Ethics, Spirituality and Self:
Managerial Perspective and Leadership Implications

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the self, as both the centre of our identity and the focus of our spiritual life, has not been given enough consideration with regards to the ethics of managers and leaders. Informed by models of self-realisation and the Jungian process of individuation, our discussion suggests that the way we perceive and interpret our self affects our moral behaviour. In particular, integrity of the self fully participates in enhancing servant leadership and consistent ethical practice. We illustrate the argument with comments from various managers on the statement: 'Being true to your self'.

Keywords: Ethics, Spirituality, Self, Consciousness, Jung, Managers, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Studies about the ethics of organisational actors purport to understand why averagely moral people tend to act, occasionally or regularly, in a morally condemnable way. As researchers and bearers of moral responsibility, we have not clearly identified the reason behind such a failure of character. Maybe there is no clear reason that can explain such behaviour. The problem might also stem from the fact that social scientists traditionally examine organisational actors solely in the context of the organisation for which they work, rather than as human beings. As complex individuals, human beings are often influenced by contradictory forces and they may lack a sense of direction, hence people might embrace a different moral code inside the workplace from every day life. Managers, just like the rest of us, are individual selves whose existence extends beyond their environment and their relationships.

The self plays a much more prominent role in our morality than we usually think. In fact, one's sense of moral self or self-identity structures one's ethos (Blasi 1984; 1993), encouraging a moral behaviour consistent with 'who we are'. Studies on moral exemplarity led by Colby and Damon (1993; 1995) have suggested that people aspire to consistency between their actions and their aspirations, because their self is key to who they are. Consequently, a good knowledge of self enables one to make moral decisions 'with great certainty' (Colby and Damon 1993: 150). Business ethics research has paid little attention to the importance of the self in moral decision-making and enactment of a moral decision. However, recent research has begun to consider the mechanisms between self and moral decision and action (see for example Gozdz and Frager 2003; Sekerka and Bagozzi 2007). Psychology-based studies have integrated the concept of self more consistently, yet the self is conceived almost exclusively as a psychological device whilst its spiritual dimension is overlooked. This paper proposes to rehabilitate the self by acknowledging its link with spiritual traditions, exploring its influence on the morality of organisational actors, and highlighting its significance in moral leadership.

We first define the self by examining its various meanings. We discuss the relationship between self and community and then outline its moral implications. Next, we turn specifically to the spiritual and ethical component of the self and highlights the moral danger of compartmentalisation and unconnectedness to self. We stress how this discussion is relevant to foster more comprehensive styles of leadership, before exploring some managers'

interpretation of what it means to be true to the self. The paper offers conclusions on the significance of self-consciousness in moral behaviour within business organisations.

DEFINING THE SELF

Within a Virtue Ethics perspective, morality is about virtuousness. Virtues for Aristotle represent essential character traits or dispositions, depicting a sense of balance, acquired and developed through practice and reflection (Aristotle 1992). Buddhists recommend the pursuit of three Cardinal Virtues: non-attachment, benevolence and understanding, whilst Christians prone the medieval virtues of courage, justice, temperance and wisdom (Keown 1996; Hursthouse 1999). Virtuousness demands consistency and coherence between our actions and our character. The self is understood as the unifying element of our identity as individuals, and the founding resource of morality. It is therefore unsurprising that 'morality "begins with the self"' (Louden 1988: 377).

The individual self is both the subject and object of the moral reflection that informs our moral decisions, and more generally how we should live (Vice 2003). The self commonly represents our personality or the sense of being a person different from other people. However, many spiritual traditions speak of a higher Self, a part of our being that stands outside the personality, outside the conscious self, and outside the categories of conscious experience, including time. There are countless names attributed to this form of self. The ancient Greeks called it *daimon*, the ancient Romans, the *genius*; to the esoteric Kabbalist it is *tzelem*, whilst to Christians it is the Christ within. Our sense of being develops along our consciousness of self.

Psychologists associate the self with many and often contradictory conceptualisations. For example, whereas American ego-psychology tradition relates 'self' to a construction of the ego (i.e. the 'I', the subject), and cognitive psychology equals self with one's identity, the English tradition considers the self the locus of the whole psychic activity and the product of dynamic processes that foster the unity of the person (Doron and Parot 1991: 670-671). Layder (2004: 7) contends that the self is 'how a person regards themselves and how they, and others, relate to or behave towards themselves.' For Layder, the self is both sociological and psychological. The self is also essentially, though not exclusively, emotional as well as flexible and capable of evolution over a life-span. Furthermore, Layder (2004) depicts the self as the centre of awareness but also a bearer of something of a spiritual nature, the higher Self.

The self is therefore a complex entity, both stable and dynamic. Human beings are most essentially spiritual, whether they are conscious of their spirituality or not, and their spirituality lies in the self.

Colman describes the self as 'the overall process of the *organism* as a whole' and stresses that 'the totality of our being is made up of the totality of our action in the world' (2008: 353 and 355). He distinguishes between being a self, knowing we are a self and having a self. If every living being can be said to be a self, only creatures capable of self-reflexivity can develop a sense of self and then claim that they have a self (that is, a soul). The fact of having a self, however, depends on others first attributing a self to us in their mind. In other words, according to Colman (2008: 359), we come to have a self by the recognition others make that we are just like them, which leads them to treat us 'as beings' like themselves, and vice-versa. Taylor views the self as emerging through language as a source of exchange between agents, but even so, Taylor acknowledges that 'our sense of the good and our sense of self…are closely interwoven' (1989: 41).

Aïssel (2005: 284) views the personality as 'composed of a multitude of pieces called the small egos ('*les petits moi*') whose gathering constitutes the self.' Personality is influenced by these small egos that sometimes act in contradiction with one another. Whilst we identify with these pieces and think of us as a whole, in reality we are fragmented (Chakraborty 2004: 41). In White's terms, the self is split into 'interacting subsystems' which have 'their own beliefs, goals, plans, and strategies' and which induce self-deception (White 1991: 193). The self is the sum of the egos and highlights the 'true nature of human being', so that the self is the perfect manifestation of an individual's essence (Aïssel 2005: 285). In the self lies autonomy and integrity, independence from seduction and manipulation, the purest embodiment of personhood (Maslow, 2006). The ego is therefore counterpart to the self. Whilst the self defines a person's individual identity, the ego identifies the person as an entity (Doron and Parot 1991: 462). In everyday life, we associate the self with selfishness, whereas in psychology selfishness (i.e. *ego*ism) is concerned with the ego rather than the self.

Carl Gustav Jung has given the self a central place in his psychology. For Jung, the self is the archetype of wholeness, expressing 'the unity of the personality as a whole' (2005: 460). Archetypes belong to the sphere of the collective unconscious, common to all human beings, and consist in 'an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way' (Boeree 2006).

Archetypes influence the content of our personal unconscious as well as our actual behaviour. It is nevertheless possible to become more conscious of the content of our unconscious layers in order to understand what makes us act or react in particular ways to certain situations. Knowledge of the self represents the ultimate goal of consciousness in a Jungian perspective. To that extent, the self helps us unite and accept our inner dualities to 'become who and what we really are' (Crowley 1998: 38). The self also possesses a sacred dimension, standing for the divine within us and 'both the source and goal of human life' (Brooke 1991: 18). However, self and ego are complementary so that achieving wholeness implies that self and ego work in harmony. The self gives the direction and the impetus, whilst the ego enables us to work in that direction. In Jung's view, the ego is the subject and the centre of our consciousness (2005: 425). The ego emerges during childhood and enables us to develop a personality by integrating the collective rules before we later differentiate ourselves from them (Jung 2005: 449). Ego-consciousness allows us to manifest our will and free-will. Yet, the ego initially remains a reflection of the archetypal self (Jung 1973: 259).

Jung's view of the self and ego does not deny that the individual is primarily a member of a community in which he or she grows up and develops his or her awareness of the world, as well as his or her self-awareness. However the self is not a mere by-product of society, as if we would 'learn to be who we are told we are' (Laing 1969); rather the self exists independently from a referential community, but reacts to and evolves in accordance with the moral or social stimuli initiated by the community (Hibben 1895; Colby and Damon 1995). The community can help the self cultivate or, on the contrary, disengage from acute moral awareness, but the decision lies with the self.

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE SELF AND THE HIGHER SELF

A Spiritual Viewpoint: Wholeness and the Higher Self
The concept of self, more particularly the idea of a Higher Self linked with an intrinsic striving for wholeness and completeness, is central to spirituality-based research. Recent studies and experiences in business and management have embraced these concepts to examine the relevance of spirituality in the workplace. Researchers perceive the fervour to pursue goals such as economic growth and to maintain the primacy of business objectives as the main reason for people's life disenchantment and disarray, on the basis that their needs are not fulfilled in the way that they had hoped (Gotsis and Kortezi 2008). Goal oriented

displacement has spawned the view that 'whatever one's underlying belief system, everyone has a spiritual life' (Howard and Welbourn 2004: 43). This has shaped a view that work is a vocation rather than a necessity, urging many to set a spiritual quest for meaning within the workplace. The quest for 'spirit at work' has an intrinsic ethical flavour, in so far as it aims to redefine or rediscover values that balance good for oneself with good for society and even with good for humanity and the Earth. Pauchant (2000: 60) associates management with action, ethics with reflection and spirituality with transcendence, underlining that we should integrate and translate all three steps into collective practice.

Despite the renewed interest in spirituality, the concept remains ill-defined (Hicks 2002). Typically contrasted with religion, we perceive spirituality as informal, non-rational, loose and personal, whereas we perceive religion as a more formal, rational, dogmatic form of institutionalised spiritual expression (Forman 2004; Collins and Kakabadse 2005). Pruzan (quoted in Zsolnai 2004: 3) holds that spirituality focuses on 'basic, deep-rooted human values, and a relationship with a universal source, power, or divinity' and that religion is an institutionalised form of this relationship. Guillory (2001: 33) defines spirituality as 'our inner consciousness…the source of inspiration, creativity, and wisdom'. He distinguishes religion from spirituality on the basis of their nature: 'Spirituality is a way of being that predetermines how we respond to life experiences; whereas, religion deals with the incorporation and implementation of organized belief systems. Religion is actually a form that spirituality takes in practice' (Guillory 2001: 33). Meanwhile, Schley (2008) argues that it is less important to distinguish religion from spirituality than to identify the respective positive and negative impacts both may have when accepted in the workplace. Others equate spirituality with religion, whilst agnostics and atheists posit that they too can be spiritual by establishing connection with humanity at large. Less controversially, Mitroff and Denton (1999a, 1999b) in a two-year US study, using face-to-face interviews and survey questionnaires, found that 60 percent of the participants favoured spirituality over religion to improve the overall work and ethical climate. Another 30 percent had positive views of both religion and spirituality. This finding reinforces Giacalone and Jurkiewicz's position (2003: 93) that 'religion and spirituality are not synonymous, and in particular, the operationalization of religion is significantly different from that of spirituality.' The argument is not whether religion is better or worse than spirituality; rather spirituality seems to offer a more open, more inclusive and less divisive framework for people's beliefs which eases its integration into the workplace.

The bottom-line of the spiritual quest involves the connection to the inner self, locus of the spiritual in human beings, which incidentally brings about a growing perception of an inter-relatedness of everything and a striving towards wholeness (Guillory 2001; Zsolnai 2004). Hubback (1998: 283) uses the metaphor of 'layers of insight' to explain how 'the personal self is potentially in touch with the healing energy of the greater self.' In fact, although we are fragmented by small egos, the purpose is the coming-to-consciousness of our fragmented nature and the working towards the state of a whole self, given that the self comprises the totality of our being. Expression of the self is the necessary path to follow in so far as repression of the self by holding on to the ego (or the egos) can lead to extreme or adverse emotional states through which individuals project onto others their own repressed personality (King and Nicol 1999). To alleviate the ego-self tension, individuals should acknowledge and confront particular aspects of their personality involved in the conflict through an effort of consciousness. However, this confrontation and coming-to-consciousness is necessarily peculiar to each individual given that it consists in accepting who one is as one is (Ashar and Lane-Maher 2004).

Ethics and the Self

The process of coming-to-consciousness of the self directly challenges our moral knowledge. Consciousness of self, in the sense of being connected to the self, paves the way for genuine and authentic moral behaviour. Terestchenko (2008) contrasts '*présence à soi*' (connectedness to self) with '*absence à soi*' (unconnectedness to self) to illustrate how the degree of connectedness to self affects our moral capabilities. Individuals who maintain a pure and solid connection to their self act in greater awareness of the other's humanity whilst enacting their ethical values and principles; on the other hand, those who fail to connect to their self yield more easily to the pressure of social conformity, relinquishing their personal responsibility by claiming 'to be just an agent within a system' (Terestchenko 2008: 15). Whilst connectedness to self emerges as a necessary condition to authentic moral practice, unconnectedness to self implies that the ego has taken over the focus of our consciousness, so that moral decisions may no longer be genuine and in accordance with our values; instead they may respond to our personal interests or to collective expectations. Collective expectations are not always morally bad; however, they carry the risk of melting personal moral responsibility into a collective mould where discretion and free-will are absent. Therefore, the person who mostly relies on collective expectations to make his/her decisions fails to claim his/her moral integrity as an individual. Compromises for the sake of some role expectations can easily change into

dishonest compromises because the person has lost track of what really defines him/her from a moral point of view.

When the person, either consciously or unconsciously, manages to bracket off his/her self whilst the other aspects of the personality take over, he/she becomes 'parted' or 'compartmentalised'. Compartmentalisation is probably the greatest threat to the realisation of a whole self (Gotsis and Kortezi 2008). The compartmentalised person actually cuts off the moral values, aspirations, feelings and emotions that we deem inappropriate and irrelevant to a certain context (for example the workplace). Compartmentalisation can also happen by simply distancing oneself from values, aspirations and feelings one holds but does not wish to, or cannot, confront. Through this process, individuals become unconscious of parts of themselves and lose sight of their self as a unified whole. Ultimately, people can develop psycho-pathologies (Cottingham 2005), although more generally the symptoms take the form of a hazy unrest people feel at work and in their everyday lives (Gotsis and Kortezi 2008).

In parallel, Mitroff and Denton's study on spirituality in organisations highlights how managers do not wish to part themselves according to the demands of the context, or even pretend that it is possible to do so (Mitroff and Denton 1999b). Yet compartmentalisation is often perceived as a necessity for success, especially business success (Lovell 2002). Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004) argue that this is symptomatic of the old business paradigm, as opposed to a more integrative, holistic model we would be developing now, although we probably are at the early stages. Figler and Hanlon (2008: 619) also denounce this 'psychological fragmentation' resulting from an excessive attention to rationality and logic, and the subsequent demise of subjectivity and of the unconscious sources that inform human relationships. Despite a growing literature purporting to explore the benefits of spirituality, self-growth and various positive psychology 'tools' for organisational members, the topic still conveys an aura of taboo matched with great scepticism (Mohamed et al. 2001; Pandey and Gupta 2008). Yet acknowledging and accepting that the unconscious has a strong influence on our behaviour arguably paves the way for more fruitful, psychologically smarter and more mature work relationships (Figler and Hanlon 2008).

We argue that instead of jumping onto the 'spiritual revolution' bandwagon at the risk of deluding an essential concept, organisational actors may choose to focus on the self in order to build solid foundations for further spiritual growth. The self is a central concept in many

spiritual traditions, but many studies surveying spirituality in the workplace assume that people are readily capable of connecting to the spiritual sphere. We all possess the ability to develop spiritually, but we also live and work in a materialistic, fast-paced world where conformity, competitiveness and forward-thinking significantly restrain our aptitude for self-reflection. Prior to nurturing spiritual workplaces, we should be concerned with enabling organisational actors to observe their inner world and detach themselves from whatever holds them back – even if this means challenging the existing corpus of organisational and economic theories. We argue that spending time with the self is the initial and critical stage in spiritual development, in the tradition of transpersonal and analytical psychology. Psychosynthesis for example, aims to help the person become 'a meaningfully harmonized whole around a center: the self' instead of remaining 'a disordered collection of clashing tendencies' (Ferrucci 2004: 46). Whilst role-playing, excessive rationalisation, extreme empathy, compartmentalisation or self-delusion widen the gap between our perception of who we are and our self, the ability to bring our consciousness back to our being (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) constitutes an essential step towards self-completion in a holistic perspective. By identifying our sub-personalities (one might say the 'small egos'), we let our self give the sense of direction, therefore allowing ourselves to achieve our full potential (Ferrucci 2004).

Carl G. Jung envisioned this process of self-realisation, which consists in recognition and acceptance of our fragmented nature and the affirmation of self, as a way to become a true individual. More significantly than other psychologists, he constructed a comprehensive and inherently spiritual framework centred around the archetypal self. Individuation, the process of growing awareness and connectedness to self through knowledge of the unconscious contents of the psyche, is indeed key to personal development. Although it involves differentiating oneself from the community and freeing oneself from the collective influences under which one lives, individuation differs widely from individualism. Individuated people have grown out of the community but still feel a deep respect for it on the basis of a shared humanity with its members (Sharp 1991). Individualistic people, on the other hand, do not care for the community but are only concerned with themselves. In Jung's terms: 'Under no circumstances can individuation be the sole aim of psychological education. Before it can be taken as a goal, the educational aim of adaptation to the necessary minimum of collective norms must first be attained. If a plant is to unfold its specific nature to the full, it must first be able to grow in the soil in which it is planted.' (2005: 449). However, differentiation from

the community is essential in becoming a true individual. In fact: 'Individuation, therefore, leads to a natural esteem for the collective norm, but if the orientation is exclusively collective the norm becomes increasingly superfluous and morality goes to pieces. The more a man's life is shaped by the collective norms, the greater is his individual immorality.' (Jung 2005: 449). This is so because the individual somehow has not confronted his or her own moral responsibility but instead, hides behind a collective responsibility.

Self-Realised Leaders

We commonly regard individuation as a life enlightening purpose, not only for oneself but also for others, as individuated people have a more acute apprehension of the common good (Hart and Brady 2005). The actions of the individuated person bounce back on their environment, possibly enticing change and evolution (Jung 2002). Consequently, individuated people tend to develop a natural potential for leadership. The quality of this leadership lies in its consistency with the leader's core values, which is particularly relevant to build up a sound moral environment and drive sustainable business practices (Lozano and Ribera 2004: 183).

Spirituality-based leadership does not really differ from leadership, but rather proposes to rebalance vision with personal integrity and self-realisation. In so far as 'true leaders must inspire courage, integrity, trust and personal brilliance in their colleagues….their leadership must be based on their personal character, and must build integrity and character throughout the organization' (Miller 2004: 169). Inspiring people to 'take the initiative' whilst listening to their core values and to their own self has become a necessary quality of today's leadership (Miller 2004: 171). Acknowledging the spiritual aspect in each and every one of us allows the business organisation to welcome 'whole' individuals. In return, when the individual unleashes his or her whole capability 'mind, body, and spirit', it positively affects the amount of resources available to the organisation (Ouimet 2000). Workplaces where people are allowed to be 'whole', that is to express emotions, feelings, aspirations alongside rational thinking, tend to foster greater intuition and creativity whilst reinforcing trust, honesty and organisational commitment (Mitroff and Denton 1999b; Guillory 2001; Krishnakumar and Neck 2002; Miller 2004).

Leaders should pay particular attention to both their own self and the degree of self-realisation of their colleagues and subordinates. Driving the changes implies allowing changes to take place in oneself too. Actually, change in oneself, within the perspective of individuation or

self-realisation, implicitly brings about a change in others as well as in the social environment through the interrelatedness of human beings rooted in our spiritual essence. To prepare for the change and set up a model of partnership which proves more sustainable, ethical and fulfilling than the current dominator paradigm, Eisler and Montuori (2003: 54-55) outline four conditions: the ability to listen to our inner wisdom, the full consciousness of others and of our surroundings, the understanding of the standards of empathy, caring and responsibility, as well as the actual practice of these standards in our relationships. The bottom-line of these conditions is founded on a greater degree of connectedness to the self.

Today's favoured models of leadership behaviour, in particular transformational leadership (Delher and Welsh 1994) and servant leadership (Washington et al. 2006), demand a more complete dedication from the person who takes up the leader's position. Although leaders typically emerge during times of crisis or critical change, organisations also need leaders on a continual basis to safeguard the integrity of core moral values, as well as to promote new ways of running the operations in accordance with these values. True leaders are spiritual leaders who have learnt to tame their ego and orientate their consciousness towards the self. As such, they embody moral exemplarity, which in turn constitutes the main vehicle for their integrity and their effectiveness as leaders. Consequently, leaders ought to have explored their inner psyche if they want to truly dedicate their actions to the good for all, not just for themselves. They receive power without having to seek it (Pruzan 2004). Consciousness and affirmation of the higher self in leadership behaviour is necessary to foster sincere care for others, which in turn inspires and empowers other stakeholders (Pruzan 2004).

EXPERIENCING THE SELF: A STUDY

It is important to examine how managers, who by definition are potential leaders, perceive their self. Knobe (2005) suggests there exists an 'ideal of being yourself' that accounts for a significant part of our moral systems. Therefore, assuming that the self carries a sense of unity as opposed to the morally impairing state of fragmentation and compartmentalisation, we undertook an exploratory qualitative study with a purposeful sample of management population realizing that we are exploring a belief-system, a perspective (Patton 2002). At this stage, statistical representation was not an issue because we aimed to capture subjective meanings offered by the study participants. We contacted some managers through networking and asked them to recommend colleagues or acquaintances who would participate in the study. This enquiry was part of a larger study aiming to explore the relationships between self

and morality, which took place in the first quarter of 2007. The findings below reflect the comments of participating managers on the statement: 'Being true to your self'.

Twenty-five managers, principally first-line managers in multinational companies (MNEs) and middle managers in small enterprises (SMEs), took part in the study in France and Britain. The first-line managers in MNEs and middle managers in small enterprises had similar job descriptions, although they worked in various industries and sectors including human resources management, technology development, banking, retail, direct marketing, sales and social care. In the following discussion, we have changed their names for reasons of confidentiality. Many had a rich working and trans-industry experience. We interviewed fourteen managers in Britain (nine men and five women), and eleven managers in France (ten men and one woman). Ages ranged from early 30s to late 50s. A bilingual researcher conducted, recorded and then transcribed the interviews in English and French according to each study participant's preference.

The interviews yielded rich qualitative data which we analysed using a system of open coding and themes which emerged from the data itself. We adopted an interpretive, inductive approach to data analysis to respect the 'wholeness' and 'meaningfulness' of the data (Dey 1993; Bryman and Burgess 1994; Willis 2007: 298). The main researcher read the transcripts several times in order to identify emerging themes or categories (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Willis 2007). This approach allowed clusters to emerge from the data itself, therefore, the researcher did not pre-specify the categories. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1984; McCracken, 1988). The researcher defined and clarified emerging concepts afterwards by referring to relevant concepts in the literature, in particular Jungian concepts. This process aligns with qualitative content analysis methods of reduction and interpretation (Patton 2002; Rubin and Rubin 2005).

Although the study participants have globally different interpretations of what it means to be true to the self, neither the participants' nationality nor their gender played a major part in such discrepancies. At this stage, the researchers favoured contextually rich accounts of the participants' experiences of self rather than an overview of possible factors of influence on their sense of self. We discovered five main emerging themes to qualify the managers' relationship to their self: 1) the self emerges as a false self, either consciously or unconsciously; 2) the self is also sometimes perceived as a projection of the ego; 3) the self is

also experienced as the object of some judgement or assessment; 4) the self is purported to be directly linked to morality; and finally, 5) we can liken the self to a duty of integrity (see Table 1 below). The themes may overlap, and some participants expressed ideas that fit into different themes. This demonstrates the complexity and varied perceptions of the self, suggesting that extensive reflection on self is critical. We will now explore these themes further, using quotes from interviews to illustrate key points.

The Self as False Self

'When I recruit, I lead job interviews that last for about one or one-and-half hours, and we highlight the qualities and shortcomings of the postulant. Then I choose someone who also has shortcomings because everyone has shortcomings. [...] What I don't like in this statement [Being true to your self] is that when I've hired the guy and these shortcomings are reflected in his work, I get upset because I knew it, and I hired him anyway and it proves to be true, and it creates problems. So being true to yourself seems to me fairly negative as well.' – Samuel

'It's one of those statements that can come up very false, because it's all down to our presumptions of what that actually means, being true to yourself. Or if you think you are owed a lot out of life, then what does it mean "being true to yourself"? [...] So being true to yourself is being true to this whole ideal, which may or may not be true.' – Brian

Some study participants tend to confuse the self with other psychological entities, although in various ways. For example, Brian and Samuel consider that being true to your self is potentially negative and risky in so far as you may delude yourself if your view of the self is wrong, or you may simply stagnate at your existing level believing you have reached your full potential and cannot progress any further. However, this interpretation of the self is based on a false view of what the self really is, which especially ignores its transcendent aspect. We can delude ourselves, but only because we focus on a constructed image rather than on our true self. Equally, achieving complete realisation of the self is a life-long endeavour and only some of us will ever reach that stage. Therefore, stagnation implies that we attach ourselves to a false image, something we think is us but which, in reality, is a false image that holds us back. These processes are often unconscious, so that consciousness of the true self necessitates awareness of our restricting mechanisms on the psychological or emotional level.

Participants also interpret being true to your self as being faithful to an image. Yet, attachment to a constructed image, either collectively-bounded or personal, strongly differs from connectedness to the self. An image is only a partial representation of our potential, whilst attachment to a false self may sometimes drive us away from our potential. Other study

participants believe that being true to your self equals being honest with yourself, or not lying to yourself. However, more often than not, participants view the self as yet another constructed image captured through emotions or cognition. For them, the self remains confused with a partial, sometimes false, image of the person.

The Self as Ego Projection

'It's really important, actually, for your self-confidence to be true to your self. I think if you're not true to your self, then you don't know what you're good or bad at, or know what you need to be aware of with other people. Like, I can be very blunt and very frank, and I would tell you like it is. There're certain things I wouldn't tell you, that I wouldn't say, but most of the time I do.' – Amy

'I think if you're not true to yourself, you risk being pretentious, or you're just lying to yourself anyway. Just to make yourself think, "No, no, no, it's okay, it's okay" if you've got a problem and fear that it will make you unhappy. So you think, "Oh, that's not gonna bother me" but you didn't even fight for it, or didn't even think that it's gonna be solvable or you're just telling yourself "That's fine," and then you just wait until it escalates, escalates, escalates.' – Ethan

'Being true to your self. I hope I am! But it depends on the situation. There is a theatrical side to our job. […] We are ourselves but at some point we are what our interlocutor wants us to be. So there is an ability to adapt which means that sometimes we act up, we play a part because this is what other people want to see and that pleases them.' – Oliver

In a related manner, for some participants, the self emerges as a projection of the ego. This implies that external sources define the self. Some participants believe that their knowledge of self comes mainly or exclusively from the feedback they receive from other people. Thus the self equates a socially-constructed personality whose legitimacy depends upon others' recognition. In brief, the self does not possess any individuality or significance on its own. Being true to your self implies obedience to social expectations, whilst lacking moral strength to oppose injustice. Embracing the collective body deprives the self of any legitimacy. For example, the consciousness of Amy or Ethan is mostly directed onto the ego, in particular the material aspect of life, to the detriment of their self. Consequently, their morality is tendentious, changing and very ego-centred.

A common implication of perceiving the self through others' feedback is that we can summarise being true to your self as 'managing your expectations'. Here, we clearly associate the self with roles whose meaning depends on the value society bestows upon it. Being true to your self means, for example, accepting you are not smart or organised enough to become a supervisor so that you will not be disappointed in your career expectations. However, such knowledge of the self is founded only on a reading of social stereotypes, which are very

different in essence from the Jungian archetypes. Social stereotypes inform roles which eventually limit our ability to change, to grow and to challenge the dominating rules. Moral behaviour is similarly limited by the social customs, whether morally acceptable or not.

Other participants stress that 'it is not always possible to be true to your self' because of the circumstances. As a result, you need to learn to compromise. However, these participants compromise in different ways. Kyle, for example, finds it easy to sit on his values as long as he achieves the desired outcome. Irene finds it much more uncomfortable to not stand by her values, but she explains that she 'can forget easily' and move on. On the other hand, Xavier argues that he cannot always justify what he feels as the right action because the work environment puts pressure on him to fulfil his duty at work even if it costs him some quality time with his family. As for Oliver, life is about acting up, which includes playing down your convictions if that is what your interlocutor wants to see. On the moral front, the acceptance of such compromises can easily slip into situations of moral elusiveness. The self cannot act as moral anchor because the participants' connectedness to their self is shallow, which induces moral inconsistency. Nevertheless, favouring roles over self leaves some managers with some uneasiness, echoing that they do not enact their true nature by behaving as they do.

The Self as Object of Judgement

'[Being true to yourself means] being true to your values, and your values of life, and also what you want to achieve as well. [This] is really about trying to meet those objectives without letting other things easily take the place. It's also about values, your own self values, this kind of personal ethics thing, these values are important. I think you have to be true to your self, otherwise you're kidding yourself in a way about what you're doing. If you can't be true to your self, you can't be true to anybody.' – Xavier

'I've got a set of sort of ethical standards and a level of expectations that I think I should provide to the company and people, and I always maintain that. Well, I'm trying to maintain that. I don't have a problem with self-worth and being true to my self in the work environment. So now it's different for the personal life, because I'm very grown-up in business but I'm quite "silly" in my personal life.' – Zack

'You can change your self if you don't like what you are, you can make your self different but you certainly have to get to a space where you are very comfortable with what you are, cause if you're not, you'll end up deluding yourself and the guys will lock you up in a paddy cell somewhere.' – Will

'Someone told me years ago: "In the end, it doesn't matter how you see your self; what matters is how other people see you and the image they reflect back at you." Often I experienced such a difference in that I perceived my self in a certain way and it turned out that people were perceiving me very differently. [...] I think the most important is your image in the eyes of others, for this is what will determine whether you feel good or not about your self.' – Louis

Some study participants feel that being true to your self involves a judgement or an assessment of some sort. Xavier, for instance, refers to his achievements to assess whether he is true to his self, whilst Gillian, Fiona, Tim and Zack judge their behaviour against pre-determined moral standards. For Gillian, being true to your self represents an ideal. Finally, Martin, Louis and Will translate 'being true to your self' as 'being comfortable with who you are' or 'accepting yourself'. This approach of the self is more reflective and somewhat introspective. However, they do not account for the spiritual dimension. Achieving material goals, whether in career or social life, is actually remote from the purpose of self-realisation and individuation in so far as the person still depends on social esteem to assert him or herself as an individual. Although important, accepting oneself also implies more practical matters, such as age, physical characteristics or personal traits, rather than a deeper, more spiritual aspiration to discover our true nature and our eventual '*telos*'.

Louis, for example, pays extreme attention to how people perceive him. For him, accepting himself means accepting the image others project back onto him. Instead of searching for his self internally, Louis directs his consciousness towards the external world, thus widening the gap between his true self and his perception of self. Meanwhile, Fiona and Tim are more self-reflective. However, Fiona argues that being true to your self becomes easier with age and experience as confidence grows to 'stick out to what you believe'. She actually suggests that connectedness to self grows stronger with time, thus excusing her compromises with the argument of 'being young, hence having a weak morality'. We can all achieve connectedness to self in any circumstance, although life experiences and maturity might help us grasp a more complete sense of self. Nevertheless, Fiona depicts the self as a disposable element of moral consistency, which does not align with the essence of the higher self.

The Self as Moral Element

'I have to be true to my self. It's very important for me. I find it very difficult to not be true to my self, to what I believe and what I think is right and all of that.' – Deborah

'I think it relates to me trying to resolve things in my own mind. And try to balance "Are they the right things for the person, the group? Or is that just the right thing for me selfishly to have an easy path?" Ultimately, I don't want to be unfair or unreasonable to people and therefore I'm prepared to spend the time, as far as it's reasonable, to come up with an outcome that makes sense to me and gives me a sense of "It's the right decision".' – Yohann

Other participants view morality as a central characteristic of being true to the self. Some participants directly associate the self with their moral values and core beliefs. For Deborah, being true to her self is essential and implies respecting her beliefs and what she thinks is right. Paul interprets the statement as being truthful to his values whilst not taking himself too seriously. Meanwhile, Yohann wants to be fair in his relationships to people and looks for a 'fuzzy feeling' that gives him 'a sense of "it's the right decision"'. He is concerned with his responsibility for his actions, so that he carefully ponders his decisions. Being true to his self involves acting in accordance with his moral values and his personal sense of duty. For these managers, social expectations or social values are not instrumental in their sense of morality. Their understanding of the self is built on a personal reflection on their view of good and evil. They do not concern themselves so much with how others will perceive them; rather they pay attention to their inner feelings, as if they have developed a personal sense of righteousness.

The Self as Duty of Integrity

'It's about honesty and about what you want out of life, what you're really trying to achieve. It's almost breaking it down into fundamental reasons and understanding. Being true to your self is understanding whether your fundamental motivations reflect who you are. Quite often, the reason you do things at the surface is not the real reason you do it. Being true to your self is understanding the real reason why you do things to make sure that there are actually a reason for you to doing things.' – Helena

'[It] goes back to your own character. There shouldn't be any pretence. Everyone knows how I am at work. If you cultivate a personality different from who you are, one day or another the mask falls and your true personality emerges, and whatever consequences are not easy to manage.' – Ryan

'It means don't live a lie. Be honest if it's not something within your capability. I would say definitely looking at something and realising that it's not within your capability. [...] It is understanding if you've reached your limits... and your self-confidence or your pride might have to give way to the fact that you need to seek assistance or help with something. Having the humility sometimes to deal with the situation because not everybody likes to admit that – they might call it failure sometimes [but] it may just be that maybe you actually don't know the way out.' – Vincent

Finally, some study participants defined being true to your self as acting with integrity. Indeed, Helena or Yohann question their motives in order to determine what actually makes them act the way they do. They are aware that they can fool themselves into thinking that they act for the good of others whilst they act for their own good. They therefore demonstrate some awareness of the tricks of the ego, and a concern for expressing the true self. Being true to the self and to moral values is a 'natural' behaviour for Deborah, Nick and Paul. They cannot do otherwise, or they cannot conceive not being true to their values. Paul also mentions 'being humble'. Humility is necessary to acknowledge our interrelatedness to every human and

living being. It goes against the ego's desire to shine selfishly whilst implicitly asserting the most essential quality of the individual self.

Nick and Ryan interpret being true to your self as consistency with who you are. This is different from 'accepting who you are', in so far as accepting yourself as you are implies a certain stagnation whilst acting with consistency with regards to your nature involves a deep understanding of your values as well as an aspiration to act with integrity. Ryan does not care about others' opinion of him, but he cares for his own feeling of satisfaction that he has done his best in his job. Displaying consistency in our behaviour requires a solid anchorage in the self, especially because our situations at and outside work are more likely to stimulate the ego's craving for pretence than the self's quiet assertiveness. Finally, Vincent believes that being true to his self involves acting in consciousness. He apprehends the self in its archetypal dimension, that is, as a source of morality, the centre of our spirituality and the focus of our human essence.

These themes are not mutually independent, and the study participants do not fit exclusively in one box. Nevertheless, their interpretations of the statement and their concomitant views of the self are instructive of their approach to moral issues. Study participants' comments reveal that only Deborah, Vincent, Paul, Nick and Ryan appear to possess the qualities of a good leader. Actually, their profiles match the characteristics of servant leadership, in so far as they all believe in collaboration and dialogue, in respect and in exemplarity. They are good managers but also good leaders. Consequently, they achieve good results and have gained the respect and appreciation of their colleagues. This suggests that perceiving the self as the bearer of spiritual needs as well as the marker of our personality fosters moral exemplarity and a more sustainable approach to leadership.

CONCLUSION

The self occupies a central place in our morality that helps us maintain our integrity whilst we tend to delude our moral values in the various roles and social expectations we endorse. However, the self possesses a distinctive spiritual dimension that defines us as individuals and transcends this individuality so that we can connect with others through the consciousness of our shared humanity. Compartmentalisation paves the way to dangerous moral compromises, whilst realisation of the whole self fosters more consistent and more righteous behaviour. Managers, who are expected to act as leaders, should ponder their view of the self because

their leadership ability and effectiveness is likely to be affected by their understanding of their self. In particular, from the moral point of view, the more encompassing and sustainable style of servant leadership is coherent with a perception of the self that recognises and embraces its spiritual dimension.

Rehabilitating the self challenges our common conceptions of organisational life in so far as organisational actors make room for human beings who become conscious of their potential, allow themselves to make decisions and accept the subsequent responsibility. This brings ethics to the core of management practice, but also claims that full consciousness of self is the cornerstone of a morally responsible behaviour. Unless managers, leaders and employees confront their shadow to live under the rightful guidance of the self, in a respectful acknowledgement of our common essence, the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility programmes will only ever be relative (Ketola 2008). Moral exemplarity and integrity begin with the self, and so does sustainable management practice. Jungian psychology and some spiritual practices have much to offer in this domain.

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Table 1: Summary of the interpretations of 'Being true to your self'

Main Theme	Implications of 'Being true to yourself'	Concomitant view of the self
Self as false self	Stagnation and risk of delusion	Self as false image
	Faithfulness to an image	
	Being honest/not lying to yourself	Self as partial image
Self as projection of the ego	Being faithful to the way others perceive you	Self as a collective construction
	Managing your expectations	Self as a social role
	Necessity to compromise	Self as disposable moral element
Self as object of judgement and assessment	Achieving your goals	Self as material success
	Assessing yourself against standards	Self as potentially accommodating moral element
	Being comfortable/accepting who you are	Self as partial image
Self as moral element	Being true to core values and beliefs	Self as moral centre
	Endorsing your responsibility	
	Doing the right thing	Self as expression of the good
Self as integrity	Questioning your motives for action	Self as archetype
	A natural attitude	
	Acting with humility	
	Being consistent with who you are	
	Acting in consciousness	