, the individual spirit rises up against God, thus climbing to the utmost height of spiritual individuality—since this is the individual's very own deed against God, occasioned by nothing else—the deed committed is at the same time the deed of the human race (no longer in the biological sense) *in the individual person.* One falls away not only from one's personal vocation but also from one's generic vocation as a member of the human race. Thus all humanity falls with each sin, and not one of us is in principle different from Adam; that is, everyone is also the 'first' sinner [italics original].⁴³⁶

This estrangement from God separates each person from the Other as well. Bonhoeffer explains, "The spirit of sin has torn him away from the spirit of God and from his neighbor. Now the human spirit circles perpetually around itself."⁴³⁷ He taught that the corruption of the church's purpose as well as the direction of the penultimate reality has also contaminated all of humanity's perception of God. As Christians, their vocation is that of leader and preparer "preparing the way...from the penultimate to the ultimate." As leaders, it is their task to bring Christ to the world. Bonhoeffer continues,

The breakup of the penultimate, in turn, leads to strengthened disregard for, and

⁴³⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 460-461.

⁴³⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 33-34.

⁴³⁷ Bonhoeffer, 124.

devaluation of, the ultimate. The ultimate and the penultimate are closely bound to one another. From this perspective the task is to strengthen the penultimate through a stronger proclamation of the ultimate and to protect the ultimate by preserving the penultimate.⁴³⁸

As a leader, the Christian is tasked with protecting the Others in God's kingdom, while co-laboring with God to proclaim his glory.

3. Point three is essential to understanding the essence of Bonhoeffer's ethics and leadership style. Through the literature review and interviews, one can see the phenomenon of authenticity is palpable for the individual who experiences real leadership in action. It is this researcher's opinion that Bonhoeffer embodied this situational ethic as he preached the love of one's enemy and devotion to one's nation while simultaneously acting to undermine the authority of the state and bring about the demise of its leader, Adolf Hitler.

As explained by Charles Marsh in his biography of Bonhoeffer called, *Strange Glory*, one can see the evolution of Bonhoeffer's ethics and leadership as he begins his career in academia. He begins his life as a privileged boy wanting for nothing, eventually growing to become a young man believing the idealism of his peers and embracing an uncompromising devotion to the state. To prove his love for God and country, he wrote that the Christian people were being called upon to wage war and he assured the German people that "war is no longer murder."⁴³⁹ Five years later, Bonhoeffer was disgusted with these words. It was soon after this, he preached to his congregation that WWII and, in fact, all war must be rejected by the church. This change of heart was influenced by men who had stretched his theology (fulfilling the need to struggle as seen in A, which he in

⁴³⁸ Bonhoeffer, 628-629.

⁴³⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 119.

turn forced upon his congregations and students).

The first major influence was Karl Barth and his recommitment to the humanity of God. Barth wanted to break the chains of German idealism and bring God's church back to the grace and love which was its original foundation. Next were Reginald Niebuhr and his social gospel. It was under Niebuhr's tutelage and his introduction to the black churches of America that Bonhoeffer first heard the gospel. Niebuhr introduced Bonhoeffer to his own form of Christian realism, which took into consideration the social situation one finds themselves in. This and grounding in existentialists like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky caused Bonhoeffer to realize that life is more dynamic and robust than he had once believed. It was through his exposure to the lived theology of Niebuhr and others that Bonhoeffer came to embrace the reality and importance of the situation.

As a result, it was sometime later that Bonhoeffer, a Christian leader who loved his country and believed murder to be a sin, returned to defy his Fuhrer and his government through starting an illegal seminary, becoming a double-agent, and eventually being involved in the attempted assassination of Hitler himself. In his *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer wrote,

There are occasions when, in the course of historical life, the strict observance of the explicit law of a state, a corporation, a family, but also of a scientific discovery, entails a clash with the basic necessities of human life. In such cases, appropriate responsible action departs from the domain governed by laws and principles, from the normal and regular, and instead is confronted with the extraordinary situation of ultimate necessities that are beyond any possible regulation by law... There can be no doubt that such necessities actually exist. To deny them would mean ceasing to act in accord with reality. It is equally certain, however, that these necessities, as primordial facts of life itself, cannot be captured by any law and can never become laws themselves. They appeal directly to the free responsibility of the one who acts, a responsibility not bound by any law. They create an extraordinary situation, and are in essence borderline cases.

They no longer permit human reasoning to come up with a variety of exit strategies, but pose the question of the *ultima ratio*. In politics this *ultima ratio* is war, but it can also be deception or breaking a treaty for the sake of one's own life necessities.⁴⁴⁰

Even the fact that we are bound to time itself demands that we submit our responsibility to knowing the times.

Only in concrete time is the real claim of ethics effectual; and only when I am responsible am I fully conscious of being bound to time. It is not that I make some sort of universally valid decisions by being in full possession of a rational mind. Rather, I enter the reality of time by relating my concrete person in time and all its particularities to this imperative—by making myself ethically responsible.⁴⁴¹

Closer to a Christian Ethic and the Penultimate

The difference between the Christian leader and other leaders is the devotion to the love of Christ. This is the believer's metanarrative and worldview (C). This metaphysical commitment determines the result of one's love and the means by which they deliver this love. As a result, all true and authentic Christian ethics are by definition situational entailing one's metaphysic as well as the Other, one's self, and the situation at hand (see figure 4). This can be seen through a quick overview of a few times the Ten Commandments were usurped for the sake of the circumstances. From lying to killing to breaking the Sabbath: one must admit that some laws are more flexible than many are willing to admit.

For example, the book of Joshua follows along as Rahab hides Joshua's men from the king and then lies to cover it up. This act sealed the fate, not just for her hometown, but also for her king. Both of these acts seem to fly in the face of the *prima facie* commandments to not lie and to "honor the king" (I Pet 2:17). Another example is

⁴⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 190-191.

⁴⁴¹ Bonhoeffer, *Reader*, 23.

killing. This case can be made in any number of situations where God commands his people to kill. In all these situations, there is no guilt for the killings implying that the situation warranted transgressing this law. Lastly is the law concerning breaking the Sabbath. Breaking this commandment goes to the Lord Jesus himself and this “was like declaring war against the religious establishment.”⁴⁴²

On at least four separate occasions Jesus seemingly broke the rules concerning the Sabbath. Once he healed a paralytic man on the Sabbath (John 5), another he healed a man of blindness (John 9), one man had his hand healed (Matt 12), and yet another time he and his disciples were munching on grain they had plucked on the Sabbath (Matt 12). Each time he is confronted, Jesus doesn't seem to understand the confusion. On one occasion he asks the question, “What man among you, if he had a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn't take hold of it and lift it out? A man is worth far more than a sheep, so it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath” (Matt 12:11-12). The point being that sometimes transgressing the letter of the law is plain old common sense.

These examples are revealing as Jesus himself points out the fact that the situation determines how one should approach the law. In one instance, Jesus explains it is completely reasonable to pull your sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath. This means that helping one's cattle and livestock is a reason to transgress the letter of the law under specific circumstances. In another situation, Jesus defends his actions by reminding the Pharisees that King David entered the temple and ate the bread when he and his men were hungry (Matt. 12:3-4). Here again, Jesus is implying that hunger can be a legitimate cause for transgression without sin.

⁴⁴² W.W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary Vol. 1* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 118.

Some detractors have tried to argue against the situational ethic contained within these verses by pointing to Matthew 12:8 by explaining that Jesus is the “Lord of the Sabbath” and therefore inherently above it, but this is a shallow reading of the text. Jesus is indeed claiming “equality with God,”⁴⁴³ but he was not arguing he had the right to usurp the commandment, he was declaring that, as Lord of the Sabbath, he knows the true meaning of the commandment. The complete answer is found in Mark 2:26, “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.” Therefore the Sabbath and by extension (one could argue) all the commandments are by definition for the sake of man, not God.

This is easy to understand. God does not need a law nor does he need man’s obedience, therefore any and all laws set in place are for the benefit of mankind. For this reason, all laws are subject to mankind’s good, but still dependent upon God’s love. As one can discern, the reason why Jesus could heal or eat on the Sabbath is, “The obvious answer is: to do good and to save life. Yet failure to use the Sabbath to meet this man’s need was to do evil.”⁴⁴⁴ It is for the good of man and (as God’s love for man usurps the law) therefore people occasionally are allowed to transgress some of the laws, while others are never betrayed as the result would never be good.⁴⁴⁵ This is why one must

⁴⁴³ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 118.

⁴⁴⁴ J. D. Grassmick, “Mark.” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures Vol. 2*, eds. John Walvoord and Roy. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 115.

⁴⁴⁵ For example, one would be hard-pressed to find a legitimate reason to commit adultery. Aristotle argues this same point in his *Ethics*. He states that there are some situations where an action is always wrong, “Nor does acting rightly or wrongly in such cases depend upon circumstances – whether a man commits adultery with the right woman or at the right time or in the right way – because to do anything of that kind is simply wrong” (Aristotle, *Ethics*, 42). As a Christian we know this would be a sin for both individuals as well as a sin against the spouse (not to mention a sin against God), but it is easy to imagine a scenario wherein a woman might have to defend herself against a rapist and, in the process of protecting herself, kill the rapist. In the latter situation, the killing may or may not even be intentional, but in either case not many would argue a murder was committed.

never blaspheme God as this would never be good, yet one could lawfully defy their mother and father if need be (Matt 10:35).

Conclusion

In the end, Bonhoeffer rebelled. He forced his followers out of their comfort zones, encouraged them to embrace their fears and demanded they grow in their faith. His Christ-centered metaphysic guided everything he did. After his illegal school was shut down, he became a double-agent, but to no avail. This led him and his comrades to consider a coup wherein they orchestrated an assassination attempt against the Fuhrer. The regicide failed. Bonhoeffer and his co-conspirators were captured by the Nazis with Bonhoeffer being placed in the Flossenbürg concentration camp. Here, it is said by some of his captors, he met his death with a demeanor and sense of peace beyond understanding. The walk to his execution was burned in the minds of those who witnessed it. Bonhoeffer set an example for authentic leadership and he set the bar high.

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