

Leadership and Self-Awareness

As fallen individuals humans have a propensity to lack self-awareness thus becoming self-referential, the utilitarian treatment of others follows. Individuals and institutions suffer and functional purposes are impeded. Furthermore, to be self-referential is to lose reference to the Transcendental, and objective, values God has revealed in Nature and in Scripture. Self-justification and rationalization of bad behavior generally follows self-referentialism. Self-deception is often a consequence. When these behaviors and cover-ups occur in the lives of leaders it results in institutional dysfunction. Organizations become little more than an extension of the leader's lack of spiritual health. This is a seminar that seeks to understand the causes and cures for these types of pathologies, exploring the Scriptures to discover Biblical processes essential to mend the lives of both leaders and the institutions they serve.

Jerry Root is a Professor of Evangelism and Leadership at Wheaton College and serves as the Director of the Evangelism Initiative. Jerry is a graduate of Whittier College and Talbot Graduate School of Theology at Biola University; he received his PhD from the Open University. Jerry is the author or co-author of numerous books on C.S. Lewis, including *The Surprising Imagination of C.S. Lewis: An Introduction*, with Mark Neal, *C.S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil: An Investigation of a Pervasive Theme*, and *The Soul of C.S. Lewis: A Meditative Journey through Twenty-six of His Best Loved Writings*. Jerry is the co-author of *The Sacrament of Evangelism* and co-editor, with Wayne Martindale, of *The Quotable C.S. Lewis*. He also teaches graduate courses (MA in Evangelism and Leadership Program) and undergraduate courses (Christian Formation and Ministry Department) at Wheaton College. In addition, Jerry has been a visiting professor at Talbot Graduate School of Theology and Biola University from 1990 to the present. He and his wife, Claudia, have four grown children - all of whom are married - and thirteen grandchildren.

Introduction

1. Self-awareness, ironically, is not centered in oneself.
2. The Self cannot be understood apart from context. Owen Barfield once wrote, “The experience of oneself over against that which is not oneself is a *sine qua non* of human consciousness” *Owen Barfield on C. S. Lewis*. P. 46. [sine qua non is Latin for “that without which there is nothing”. Barfield is saying, we cannot know or understand ourselves without a larger context for such understanding.]
 - a. Objectivity vs Subjectivism. [Literary Critic Terry Eagleton: “The subjective is a matter of value, while the world is a matter of fact”. After Theory P. 47]
 - 1) Objectivity speaks of the fact that there is an “objective” world that exists independent of my thoughts about it. Any effort to understand features of that world implies that my intellectual grasp of a given matter will need to correspond with reality. This is among the main points C. S. Lewis is making in his book, *The Abolition of Man*.
 - 2) Subjectivity refers to the subject (or a knower); one who—when life is properly considered—should want to know about the objective world in order to understand himself and his place in that world.

- 3) *Subjectivism*, on the other hand, is that state whereby the subject (the knower) is no longer responsive to the objects around him or her; creating a vision of reality that is made up, it is relativistic and false.
- b. To accurately understand the reality of self, others, and the world in which we find ourselves is necessary in a life in pursuit of truth. The understanding of reality in order to know the truth is essential for sound leadership.
- c. Truth in relation to reality: Truth is not reality, truth is what I think about reality when I think accurately.
- d. The pursuit of truth is always an unfinished business (we can have sure words even if we cannot have the last word on a matter). Failure at this point leads to lack of self-awareness and is disastrous when it comes to leadership. In such cases the leader is at risk of becoming self-referential and at risk of creating an organization that is merely an extension of his or her own dysfunction.
3. At play are questions of Ontology (which is the study of being and existence), Teleology (the study of design, or the ends to which a thing moves; Teleology seeks to understand the purpose of a thing in its context or function) and Epistemology (the study of knowledge: Can we know? Do we know? How do we know? And, how do we know we know?).

Self-Awareness

(Knowing something about Ontology is essential for Self-Awareness and Leadership)

1. The first question of Ontology, according to thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, C. S. Lewis, and Francis Schaeffer, is “Why is something there rather than nothing there”?
2. In other words, “In a universe of contingencies, if anything exists, something must be eternal; that is, something must have necessary existence. What is that Necessary thing”? [Contingency may be understood in this way: contingent things have no independent existence, their existence is caused by something that exists prior to their existence. In this regard, Christians would understand that they exist, in fact all of the visible world exists because God, who is non-Contingent, created and purposed things to be, and to do, what He intended for them to be and do].
3. Options to consider when thinking about origins:
 - a. Things just happened.
 - b. Matter is eternal.
 - c. Something immaterial is eternal.
4. The implication of Chance vs. Cause approaches to origins:

Chance = no direction = no goals/ends = no purpose = no meaning

Cause = direction = goals/ends = purpose = meaning

5. What is suggested in all of this is that “Creation implies intention”. Everything, and everyone, has meaning and value.
6. Dante described it this way, that: “Function precedes essence” *The De Monarchia*.
7. Function applies to rulers and ruled alike; and each has value, meaning, and worth. Self-aware leaders are leaders growing in their sense of the truth of these facts. They begin to see their role and responsibility to themselves and others as something purposed and assigned by God, to accomplish something of His mission in the world.

Self-Awareness and Teleology

(Leaders tend to be Self-Referential & Utilitarian, or Self-Aware & Empathetic).

[To be Self-Referential means that a person casts meaning and purpose for himself without respect for the bigger picture. He does everything in reference to himself without respect for the organization or the needs of others. Nothing of “Servant Leadership” is in evidence of the Self-Referential leader. Utility speaks of the “usefulness” of a thing. The Self-Referential leader values others only if they are useful to him, and serve his purposes rather than considering the higher purposes of God and his mission in the world].

1. Function speaks of design and intention.
2. Developmentalists. [The Developmentalists were social scientists who, through observation, saw there are predictable patterns evidenced in any maturation process. They also saw that all development in a fallen world occurs after moments of “disequilibrium” i.e., those moments that reveal our present understanding of things is insufficient to account for some bit of new data. Consequently change is necessary. It must be determined if the change-situation demands a “change of kind” (I must scrap my old way of thinking and embrace a new). Or do I need a “change of degree” (the old understanding is mostly real, but needs some modification. A tree doesn’t need to give up its interior rings in order to add new ones, but if it doesn’t add new ones, it dies).
3. Fixing what is broken, is necessary in order to grow and mature according to design.
4. God wants to restore in us the *Image Dei*. That is, He wants us to begin to resemble the character of Christ. The process may be painful; but it is a necessary one if leaders are to become Self-Aware, and sufficiently willing to serve those they lead.

Self-Awareness and Epistemology

(Epistemological Chaos is a characteristic of Self-Referential leadership. On the other hand, the Self-Aware cultivate Epistemological Clarity—people in the organization understand the purpose of the organization and see their place and purpose in the organization. Ambiguity and anxiety are minimized where there is clarity of purpose.)

1. Richard Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*. Unethical arguments are self-referential.
2. The basic questions of Epistemology:
 - a. Can you know?

- b. Do you know?
 - c. How do you know?
 - d. How do you know you know?
 - 1) Authority.
 - 2) Reason.
 - 3) Experience.
 - e. “On these three, mixed in varying proportions, all of our knowledge depends”. C. S. Lewis, “Religion: Reality or Substitute,” *Christian Reflections*. P. 41.
3. “Whatsoever credit or authority we give to any proposition more than it receives from the principles and proofs it supports itself on, is owing to our inclination that way”. Philosopher Basil Mitchell, quoting John Locke. *Newman after a Hundred Years*. P. 223.
 4. The Scriptures say in Ephesians 4:12 that it is the role of a pastor-teacher (or leader) to “equip” the workers for service. The word for “equip” in the Greek, is *katartismos*. The word had many uses in New Testament times, but primarily, two:
 - 1) It was a medical term and meant “to mend”, as in the case of a medical doctor mending a broken bone.
 - 2) It was also a nautical term and meant “to rig a ship for full sail (i.e., deploy purposefully)”.
 - a. There are significant instances of this mending and deploying in Scripture whereby a Biblical pattern can be discerned: Paul, Moses, Isaiah, John 15, Etc.
 - b. The Biblical pattern, closely followed by a Self-Aware leader, produces positive Morale. “If all were eyes where would the hearing be? One Body many Members”. Paul.
 - c. Note the difference between “Unity” vs. “Uniformity”. One of these is organizationally healthy, the other is a sign of organizational infirmity.
 - d. In this regard not the wisdom in C. S. Lewis’s statement that, “Obedience is the road to freedom, humility the road to pleasure, unity the road to personality”. From C. S. Lewis “Membership” in *The Weight of Glory*. P. 125.
1. Mission and the Role of the “Bogat” (explain). In the Scriptures we read lists of genealogies where it is noted that one generation “bogat” another generation which “bogat” another, etc. We never hear of some of these people again. Nevertheless, the role they played was an important one (Illustrate).

2. “Reproducing Reproducers” Dawson Trotman.
3. From Self-Referential and Utilitarian to Self-Aware and Empathetic.
4. Examples and Stories.

Suggested Readings:

BUECHNER, Frederick, *Now and Then*.

PETERSON, Jordan, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*.

MERTON, Thomas, *Seeds of Contemplation*.

UNDERHILL, Evelyn, *Collected Papers*.