

Values, Authenticity, and Responsible Leadership

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Abstract The recent financial crisis has prompted questioning of our basic ideas about capitalism and the role of business in society. As scholars are calling for “responsible leadership” to become more of the norm, organizations are being pushed to enact new values, such as “responsibility” and “sustainability,” and pay more attention to the effects of their actions on their stakeholders. The purpose of this study is to open up a line of research in business ethics on the concept of “authenticity” as it can be applied in modern organizational life and more specifically to think through some of the foundational questions about the logic of values. We shall argue that the idea of simply “acting on one’s values” or “being true to oneself” is at best a starting point for thinking about authenticity. We develop the idea of the poetic self as a project of seeking to live authentically. We see being authentic as an ongoing process of conversation that not only starts with perceived values but also involves one’s history, relationships with others, and aspirations. Authenticity entails acting on these values for individuals and organizations and thus also becomes a necessary starting point for ethics. After all, if there is no motivation to justify one’s actions either to oneself or to others, then as Sartre has suggested, morality simply does not come into play. We argue that the idea of responsible leadership can be enriched with this more nuanced idea of the self and authenticity.

Keywords Authenticity · Ethical theory · Poetic self · Responsible leadership · Values

Introduction

Values are central to the idea of “responsible leadership” and most modern discussions of business ethics are connected in a variety of ways to the concept of “values.” Although there are several feasible ways to interpret the idea of “values,” most accounts assume that it makes sense to talk about both individual and corporate values.¹ Indeed in recent times, business ethicists have proposed that we stop separating “business” from “ethics” and instead integrate values into our basic understanding of how we create value and trade with each other. For instance, “treating employees as rights-holders,” “creating value in an environmentally sustainable way,” “implementing corporate social responsibility,” “becoming a good citizen in civil society,” “being a force for peace in the world,” “engaging in social entrepreneurship,” and being “ethical or responsible leaders” are all ideas that depend on some underlying notion of values. At their best, we expect businesses to act on those values and hence act “authentically.” And, we look to business executives to act on their own values to be authentic (George and Sims 2007). As Maak and Pless (2006a) suggest, while personal values are important for any notion of responsible leadership, we need to replace the idea of “great man” theories of leadership

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¹ Some may want to reduce the idea of “corporate values” to some notion of the values of individuals. Hopefully, nothing in our argument turns on particular accounts of the nature of values, and in fact, as pragmatists, we wish to avoid such essentialist theorizing. We explore these issues in our next article entitled, “Values and Poetic Organizations.”

with “moral persons” theories. In any such idea of “moral persons,” the notion of authenticity is central (Maak and Pless 2006a, p. 42).

Curiously, not much is written in the business ethics literature about the idea of “authenticity.”² Our argument is simple. To act authentically, in this sense, assumes that values are either easy to know, but rather difficult to realize, or difficult to know but easy to realize. Acting authentically becomes either a matter of will or knowledge. Both views assume that values are relatively stable over time. We believe that the reality of modern life makes values both difficult to know and difficult to realize. So, the problem of authenticity is more complex than most theorists imagine. It is not simply a matter of introspection to find one’s values, and then having the will, character, or integrity to act on those values. We see authenticity as a creative project, one where we strive to create a life that is imbued with the process of trying to live in an authentic way. However, we believe this is a creative process, and ongoing inquiry, rather than a static statement of one’s values and declarations of action.

When we turn to the leadership literature, we find a fairly recent concern with the idea of “authentic leadership” where scholars define “authenticity” much in the same way that business ethics theorists do. In their introduction to a special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* on “authentic leadership,” Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggest that authenticity is fundamentally a self referential concept that is about “being true to one’s self.” “Authentic leadership” is more complex as it depends on leader–follower relationships and has a more relational character. There seems to be widespread agreement among leadership theorists who think about these issues that values and acting on one’s values play a crucial role in the development of any theory of authentic leadership. Although Avolio and Gardner suggest that the roots of the theory are in what organization theorists would call “positive psychology,” philosophers might argue that we can understand “authenticity” without such a reference, as there have been plenty of leaders who have been authentic who committed great evils in the world.

We find the practitioner literature on authentic leadership even less compelling than the academic one. George (2003) and George and Sims (2007) have raised the important idea that leaders should not try to be someone they are not. This is a welcome change from the “leadership style” advice genre, where leaders are encouraged to adopt the appropriate style to the circumstances. However, George assumes that knowing ones values and being true to oneself is a fairly straightforward process. And, he is surely

correct that leaders must start with their own conceptions of themselves and their values. However, authenticity, at least in our view, does not end with a simple proclamation of either individual or corporate values. Although the development of authentic leadership theory is a step in the right direction, we believe that it would benefit from a more careful analysis of the idea of “authenticity” and a more explicit connection to Maak and Pless’s (2006a, b) idea of embedding “moral person” into the very core of leadership theory.

We proceed as follows. In [The Essential Self and the Problem of Authenticity](#) Section, we critique the underlying idea that acting authentically is essentially about being true to one’s values. In [The Poetic Self: Enlargement, Connection, and Aspiration](#) Section, we suggest re-thinking authenticity as a “project of self-creation” for individuals. In [The Poetic Self and Responsible Leadership: Creating Self and Community](#) Section, we sketch an argument about how a more robust idea of authenticity can enrich Maak and Pless’s (2006a, b) theory of responsible leadership. In particular, we link this more complex conception of the self to the pragmatist project as articulated by Richard Rorty (1989) of the creation of self and community. We suggest that such an account opens up a space of possibility for a revised notion of responsible leadership.

The Essential Self and the Problem of Authenticity

Most discussions of authenticity begin and end with the idea that individuals have a set of values, and that these values are knowable. There are several interpretations of “values” which are important to understand. In the social science literature, we find the concept of values as preferences. Drawing on the pathbreaking work of Rokeach (1973), Frederick (1995), and others, values as preferences can be empirically studied in a number of ways, and social scientists have developed a number of scales and methods to sort out different kinds of values. In the business ethics literature, Agle and Caldwell (1999) have summarized this social scientific approach and suggested that we can understand values at five interdependent levels: individual, organizational, institutional, societal, and global, as well as ten possible connections among the levels. The main focus of this approach is to find the right instrument to empirically determine what values actually are. Although there is a large empirical literature here, we shall see that it rests on some shaky philosophical grounds.

William Frederick (1995) built on Rokeach’s (1973) work and applied it to business ethics. He used the idea of values as preferences to construct a multi-layered notion of business values. He claims:

² The exception is Jackson (2005) which takes a particularly existential approach to authenticity.

A largely unspoken premise has been that the values held by these business leaders—owner-entrepreneurs, top-level corporate managers, financiers, and industrialists—shape the motives, policies and actions of their firms. (p. 14)

While he diagnoses the tension between business and society as an underlying struggle between three different sets of values, economizing, power-aggrandizing, and ecologizing values, he assumes, along with Rokeach, that the basic idea of values is a useful starting point.

Rather than mere preferences, business ethicist Edwin Hartman (1988) contends that values are relatively general, permanent, considered desires. The attribution of values implies a kind of rationality, but values are more difficult than social scientists would have us believe. He says:

Most of us cannot state our values and their implications in a coherent and airtight way; hence unanswerable questions arise about whether we really hold this or that value... nobody is completely rational, we cannot always know whether a failure to act on a value is a failure of rationality, an absence of the value in question, or a simple lapse. (p. 75)

Hartman (1988) suggests the Problem of Authenticity on these accounts becomes either how we know our values or whether our values are realizable through action.³ We begin with this same idea of individual values as the starting point of authenticity. However, unlike many management theorists, we do not assume that values are transparent to individuals (and by parallel, organizations), nor do we assume that the self is mainly defined by these values.

Many of the staple examples that business ethicists use concern companies or individuals acting on their values, or sometimes, standing up to others, based on their values. Johnson and Johnson is said to have acted on its statement of values called “the Credo” to handle the Tylenol situation. The CEO James Burke is lionized as a responsible leader because there was some match between his personal values and the Credo, and he acted on them. Merck is said to have acted on its value that “medicine is for people not for profits” in developing a drug for River Blindness. The CEO, Dr. Roy Vagelos, was able to realize that value, because it also meshed with his own personal sense of how physicians should act, even if they are in charge of a large multinational pharmaceutical company. Even the much

³ Some recent popular business literature has focused on this interpretation of “authenticity.” Gilmore and Pine II (2007) have focused on “authentic” as opposed to “fake.” George (2003) has written about leaders “starting where you are” by which he means not trying to become someone who has different values. Both of these theories have the ring of validity to them, but both take “being authentic” as non-problematic.

maligned Wal-Mart is said to act on “everyday low prices” as one of its core values. And, clearly its founder, Sam Walton, believed that the poorer strata of American society deserved the same access to goods and services that wealthier Americans enjoyed. Alternatively, many of the scandals in business ethics are attributed to a lack of values, or perhaps faulty sets of values. Enron, Parmalat, and other famous scandals are routinely held up as examples of not prioritizing values. Corporate seminars are full of the advice to “walk the talk” by which is meant, if you say you have this value, then your actions need to be consistent with the value.

These very practical business issues have a philosophical counterpart in the debate in ethical theory between “internalism” and “externalism.”⁴ We propose to examine one of the assumptions present in this debate, namely, that acting authentically is simply a matter of knowing (Plato) one’s values and then acting on them (Aristotle). In doing so, we highlight the underlying view of the self as a vessel that contains values.

When wrongdoing occurs there are several possibilities. The first is that we could explain behavior by saying that the person simply did not know that the behavior was morally questionable or did not know (or “believe” if you are a pragmatist like us) that the behavior would lead to the morally questionable outcome. If they had known, they would have behaved differently. In the literature, this is referred as the “internal” explanation. It adopts the view first articulated by Plato that “to know the right is to do the right.” Plato is alleged to hold the view that morally questionable behavior was a matter of “error.” He believed that moral reasons provided the necessary motivation for action.

A second explanation called “external” was suggested by Aristotle.⁵ We might say that the person or company had values, but was not sufficiently motivated by those values to produce action. Motivation is not internal to values, but must be found externally. Motivation comes from moral claims only if one has a desire to be moral, or to act on one’s values. Perhaps Enron executives who

⁴ The internalism versus externalism debate is rooted in Plato and Aristotle, and was brought into the foreground by Frankena (1958).

⁵ We see no reason to make a distinction between matters of “morality” and matters of “prudence.” Self-regarding values may well also only offer motivational force if one has the desire to realize one’s best interest. And, for the internalist, the extent to which moral values trump prudential values is also a matter of knowledge. We believe that this distinction is better made between values that are “primarily self-regarding” and values that are “primarily other-regarding.” In the real world, most people are driven by a mixture of self-regarding reasons and other-regarding reasons. Even Kant believed that self-regarding reasons had moral content, as he carefully wrote about the “duty to self perfection.” We are indebted here to Professors Norman Bowie and Patricia Werhane.

actually believed in RICE could be said to hold those values, but the values could be overridden by non values-related reasons.⁶ Psychology is complex, and values may only offer partial motivating force.

What happens when values conflict? According to the internal explanation, it becomes a matter of knowledge as to which values take precedence. Alternatively, it may be a matter of knowing how to create a situation through innovation or Patricia Werhane's (1999) idea of "moral imagination" so that all of our values can be realized. Distinguishing "moral values" from "prudential values" does not help the internalist here. And telling the internalist to "walk the talk" is meaningless if they cannot figure out what they do not know. The talk is the problem. For the internalist, acting on one's values is problematic because of the uncertainty and complexity in the process of coming to know one's values.

The externalist has a different problem. Because values do not necessarily offer motivational force, they cannot conclude which values are more important. Indeed, how is one to know one's values to begin with? If there is not a strong connection to action, how can one tell whether they have merely prioritized conflicting values differently, do not actually believe the values, or simply have "weakness of will." At Enron, how could someone tell the difference between the value of profit and the value of integrity as they made various decisions? Telling the externalist to "walk the talk" is meaningless unless it is interpreted as a statement about what their desires should be, i.e. that they should "walk." For the externalist, acting on one's values is problematic not because knowing one's values is difficult, but because there are many other psychological forces that can serve to override these values.

We want to suggest that this philosophical debate for which there is no "solution" highlights the fact that human motivation is complicated. Rather than solving the "internalism-externalism" issue, we suggest a pragmatist alternative that tries to find a middle ground between the two. In the real world, human beings are complex. For the internalist, the idea of "being true to oneself and one's values" is problematic in the sense of knowing one's values, be they other-regarding values or self-regarding values. The internalist view highlights the importance of the process of self-knowledge and the difficulties in coming to know one's own values. Sometimes we are in fact motivated simply because we have discovered something that is a core value for us, and the fact of discovering or being reminded of its existence actually moves us to act. Surely internalism reminds us of this valid point. On the other

hand, for the externalist, the idea of "being true to oneself and one's values" is a matter of knowing what else, besides values, has motivational force. Sometimes we find ourselves enmeshed in situations that overwhelm our values and even our sense of self. Milgram (1963, 1974) and others have demonstrated the situational effects on action, time, and time again. Surely, externalism reminds us of this fact that we encounter in the real world. However, both views point out important conceptual difficulties in the naïve view of authenticity as being true to self.⁷

We shall call the idea that the self is a vessel containing values that are knowable by introspection, the "essentialist self." The main idea, on this view, is that our values define us. They express our essence, hence the name. Our values give us our identity, and in the liberal West, we take these values to be individualized. The main point of liberalism is that we can live together, even if we have different values. We find this idea implicit in much of the business ethics literature. Yet, it has undergone a profound critique by thinkers such as Charles Taylor (1991) in philosophy, Hans Joas (2000) in sociology, and more recently, Mollie Painter-Morland (2008) in business ethics. The dispute between internalism and externalism hints that things are more complicated than they appear. The internalist view highlights the difficulty in coming to know the values, which the externalist view highlights the problem of understanding the vessel. We believe that there are problems understanding both the vessel and what may be inside.

Joas's (2000) brilliant work, *The Genesis of Values*, gives a more nuanced account of what Hartman (1988) must mean by values as "considered desires." Joas looks to the history of philosophy, particularly recent pragmatist thinking, and suggests along with Charles Taylor that we cannot give an adequate account of values without understanding our view of the self. Our values ultimately give us the boundaries of the self, and are integral to the process of self-description and redescription.

Kevin Jackson (2005) is one of the few business ethicists that has directly addressed the idea of authenticity. While Jackson wants "authenticity" to do the same work as values in the essentialist self, he does point the way along for a revision of the essentialist self. Jackson draws on Sartre and the existentialist tradition to argue that values rest on our ability to choose. We need to see our freedom as a precursor of any set of values. Being conscious of that freedom when choosing to realize a particular project is the

⁶ The Enron values were cleverly called by the acronym "RICE," standing for "Respect," "Integrity," "Communication," and "Excellence."

⁷ Recently, Evan Simpson (1999) has suggested a middle ground between these two extremes, whereby the connection between moral beliefs and motivation is weakened from one of logical necessity to causal dependency. This analysis seems correct to us, and is in keeping with the pragmatist spirit of our suggestions here. We use "internalism" and "externalism" as illustrative of two kinds of problems with the naïve idea of authenticity as being true to self.

real meaning of authenticity according to Jackson. In effect, he identifies moral character with the ability to recognize one's freedom and choose accordingly. However, in Jackson's account, we choose projects, and those choices define us. By focusing on projects and freedom to choose, Jackson sketches an account that appears to do without values. However, there is still an essentialist flavor, as it appears that freedom acts as an ultimate ground. And, how are we to know when we are truly free without lapsing back into the arguments above about internalism and externalism. Jackson (2005) argues:

...the past as a determinant of action depends on our freely constituted projects in the now. I cannot literally change the past. No physical force in the world is powerful enough to do that. Still, the meaning of the past hinges on my present commitments. (p. 312)

And, we would add that the meaning of the present depends in part on one's past experiences. The idea that every moment represents a clean slate is difficult to realize, and it ignores important ideas such as commitments, and the shaping of our present through the past. In essentialist terms, it is as if Sartre, through Jackson, is suggesting that we are free to empty our vessel at any point in time, and to fill it with whatever projects we may find ourselves engaged. We want to suggest that the human condition is more subtle. However, we also want to acknowledge that Sartre's idea of freedom should be used as a humble reminder that we can choose a different way to live no matter how difficult our circumstances, nor how difficult the choice.⁸

Indeed Charles Taylor (1991) suggests that our reliance on an individualist idea of authenticity is a root cause for much of the malaise in modern society. Because we rely too much on something like Jackson's idea of individual freedom, we get easily estranged from the meaning that we create with our fellow human beings. Mollie Painter-Morland (2008) suggests that business ethicists adopt a Taylor-like redefinition of authenticity. She suggests that the very process of defining ones values is always "relational." Values make sense only because they allow us to act in context, precisely where the boundaries of the self are at issue. Painter-Morland (2008) says

Authenticity, thus conceived, allows for the fact that an individual's role may shift as he/she traverses the complex typography of an organization's various functional units and system of relations. Because it

allows the individual to calibrate his/her role in relation to the various stakeholders with whom he/she is engaged, this view of authenticity involves a certain degree of perspectivism. (p. 214)

Perhaps the best illustration of the incompleteness of the essentialist self is in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Hamlet is searching for perspective and self knowledge and seems utterly confused throughout most of the play. We can all be reminded of Shakespeare's classic line in Hamlet where Polonius gives advice to Laertes, his son, "this above all: to thine own self be true." When such advice is taken literally, as in many management best sellers, and in the business ethics literature, it provides a set of facile recommendations that make discovering and acting on values nearly impossible.

At least one reading of Shakespeare is that Polonius is quite a fool. He is giving "fatherly advice" to Laertes precisely because he has failed to establish any deep and meaningful connection with his son. He is reduced to platitudes. We do not believe that platitudes produce responsible leadership; rather they are one of the main barriers to such leadership. Hamlet is a paradigm case of a troubled person who is searching for what it means to be true to himself, because he knows neither what "his self" is nor "how to be true." By confronting his history, especially with his parents and their history, and by examining his relationships with others, and coming to terms with his own aspirations, he is able to begin to gain insight into his own actions, and his life begins to become authentic.

Prince Hamlet suffers from what we will call:

The Problem of Authenticity *Understanding ourselves, and why we do what we do, requires a commitment to being authentic. However, being authentic is more difficult than it first appears. "Know thyself" is easy to say and hard to accomplish. We can start with our values, but we must be willing to engage in a dialogue with our past, our relationships with others, and our aspirations for the future.*

There are many Prince Hamlets in the business world. In many cases, things just seem to happen, and we go along not bothering to understand who we are or what we are becoming. After a while, acting authentically becomes either taken for granted or becomes impossible. We need a more nuanced approach. We need to examine our past (and by parallel, the history of an organization) and try to understand why we behave the way we do, enlarging our view of the self. Very quickly we encounter the idea of self and other, and the related tensions that result, so that individual values and understandings of the past are enmeshed in connections with others. These ideas combine to confront and inform our aspirations about the lives we want to lead and our effects on others. Therefore, we

⁸ For pragmatists saying that we always have a choice and that we continually makes choices is much like saying as Richard Rorty (1980) does that truth should be understood as a cautionary warning... that we may not have all the evidence for a belief. Choice reminds us that we can be masters of our own fate.

suggest replacing the idea of “the essentialist self” with what we have come to call “the poetic self” viewed as the intersection of our values, our past, our set of connections to others, and our aspirations. The poetic self is better conceptualized as a project of self-creation, rather than a static entity that explains why we do what we do.

The Poetic Self: Enlargement, Connection, and Aspiration

Since Freud, we have become skeptical of ourselves as being the best judges of what is in our hearts, what our “true values” may be. We need not adopt the Freudian ontology of drives, or his map of the mind, to take his insight seriously, that sometimes our unconscious mind is driving the animal. This seems to come down squarely on Aristotle’s side in the “internalism–externalism” debate, but it is more complicated. Many of Freud’s followers have suggested that we can bring many unconscious motivations to light, and that doing so is an ongoing project. Unlike the current medicalization of psychoanalysis, Freud’s original insights were not aimed at “healing” but at coming to understand why one sees the world and acts as one does. It was a matter of coping and as Carl Rogers (1959) and others have suggested “self-development.”⁹

Freud’s view that early childhood experience plays a crucial role in the adults we become depends in part on the idea that we can have access to at least some of our unconscious. Philosopher Richard Rorty (1991) claims that we need to see Freud as articulating a sort of moral imperative:

Unlike Hume, Freud did change our self-image. Finding out about our unconscious motives is not just an intriguing exercise, but more like a moral obligation. (p. 3)... What we are morally obligated to know about ourselves is not our essence, not a common human nature that is somehow the source and locus of moral responsibility. Far from being of what we share with the other members of our species, self-knowledge is precisely what divides us from them, our accidental idiosyncrasies, the “irrational” components in ourselves, the ones that split us up into incompatible sets of beliefs and desires... Only study of these concrete details will let us enter into conversational relations with our unconscious and, at the ideal limit of such conversation, let us break down the partitions.” (p. 6)

⁹ We are not claiming that Freud himself had much optimism for “self development” only that it was an outcome of his original insights in a more positive mind such as Rogers’.

We shall call this idea “self-enlargement” to denote the difference between trying to discover one’s true values or one’s essence and trying to figure out where some of these “values” may come from. There are multiple applications of the enlarged self in business. For instance, psychoanalyst Karen Horney (1950)¹⁰ has articulated the “Search for Glory,” which drives many executives. Heinz Kohut (1996) and others have developed models of “transference” which can be useful especially in understanding how people react to change and authority. Transference occurs when we transfer relationships from the past to our current ones. For instance, an executive might adopt a posture of resentful obedience because of the way he or she was made of obey a parent or other caregiver. Transference gets in the way of developing the self, because it suggests that we repeat patterns of the past over and over.

Self-enlargement is not enough. Introspection can only take one so far. In a number of books and articles, Kets de Vries (2006) has articulated what he calls, “the clinical paradigm” and applied it to his clinical practice with executives and companies. There are four principles to his paradigm, each of which is important when we begin to see the self as a project. They are:¹¹

- (1) Every human action has an explanation and rationale.
- (2) A great deal of our action is based in the unconscious.
- (3) The way we express and regulate emotion is central to any idea of self.
- (4) “Human development is an inter- and intra-personal process.”

Although the first three principles can be said to be behind the enlarged self, Freud pays little attention to the inter-personal process that goes on as we engage in conversations with our past. Here, we again turn to the object relations school of psychoanalytic thought, and in particular to Jessica Benjamin (1988) who has argued that the inter-subjective and intra-psycho views must be seen as going together. She claims that by the age of two, children feel the tension between the “assertion of self” and “recognition of the other.”

In trying to establish itself as an independent entity, the self must yet recognize the other as a subject like itself in order to be recognized by the other...In its encounter with the other, the self wishes to affirm its absolute independence even though its need for the other and the other’s similar wish undercut that affirmation. (p. 32)

Recognition becomes mutual. The tension between establishing an autonomous boundary for the self, yet

¹⁰ See Horney (1950), Kohut (1996), and Siegel and Kohut (2000).

¹¹ See especially, Kets de Vries (2006, pp. 9–11).

acknowledging others by doing so, and being acknowledged becomes permanent. The wish to resolve this tension often leads to domination and subordination. There is no subject without another subject. The self becomes a connected self. Discovering one's past associations is dealing with those individuals who have influenced a person's development so far. And, connections are current and future looking as well. Understanding who are those individuals with whom one currently has some relationship is as important as understanding the past. In fact, if Benjamin and others are correct, we cannot have access to the unconscious without thinking about the tension between autonomy and connection.

Jean Baker Miller (1976), and later Carol Gilligan (1982), made the controversial claim that such a connected self was gendered. The controversy arose in part because Gilligan was writing in the context of Kohlberg's (1969) stages of moral development that put a "higher" value on being autonomous, rather than connected. The underlying idea of authenticity as the essential self was the culprit. We need a view of the authentic self that takes into account the mutuality and paradox of recognition, and the permanent tension between self and other, autonomy and connection, which comes with mutuality.

We can summarize our more nuanced view of the self as follows. The essential self is a starting point. We begin to try and explicate our values, or at least what we would say our values are now. Self-enlargement asks us to more deeply probe into our past, and try and understand some of our history that makes us the unique person we are. Self-connection asks us to see both our current values and our past associations as enmeshed in a set of relationships. We need to keep present the tension between self and other. We also need to understand aspiration and the future.

Just as our current behavior is shaped by our understanding of the past, so too is it shaped by our aspirations, our ideas about the kind of lives we want to live. Some have such a clear and compelling vision of their own futures that the present is literally caused by these future visions. Imagine parents who have a clear idea that they want their sons or daughters to follow in a particular direction. Such a future vision can literally script their lives. More generally, think about some great leaders who have articulated a vision of the future such as Gandhi's vision of self-rule for India, causing millions of people to enact a present based on that future vision.

As we look forward, we constantly struggle with changing our lives, indeed with changing the very idea of our "self." We have aspirations for ourselves and for those connected to us, about the lives we want to live and the effects we want to have on others. Of course, these future aspirations are connected to our understanding of the past, our connections with others, and our understanding of our

current values. Sometimes our current values can express these aspirations, our deepest hopes and dreams about how we want to live. Living authentically means asking hard questions about these aspirations, not taking them at face value, understanding the connections to past, present, and future that they are based on. But, if living authentically is to be more than an introspective journey, we must take account of how human beings remake their world.

We have suggested that our idea of authenticity as acting on our values, and its associated view of the self as a vessel filled with values, is of limited usefulness, and needs to be more nuanced. We have argued that we need to see authenticity, and hence our values, as a more creative process. Living authentically is at once engaging our current values as best as we understand them, constantly querying our past for clues about our idiosyncrasies and behaviors, engaging in conversation and relationships with others, and remaking our futures with our aspirations. If this more nuanced view of the self enmeshed with others is useful, then we need to rethink our idea about responsible leadership to include this more nuanced view of authenticity and values.

The Poetic Self and Responsible Leadership: Creating Self and Community

Uhl-Bien (2006) has outlined a different approach to leadership based on a view of the self that is relational. Because her purpose is to develop a relational theory of leadership, Uhl-Bien does not explicitly connect this theory to the psychoanalytic literature. However, something like the relational view of leadership seems to make sense as we develop a more nuanced view of authenticity and the self as we explained it in the previous section. Maak and Pless's (2006a, b) take Uhl-Bien's relational theory and suggest that the idea of "moral person" needs to be at the center. We go further to argue that "moral person" needs to be unpacked into something like the poetic self.

The "poetic self" stems from Harold Bloom's (1997) idea of the "strong poet" who literally sees the world in a way that is different from others, but is also embedded in a number of communities. It is the intersection of our values, our past, our set of connections to others, and our aspirations. Our aspirations include not only individual aspirations but also community aspirations. Thus, the poetic self embraces the idea of simultaneously creating self and community. Indeed, language works so that there are no desert island speakers. It is social and interconnected as surely as subjects are connected to objects that become subjects. Authenticity becomes the project of finding this unique expression of our own humanity that takes account of both individual (and intra-psychic) and community (and inter-subjective) aspirations.

To Maak and Pless's question, "What makes a responsible leader," we would answer that at a minimum, leadership requires the effort to be authentic understood in the sense of starting with one's values, seeking to understand the influence of the past, the set of connections or relationships in which one is entangled (Uhl-Bien 2006, p. 658), and one's aspirations. This conception of the poetic self means that leaders must think beyond followers and take on at least some responsibility for the stakeholders in the organizations that they lead, as Maak and Pless (2006b, p. 105) argue.

Taking such an approach to responsible leadership squarely places the theory in the pragmatist domain. Philosophers, such as John Dewey and Richard Rorty, have argued that the project of self-creation is a private project, whereas the project of "community creation" is a public project. If something like the account we have given of the essential plus enlarged plus connected self is helpful, then we can begin to dissolve the public-private distinction in this sphere, and see self-creation and community creation as two sides of the same coin.¹² We create self in part by creating connection, and as we create connection, we create self.¹³ This is the implication of the mutuality of recognition, and the enduring tension between self and other.

We have only begun to sketch the idea of the poetic self and its connection to responsible leadership. There is much more to be said. However, an immediate question for business ethicists is how this idea may or may not translate into business organizations. One of the key ideas in business ethics is that it makes sense to claim that organizations have values, and that they can act on them. Immediately, the same questions about authentic organizations come to mind. Responsible leaders want to lead authentic organizations, but the process of creating authentic organizations is not so easy.

Oftentimes organizations announce their values, print them on cards, and hand them out to employees and other stakeholders. We then carefully watch and see whether the organization acts in a way that is consistent with those values. As in the case of individuals, there are multiple problems with this rather simple analytical scheme. First, values are difficult to know for individuals. They are at least as difficult to know for organizations that may consist of a great number of individuals, with different and

conflicting interpretations of these values. Like the individual case, there is a knowledge problem about how organizations can know and agree on what their values are. We believe that it is more fruitful to approach this problem in terms of an ongoing process of conversation. Second, it is difficult to always pin down what actually motivates organizations to do what they do. There can be multiple conflicting reasons and causes of organizational action, only some of which is attributable to the role of organizational values.

In summary, we believe that we can conceptualize the "poetic organization" much along the lines of the poetic self. Authenticity in organizations becomes a process of starting with where the organizational values are thought to be. Second, organizations must become aware of their history and their historical routines. Third, every organization is embedded in a network of stakeholder relationships. Finally, most organizations have some kind of purpose or aspiration. By understanding these processes of self-understanding, connection, and aspiration, we have a chance to make adjustments to make our organizations more fit for human beings. Creating such organizations is the work of responsible leaders and responsible leadership. That is a much longer story to tell, and it is only possible if we adopt Maak and Pless's (2006a) idea that leadership studies (and we would add the entire field of "business ethics") becomes:

A specific frame of mind promoting a shift from a purely economic, positivist and self-interested mindset to a frame of thinking that has all constituents and the common good in mind. (p. 1)

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¹² There are many reasons that we may want to reconstruct the public-private distinction for purposes of personal freedom, but we should now be tempted to do so at the cost of a more nuanced version of the self.

¹³ As the relational psychoanalysts would say, "Where there is subject there is object." For an overview of some of the issues here see Stolorow et al. (1987) and Jordan et al. (2004). There is a very rich literature here that is suggestive of many research questions for leadership theory.

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