



# THE CARE OF THE SELF AND THE *ETHOS* OF LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC AND CRISIS

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*Foucault's notion of the "care of the self" is essential in preparing leaders for crisis situations. Crisis situations are characterized by insecurity, uncertainty, and disruption. Hence, it demands for leadership who will provide direction, inspiration, hope, and solution. Leaders must be prepared in encountering crisis situation as well as in the effective performance of crisis leadership tasks. Leadership preparation for crisis situation need not only scientific and technical know-how but also the development of one's character, values, and moral conviction. Leaders must be guided by rational discourse, convictions, principles, and truth. Their actions and decisions must be consistent with truth, beliefs, values, and convictions.*

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Crisis, Care of the Self, Ethos of Leadership

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## INTRODUCTION: COVID-19 AND THE TEST OF LEADERSHIP

Experts in business and politics described the characteristics of leadership in these difficult times as empathy and intelligence,<sup>1</sup> knowledge and flexibility,<sup>2</sup> readiness to know, to do, and to inspire people,<sup>3</sup> and honesty, agility, and value for people.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these leadership traits, Champoux-Paille and Croteau concluded that the characteristics of the new type of leadership that emerged during this pandemic is traditional feminine leadership.<sup>5</sup> “Resilience, courage, flexibility, listening, empathy, collaboration, caring, and recognition of collective contribution” are all traits possessed by feminine leadership.<sup>6</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic has also become a test of leadership particularly to those occupying leadership positions in the government and business sectors. Kerrissey and Edmondson articulated that leaders who passed the test were those who “act in an urgent, honest, and iterative fashion, recognizing that mistakes are inevitable and correcting course – not assigning blame – is the way to deal with them when they occur.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, they explained that communication was also critical in passing the test. Those who passed the test conveyed the message with clarity, honesty, and compassion. Kerrissey and Edmondson laid down four leadership lessons that can be learned from the pandemic. First, leaders should act with urgency.

They have to make a fast decision and should not take things for granted. Next, leaders should also communicate with transparency. They have to be transparent not only with facts but also with their emotions and feelings. They should not be afraid to express their fear and anxiety. It is also important for leaders to respond productively to mistakes. This is an unprecedented situation. No one has been in this situation before. In making decisions, leaders may commit miscalculations and may miss the target. In this context, leaders should not blame others; rather, they should correct mistakes immediately. Lastly, leaders should manage emotions and expectations in these difficult times. This can be done by providing people with constant updating about the crisis.

Based on the discussion above, one of the themes that has come out at the start of this pandemic is the need for responsive and competent leadership. Leadership is critical in the governmental efforts in addressing the crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has also brought us back to the basic principle that leadership is all about the self. Values and character including the personal qualities and traits of the person who is leading play a critical leadership role. Leadership, therefore, is not only about leadership styles and techniques.

This article is an exposition on the relevance of the notion of “care of the self” by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to leadership. Furthermore, this article analyzes why “care of the self” is essential for leaders particularly in times of pandemic as well as in preparing for a crisis. In this context, the objectives of this article are to formulate a philosophical framework for leadership development and to provide ethics of leadership based on the notion of the “care of the self.” This article is purely a library work. All information is taken from existing literature on leadership.

<sup>1</sup> M. Kerrissey and A. Edmondson, What Good Leadership Looks Like During This Pandemic, April 23, 2020 @<https://hbr.org/2020/04/what-good-leadership-looks-like-this-pandemic>.

<sup>2</sup> D. Foster, Leading Through Uncertainty, March 12, 2020 @<https://www.harvardbusiness.org/leading-through-uncertainty>.

<sup>3</sup> V. Boris, How Leaders at All Levels Are Taking on Change Management, April 8, 2020 @<https://www.harvardbusiness.org/how-leaders-at-all-levels-are-taking-on-change-management>.

<sup>4</sup> H. Kretchner, 3 Leadership Lessons from the Age of Coronavirus, August 12, 2020 @<https://weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/coronavirus-leadership-women-leaders-jacinda-arden>.

<sup>5</sup> L. Champoux-Paille and A. Croteau, The reason why female leaders are excelling at managing the coronavirus, May 18, 2020 @<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/why-women-leaders-are-excelling-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>.

<sup>6</sup> L. Champoux-Paille and A. Croteau.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kerrissey and A. Edmondson.





This article will start with a discussion of Lowney and Kramer's Leadership Values. This is to demonstrate how values can make a leader effective and efficient in performing tasks and responsibilities. This part will be followed by an exposition on the notion of the "care of the self" and the models of the "care of the self", which are all about transforming oneself and improving oneself based on values, beliefs, and truths. After these topics, an analysis of the notion of *parrhesia* will be presented. This aims to stress the importance of truth-telling based on one's values and beliefs. The last parts of this article are discussions on crisis leadership as well as the integration of the care of the self and crisis leadership.

#### LOWNEY AND KRAMER'S LEADERSHIP VALUES

Chris Lowney in his book, *Heroic Leadership*, stressed that the foundation of successful leadership is self-awareness. According to Lowney, "leaders thrive by understanding who they are and what they value, by becoming aware of unhealthy blind spots or weaknesses that can derail them, and by cultivating the habit of continuous self-reflection and learning"<sup>8</sup> Cultivating leadership skills by looking into one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and worldview is essential in overcoming challenges and difficulties. Those who commit to continuous learning and self-reflection are the ones that "stand a chance of surfing the waves of change successfully."<sup>9</sup> In facing "unfamiliar and challenging environments," one needs not tactical handbooks on how to "address every foreseeable contingency."<sup>10</sup> Rather, one has to learn, to innovate, to exercise good judgment, to take responsibility for their actions, and to

take risks.<sup>11</sup> All of these boil (ed) down to self-awareness and self-understanding. Lowney concluded that:

All leadership begins with self-leadership, and self-leadership begins with knowing oneself. First comes the foundation: goals and values, an understanding of personal strengths and obstacles, and an outlook on the world. Then comes the invigorating daily habit of refreshing and deepening self-knowledge while immersing oneself in a constantly evolving world.<sup>12</sup>

This situation marked by sudden and accelerating change as well as uncertainty and ambiguity can be surpassed by leaders who have self-confidence, capability to make good judgment, ability to learn, and comfortable in making decisions.<sup>13</sup>

Aside from self-awareness, Lowney also identified three additional qualities that leaders should also possess and develop. These are ingenuity, love, and heroism.<sup>14</sup> Ingenuity refers to the leaders' ability to "explore ideas, approaches, and cultures." It is the leaders' ability to make themselves comfortable in an unfamiliar terrain and changing world. The leaders can accept change without compromising personal principles and values. Love is shown when leaders are confident with their own talent, dignity, and potentiality to lead, when they also respect the talent, dignity, and potential of others, and when they create an atmosphere where everyone is "energized by loyalty, affection, and mutual support." Lastly, heroism is exhibited by leaders who provide an inspiring future and at the same time shaping the future. It is exhibited by leaders who create opportunities for themselves and others.

Similar to Lowney, Harry Kraemer, Jr. in his book, *From Values to Action: The Four Principles*

<sup>8</sup> C. Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company that Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 27.

<sup>9</sup> Lowney, 96.

<sup>10</sup> Lowney, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Lowney, 107.

<sup>12</sup> Lowney, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Lowney, 108.

<sup>14</sup> Lowney, 29-33.





of *Values-Based Leadership* also highlighted the importance of developing personal values for successful leadership. Kraemer explained:

Your ability to influence people, whether you are leading a team of two or running an organization of twenty thousand, depends significantly on their ability to appreciate your values. Your values as a leader should be so clearly understood that if you put three, five, twenty, or even one hundred members of your team together without you in a room, they would be able to explain what you stand for inconsistent terms. The more they understand your values, the better they will relate to you and follow your lead.<sup>15</sup>

Kramer identified and expounded four leadership values that one has to cultivate. These are self-reflection, balance and perspective, true self-confidence, and genuine humility.

Kramer's self-reflection is the same as Lowney's self-awareness principle. It is about the leaders' ability to know oneself particular one's weaknesses and areas for improvement. Kraemer explained the practical effect of self-reflection on leadership. Self-reflection will make the leaders effective in connecting and communicating with people. It will also help leaders identify their priorities based on their principles, beliefs, and values. Balance and perspective are essential to leadership because leaders can see issues, problems, and questions from all angles, from different viewpoints, and even from opposing ideas.<sup>16</sup> Leaders who have balance and perspective will have a holistic understanding of a given phenomenon, will be well-informed, and will be able to communicate their views effectively. Balance and perspective are similar to Lowney's ingenuity where one has to explore different ideas, principles, and approaches.

True self-confidence is a leadership attribute that allows leaders to see and accept themselves

exactly as they are.<sup>17</sup> Leaders who possess true self-confidence are comfortable with who they are and with other people who are better or smarter than them.<sup>18</sup> These are the leaders who are aware of and comfortable with their imperfections and limitations, and they commit to keep on improving themselves to overcome such imperfections and limitations. Lastly, leaders should possess and develop genuine humility. Kraemer described genuine humility as "never forgetting who you are," valuing each person in the organization, and "treating everyone respectfully."<sup>19</sup> Leaders exhibited genuine humility when they "remain authentic, approachable, and open to others."<sup>20</sup> Genuinely humble leaders are grounded, see others as gifts, and treat each member of the organization as a human person.<sup>21</sup> True self-confidence and genuine humility are similar to Lowney's notion of love where leaders demonstrate the ability to accept and respect themselves as well as others.

Lowney and Kraemer provided values that leaders should develop and exhibit. These values could not be learned by simply studying leadership styles and approaches. These values should come from within or from the self. These should be cultivated daily by developing the habit of continuous learning and unlearning. These values of self-awareness, self-reflection, ingenuity, balance, perspective, love, true self-confidence, genuine humility, and heroism are essential for leaders to succeed in an environment that is rapidly and suddenly changing and creating a situation that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. These values are the foundation of leadership traits – resilience, courage, flexibility, listening, empathy, collaboration, caring, and recognition of collective contribution – that

<sup>15</sup> H. Kraemer, Jr. *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 79.

<sup>16</sup> Kraemer, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Kraemer, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Kraemer.

<sup>19</sup> Kraemer, 60.

<sup>20</sup> Kraemer.

<sup>21</sup> Kraemer.





made some leaders overcome the challenges in these times of pandemic.

The shift from leadership styles and approaches to the self and values of the leader during these times of pandemic is not new. Philosophers of ancient times already talked about the cultivation of the self in relation to governing and leading. French philosopher Michel Foucault provided a philosophical analysis and interpretation of these ancient ideas about the self and its importance to society, government, and institutions. In the remaining part of this paper, Foucault's analysis and interpretation of the ancient Greek's "care of the self" will be discussed. Foucault's analysis and interpretation of the ancient Greek's "care of the self" is relevant to the discussion about the self and values of the leader. It is also timely since it reminds everyone that in these times of crisis, we need leaders who care for themselves and for others as well as citizens who also understand the meaning of caring for oneself and its significance to social and civic duties and responsibilities.

## THE CARE OF THE SELF

The care of the self is linked to the exercise of power. It is the power of "taking care of oneself" to exercise political power over others. Foucault stressed that one cannot govern others well, one cannot transform one's privileges into political action on others into rational action, if one is not concerned about oneself.<sup>22</sup> The care of the self is also linked to the inadequacy of education.<sup>23</sup> One has to care for oneself because one always lacks something. He has to keep on improving his knowledge and skills. Things are always changing, new trends and challenges are

always emerging, issues and problems are always arising. Hence, those who want to govern must recognize their inadequacy in the light of these changes to realize the need to keep on improving themselves.

The care of the self is a necessity for the young. The young should be trained at the earliest point of their life to govern themselves and to keep on improving themselves before they govern others.<sup>24</sup> Alcibiades, for example, was an ambitious young man who wanted to take charge of the city, manage its affairs, and enter into competition with the kings of Sparta or the rulers of Persia.<sup>25</sup> However, he realized that he lacked knowledge on how to manage the affairs of the city-state, he lacks purpose in his political activity, and he knew nothing about the object of good government.<sup>26</sup> He was reminded at the earliest point of his life that before he could achieve his political ambitions, he should first attend to himself.

The young should be guided by a master in their path towards improvement. The master, then, is essential in the care of the self. The master not only serves as a teacher of wisdom but also as a moral guide to the young. The master is the one who cares for the young to care for himself.<sup>27</sup> He is the one who cares for caring. He served as a moral compass for the young's desire to care for and to improve himself. The significance of the master in the care of the self also means that caring for oneself is not an individual or solo act. It goes through a relationship. It is relational because it can be realized only with the guidance of the master. The divine, aside from the master, is also important in the care of the self. To care for the self, Foucault explained, is to know

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982*, Frederic Gros, ed., Graham Burchell, trans. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 36.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 44.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 37-38.

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 58-59.







oneself by looking at oneself in an element that is the same as the self.<sup>28</sup> This element, which is the very source of thought and knowledge, is the divine. In other words, the care of the self involves looking at oneself not only from purely existential, social, political, or economic perspectives but also looking at oneself in the element of the divine. Caring for the self involves not only knowing oneself but also knowing for one to see and understand himself.

Knowing and understanding oneself implies labor. Care of the self is taken from the Greek words, *epimeleia heautou*. *Epimeleia*, as Foucault interpreted, implies labor.<sup>29</sup> The care of the self includes taking different activities that lead to the development and transformation of oneself. Taking care of oneself involves a lot of exercises, practical tasks, meditations, readings, conversations, and recollection of truths.<sup>30</sup> Taking care of the self is a social practice and an isolated activity because it involves “an entire activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others were linked together.”<sup>31</sup> It is a social practice that can be done in more or less institutionalized structures like the schools, lecture halls, or spiritual direction. It can also be found in a “bundle of customary relations of kinship, friendship, and obligation.”<sup>32</sup>

Care of the self is significant to one's life and existence. This can be illustrated by the metaphor of navigation.<sup>33</sup> In steering or piloting, one journeys from one place to another. The aim is to reach the place of destiny and that place of destiny could be a new city or a hometown. The journey from the place of origin to the place of destination involves calculated, foreseen, and

unforeseen risks. Because of these risks, the pilot may experience delay or may not reach the place of destiny or may have gone astray or may go to another place. The pilot may go to a more unfamiliar and dangerous place. Given this situation, navigation implies knowledge, technique, and art to arrive safely at the place of destination. The pilot must be skilled and knowledgeable in this technique and art of navigation. This is also true in living. In life, everyone has a goal. To achieve that goal one has to care for oneself, know oneself, and keep on improving oneself. One should be able to overcome the risks and dangers in a journey by being knowledgeable of the environment and oneself.

The care of the self is closely related to governing and being governed. Using the metaphor of navigation, the one who governs must first know the art and technique of governing to guide the people in realizing their aims as a whole and in overcoming the problems and challenges that they encounter. Governing includes having a goal, inspiring people to work towards the goals, motivating people to keep on moving towards the goals despite the risks and difficulties, and showing people the importance of caring for themselves to achieve their goal and to overcome all odds. For Foucault, governing, being governed, and care of the self form a sequence or a series.<sup>34</sup> These three are interrelated. The care of the self is essential in governing oneself as well as in governing others. The care of the self should be properly understood in the context of governing and being governed. Its aims are personal growth, ethical and political development for one to govern well and for the governed to become responsible and productive individuals. The care of the self is both an ethical and a political question because it is about

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 70-71.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, 52-53.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 248-249.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 44-45.





controlling one's desires to realize the common goal. It is about tempering one's selfishness and inspiring others to work cooperatively with one another.

## MODELS OF THE CARE OF THE SELF

Foucault identified and discussed three models of care of the self. The first model is the Platonic model. In the Platonic model, the care of the self is a result of the discovery of ignorance. In this model, care of the self is essentially "knowing oneself."<sup>35</sup> This knowing of oneself is realized through the Platonic method of recollection. In recollection, the "knowledge of the self and the knowledge of the truth, care of the self and return to being are brought together and sealed off in a single movement."<sup>36</sup> Recollection leads one not only to knowing oneself but also to know the truth. Care of the self, therefore, is about knowing oneself and knowing the truth about one's own being. Care of the self provides an objective understanding of oneself through self-knowledge and self-examination. Self-knowledge and self-examination are essential to the Platonic model. The purpose of self-examination is not to "discover one's guilt, down to its most trifling forms and its most tenuous roots" but to "commit to memory, to have them present in one's mind, legitimate ends" and to commit to "rules of conduct that enable one to achieve these ends through the choice of appropriate means."<sup>37</sup> Through examination, one reactivated and strengthened the rational equipment that ensures a wise behavior, and not resurrects culpability and guilt.

In the second model, the Christian model, care of the self is knowledge of the self that is

"linked in a complex way to knowledge of the truth."<sup>38</sup> In the Christian model, the method of purification is essential in self-knowledge. The heart must be purified first to understand the Truth, which is the Word. Once the heart is purified, the individual will gain knowledge of the Truth and self-knowledge. Foucault explained that "with Christianity, then we have a schema of a relationship between knowledge and care of the self that hinges on three points: first, circularity between the truth of the Text and self-knowledge; second, an exegetical method for self-knowledge; and finally the objective of self-renunciation."<sup>39</sup> If one desires self-knowledge, one has to purify one's heart and renounce one's desires of this world. The purification of heart and renunciation of worldly desires are important pre-requisite to self-knowledge because through these one will gain knowledge of the Truth, the Word. It is only in the knowledge of Word that one will know oneself. In Christianity, therefore, knowledge of the self cannot be separated from the knowledge of the Truth. The former is tightly interconnected with the latter.

The third model of care of the self is the Hellenistic model. This model is centered on "self-finalization of the relationship of self and conversion of self."<sup>40</sup> The third model postulates that knowledge of the self and knowledge of nature are linked to each other,<sup>41</sup> that is why it emphasizes acquiring virtues that will help one to defeat passions, being strong in times of adversity and temptation, setting one's objective in mind, and being ready to die.<sup>42</sup> Knowledge of the self, therefore, entails knowing and controlling one's natural inclinations and desires.

The first virtue that one must acquire is *paraskeue*. It refers to the openness and orientated

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* 254.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 254.

<sup>37</sup> Foucault., *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, 62.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 255.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 255.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 258.

<sup>41</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 278.

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 271.





preparation of an individual for the future and unforeseen events in life.<sup>43</sup> There are a lot of things in life that are beyond one's control. Life is full of surprises. It is constantly changing and evolving. Hence, an individual must develop a strong character to overcome difficulties and challenges in life. But aside from openness, orientated preparation, and strong character, an individual must also acquire *logoi* (discourses). *Logoi* is a "proposition justified by reason."<sup>44</sup> *Logoi* is a rational discourse "that states the truth and prescribes what we must do at the same time."<sup>45</sup> It is also a persuasive discourse that brings "not only convictions but also actions themselves."<sup>46</sup> Responding to changes and challenges as well as pitfalls and perils in life, in other words, does not only entail action but a guided rational action. It is an action that is based on rational discourses and principles. It is an action that is guided by the principle of "what ought to be done" in a particular situation. *Paraskeue* and *logoi* are interrelated. The former is the structure of the permanent transformation of *logoi* (true discourse), firmly fixed in the subject, into principles of morally acceptable behavior.<sup>47</sup> The *paraskeue* is, again, the element responsible for the transformation of *logoi* into an *ethos* (morally acceptable behavior).<sup>48</sup>

The third virtue that has to be acquired and developed in caring for the self is *askesis*. *Askesis* is the manifestation of the transformation of *logoi* (true discourses) into an *ethos* (morally acceptable behavior). It makes individuals subjects who tell the truth.<sup>49</sup> In developing the virtue of *askesis*, the individual embraced and owned the truth. Embracing and owning the truth is not enough. It must be confessed and professed. That is why

the fourth virtue that must be acquired after *askesis* is the virtue of *parrhesia* (speaking freely). *Parrhesia* is the "naked transmission of truth itself."<sup>50</sup> Those who speak freely about the truth are those who owned and embraced it. Those who were impregnated and subjectivized by the truth.<sup>51</sup> They did not only know the truth but they were also convinced that the truth must be propagated and defended.

### PARRHESIA

One of the essential virtues that needs to be acquired and developed in the care of the self is *parrhesia* (i.e., truth-telling or the courage to freely tell the truth). *Parrhesia* is the "courage of truth in the person who speaks and who, regardless of everything, takes the risk of telling the whole truth that he thinks, but it is also the interlocutor's courage in agreeing to accept the hurtful truth that he hears."<sup>52</sup> To illustrate *parrhesia* as the courage of telling the truth and taking the risk of telling the truth, Foucault provided a lengthy analysis of Socrates' *parrhesia*. He explained that Socrates defined *parrhesia* as a "form of mission" that he will never abandon and "which he will practice constantly at the very end."<sup>53</sup> For Socrates, Foucault elaborated, *parrhesia* was a job and a responsibility that cannot be abandoned until the very end.<sup>54</sup> Socrates' mission aimed to care for others so that they take care of themselves particularly their souls, their reasons, and truth; not their wealth, reputation, honors, and offices.<sup>55</sup> The care of the self is, for Socrates, essentially about caring for the soul and reason. The care of the self means freedom from opinions that are

<sup>43</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 321.

<sup>44</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 323.

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 323.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 323.

<sup>47</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 332.

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 332.

<sup>49</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 332.

<sup>50</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 382.

<sup>51</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 382.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth: Lectures at the College de France 1983-1984* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13.

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 85.

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 85.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 86.







capable of corrupting the soul and at the same time embracing the opinion that enables one to decide what is just and unjust.<sup>56</sup> In other words, it means that care of the self is knowing and owning the truth that determines what is just and unjust. Socrates' care of the self was non-political because it is "connected to the gods, the relation to truth, and the relation to others."<sup>57</sup> It was non-political because Socrates took care of others so that they would learn to take care of themselves.<sup>58</sup> This also implies that the care of the self was not all about the self, it was also about "caring for someone, looking after a flock, taking care of one's family, or as is often found with regard to physicians, caring for patients."<sup>59</sup> The care of the self is non-political because one is taking care of others not intending to utilize them to achieve personal interests or use them as mere instruments. The goal of taking care of others is for others to take care of themselves.

Foucault took note of the shift in the object of the care of the self. He realized that the object of the care of the self is life (bio),<sup>60</sup> not only reason and soul. The lifestyle, the way of living, or the mode of existence is the object of the care of the self. Foucault did not see that this object is incompatible with the soul. The philosophy of the soul and the philosophy of existence are complementary for they are all about taking care of the self of the person; and that the self is not only spiritual or moral but also existential.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the object of the care of the self is life itself which consists of spiritual and existential. The way one lives (both spiritual and existential) is the object of the care of the self.

Foucault pointed out that Socrates got his authority to teach from the harmony between

his life and his discourse, from the harmony that exists between what he says, his way of saying things, and how he lives.<sup>62</sup> Authentic existence marked by harmony and consistency between what one says and how one lives is the source of Socrates' authority. That authentic existence is characterized by harmony between "Socrates' life and discourses to the practice of a true, free, and frank discourse."<sup>63</sup> For Socrates, his mode of life and existence is the fundamental correlative of the practice of truth-telling. In the realm of care of the self, Foucault explained that truth-telling is to question one's mode of life, to "put this mode of life to the test, and to define what is in it that may be ratified and recognized as good and what must be rejected and condemned."<sup>64</sup> Foucault linked the care of the self to *parrhesia* and the ethical division between good and evil in the realm of existence.<sup>65</sup>

## CRISIS LEADERSHIP

A crisis is defined as "extended periods of high threat, high uncertainty, and high politics that disrupt a wide range of social, political, and organizational processes."<sup>66</sup> Crises are characterized by "dynamic and chaotic processes, not discrete events sequenced neatly on a linear time scale."<sup>67</sup> Leadership is critical in times of crisis because people look up to their leaders and "expect that they will minimize the impact of crisis at hand in the face of blame and criticism, chaos, disruptions in normal routines, and uncontrolled media reports."<sup>68</sup> Leaders are also expected to "grasp and address the crisis

<sup>56</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 105.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 91.

<sup>58</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 110.

<sup>59</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 110.

<sup>60</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 126-127.

<sup>61</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 127.

<sup>62</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 148.

<sup>63</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 148.

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 149.

<sup>65</sup> Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 149.

<sup>66</sup> A. Boin and P. Hart, Public leadership in times of crisis: Mission impossible? in *Public Administration Review*, September/October 2003, Volume 63, Number 5, 545.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> T. Nyenswah, et al., Leadership in Times of Crisis: The Example of Ebola Virus Disease in *Liberia in Health Systems and Reform*, 2(3): 194-207, 2016, ISSN: 2328-8604 print/2328-8620 online, DOI 10.1080/23288604.2016.1222793, p. 196.



while maintaining a sense of normality to make prudent decisions.”<sup>69</sup> These “decisions involve personal and political risks and consequences that could make or mar their political careers.”<sup>70</sup> Crisis and leadership are “closely intertwined phenomena.”<sup>71</sup> People experience insecurity and uncertainty in a crisis, that is why they want their leaders to “do something” and to act urgently to overcome such kind of situation.<sup>72</sup> Leaders are judged as “true leaders” when they “reduce stress” and able to “return to normality”; however, when they failed they became “obvious scapegoats.”<sup>73</sup>

Nyenswah, Engineer, and Peters identified five core tasks of crisis leadership.<sup>74</sup> These are sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making, crisis termination, and learning. These core tasks of crisis leadership explain that a leader in times of crisis must first understand the crisis as it unfolds (sense-making) including its barriers, challenges, limitations, as well as its psychological impacts. The leaders must also have the ability to identify and choose alternative courses of action (decision-making) that will solve, or at least minimize the impact of a crisis. This includes the ability to create groups or teams and to coordinate with different agencies in the implementation of policies and programs. The ability of a leader to communicate to explain (meaning-making) to the population the nature, causes, consequences, and the courses of action taken to mitigate the impact of the crisis is fundamental for crisis leadership. Terminating the crisis is the goal of crisis leadership. The leader, therefore, must demonstrate accountability in ending the crisis or failing to end the crisis (crisis termination). Lastly, leaders must learn from the crisis (learning) to initiate reforms and to further strengthen the organization and its systems in dealing with a future crisis.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Boin and Hart, 544.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> T. Nyenswah, 196.

In addition to Nyenswah, Engineer, and Peter’s five core tasks of crisis leadership, Boin, Kuipers, and Overdijklaid also laid down nine tasks of leadership in times of crisis such as: early recognition, sense-making, making critical decisions, orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination, coupling and decoupling, meaning-making, communication, rendering accountability, learning, and enhancing resilience.<sup>75</sup> They added four tasks that are not mentioned by Nyenswah, Engineer, and Peters. These are early recognition, orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination, coupling and decoupling, communication, and enhancing resiliency. For them, the role of leadership in times of crisis is strategic.<sup>76</sup> Leaders must carry out these tasks at the strategic level. In early recognition, leaders must be able to recognize and share the recognition of the emergence of a crisis. They must also facilitate the effective horizontal and vertical coordination between organizations and agencies in the implementation of policies and programs to resolve the crisis. They must also intervene to strengthen cooperation and coordination between organizations and agencies. They must also figure out what systems are working and what are not (coupling and decoupling). They must be able to decide “which systems should be switched off and which ones should be put on life support.”<sup>77</sup> Leaders, therefore, must have an “intimate knowledge of complex system”<sup>78</sup> for them to understand what system needs to be “turned on” or “turned off.” Communication is critical in times of crisis. Leaders must demonstrate effective communication skills. They have to explain the “crisis, its consequences, and what is being done to minimize the consequences.”<sup>79</sup> They “should

<sup>75</sup> A. Boin, et al., Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Framework for Assessment in *International Review of Public Administration*, Vol. 18., No. 1, April 2013, 82-87.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 85.



also offer ‘actionable advice,’ explaining what should be done, by whom, and why.”<sup>80</sup> Lastly, they have to enhance the organization’s and system’s resilience to be prepared for a future crisis.

### THE CARE OF THE SELF AND THE *ETHOS* OF LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC AND CRISIS

The care of the self is an art of living. One has to take care of oneself to have a meaningful existence. The care of the self is a technique that one has to acquire and develop to live well. The four virtues of *paraskeue*, *logoi*, *askesis*, and *parrhesia* are essential in living well and having a meaningful existence. One must be open and prepared for the unforeseen events in life, to the sudden changes, challenges, and miseries that jolted one’s tranquil existence. One must respond to these sudden changes and challenges with an action based on rational discourses and on the principle of “what ought to be done.” One must understand that these rational discourses and principles are based on truths and he must own the truth as well as passionately profess and defend it not only in words but also in deeds.

The objective of the care of the self is the formation of *the ethos* of leadership. *Ethos* refers to morally acceptable behavior. The *ethos* of leadership is a result of self-examination through a recollection of knowledge, purification of intention, renunciation of worldly desires, and knowledge of the truth. The *ethos* of leadership is an outcome of *paraskeue*, *logoi*, *askesis*, and *parrhesia*. *The ethos* of leadership is openness and orientated preparation for the future and unforeseen (*paraskeue*) events guided by rational discourse, convictions, principles, and truth

(*logoi*). *Ethos* is the transformation of true discourses (*askesis*) into action and behavior that is morally acceptable. *Ethos* is demonstrated in the act of truth-telling and living a life consistent with one’s truth, beliefs, values, and convictions.

The examination of oneself, the knowledge of oneself concerning the Truth, and the acquisition of virtues of openness and preparedness, responding to life challenges and changes based on rational discourses and ideal principles, owning and possessing the truth, and telling freely the truth boil down to the formation of an ethical leader. An ethical leader is the one who knows oneself, one who knows the Truth and lives a life according to that Truth, one who professes and defends the Truth both in words and in deeds, and one who deals with challenges and adjusts to changes in life based on rational discourses and ideal principles. Leadership, therefore, is about the leader, the person. It is not about possessing skills and techniques. It is about the self.

One important trait that a leader should possess is *parrhesia*. *Parrhesia* is the source of integrity because it demonstrates consistency and harmony in the life of the leader. It is a life based on the leader’s beliefs, values, and convictions. The leader’s integrity is beyond question and doubt if there is a relationship between beautiful existence and life for truth. Leaders should be like Socrates who viewed truth-telling as his moral duty and never to be abandoned until the end of his life. They should be like Socrates who risked his life in professing and defending the truth. Leaders, like Socrates, should teach and show young people the nobility in living a life according to the values, principles, convictions, and not based on power and wealth. They should show the beauty of leadership based on harmony between what one believes and how one lives.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



A crisis, like the Covid-19 pandemic, is characterized by insecurity, uncertainty, and disruption. The situation is dynamic, fluid, and chaotic. It is also the situation that demands leaders who will provide direction, inspiration, hope, and solution. Leaders in times of crisis must be able to perform tasks such as early recognition, sense-making, making critical decisions, orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination, coupling and decoupling, meaning-making, communication, rendering accountability, learning, and enhancing resilience. The performance of these tasks defines the kind of leadership demonstrated in times of crisis. It also determines the success or failure of leadership. Leaders, therefore, must be prepared in encountering crises as well as in the effective performance of crisis leadership tasks. Preparation for a crisis needs not only scientific and technical know-how, the leader must embrace the philosophy of the care of the self that is founded on the formation of the ethos of leadership. An *ethos* of leadership is characterized by openness and orientated preparation for the future and unforeseen (*paraskeue*) events guided by rational discourse, convictions, principles, and truth (*logoi*). An *ethos* of leadership is based on the transformation of true discourses (*askesis*) into action and behavior that is morally acceptable. An *ethos* of leadership is demonstrated in the act of truth-telling and living a life consistent with one's truth, beliefs, values, and convictions. Hence, in preparing for and managing crises, leaders must demonstrate their tasks guided by the *ethos* of leadership and "care of the self." They must be guided by rational discourse, convictions, principles, and truth. Their analysis of the situation, the decision on the course of action to take, and communication about the crisis itself must be based not only on hard facts. Those acts must also be guided by the principle of truth-telling and must be consistent with the truth, beliefs, values, and convictions (please see

Figure 1: Care of the Self, Crisis Leadership and Crisis Situation).

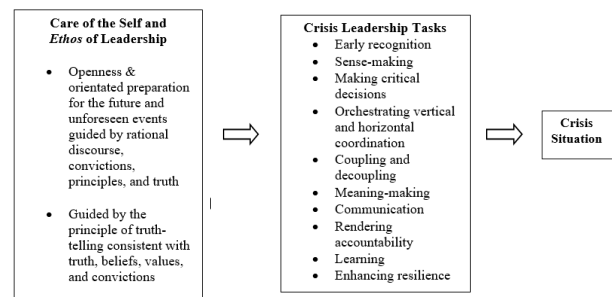


Figure 1: Care of the Self, Crisis Leadership and Crisis Situation

In this context, leadership in general and crisis leadership in particular are the art of living. To be an effective and successful leader during a period of crisis like the ongoing pandemic, one has to keep on knowing and improving oneself. One must commit to personal growth, ethical, and political development. One must exercise power over oneself by controlling, disciplining, and influencing oneself to temper selfishness and inspiring others to work cooperatively to achieve a common goal.



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