VIA THE BROKEN ONES: TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEOLOGY OF ECCLESIAL LEADERSHIP IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: This article explores theological and philosophical sources for ecclesial leadership among marginalized communities in post-apartheid South Africa. It represents a journey of reflection from within the personal life stories and leadership experiences of two South African authors who grew up on opposite sides of the racial, class, and gender divides of apartheid South Africa. This journey led the authors to reject well-defined leadership theories that present themselves as generic solutions abstracted from the particularity of unique relationships and communal structures of belonging. They suggest a phenomenological approach to a socially-embodied theology of leadership for the emergence of a leadership posture *via the Broken Ones*.

Introduction

We grew up on opposite sides of the racial, class, and gender divides of apartheid South Africa. In writing this article together, we eagerly grasped at yet another opportunity on the difficult but rich journey of healing and reconciliation into a post-apartheid South Africa. As such, writing this article together on leadership via the Broken Ones is as much a wrestling with our own personal life stories and leadership experiences from within the brokenness of an apartheid past as it is about finding theological language and theoretical sources for

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ecclesial leadership within marginalized settings.[1] In fact, the theological grounding and theoretical approach suggested in this article for a leadership posture via the Broken Ones can only make sense to us in the light of our own experiences as children of apartheid who now have the privilege to be part of a post-apartheid South African society in which we learn together how to heal the wounds of the past and how to develop an ethos of valuing our rich diversity for the sake of our future in reconciliation and unity.

We can therefore only reflect on leadership via the Broken Ones from within the specific and concrete circumstances of post-apartheid South African dynamics. Our own leadership experiences with regard to ecclesial-initiated engagements with the Broken Ones in the specific context of post-apartheid South African society prompt us to reject well-defined leadership theories that present themselves as generic solutions abstracted from the particularity of unique relationships and communal structures of belonging. We can only hint at a leadership posture from within our own journey of discovery via the Broken Ones, and enrich it with an appropriate theological grounding and philosophical approach to leadership. In doing so, we suggest a journey of learning the art of leadership via the Broken Ones as a direction towards a phenomenological theology of ecclesial leadership.

Our own journeys of transformation into a post-apartheid South Africa indicate significant routes via the Broken Ones in which the stereotypes of typical center/edge dichotomies were reframed and our leadership understanding reshaped. We both gained

[1] In this article, we will use the fairly common preference in non-Western or non-European contexts to refer to *marginalized people* as "the Broken Ones." Gerhard T. Johnson, "Religions of the Marginalised: Towards a Phenomenology and Methodology of Study," *Missiology* 28(3) (1999): 384. For reasons that will become clear in the rest of this article, the *Broken Ones* is an appropriate metaphor for grounding our argument in a theology of the *Broken One's* cross and framing leadership within a phenomenological approach *via* the Broken Ones.

leadership experience within South African ecclesial communities which seek to make a difference in the social challenges of broken people. In bringing our experiences, interests, and expertise together (Elizabeth as social worker, director of a church-initiated shelter for abused women and children in Cape Town, and until recently a Humphrey fellow at the University of Minnesota; Jannie as lead pastor of a local congregation in Johannesburg, and currently Ph.D. candidate in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary), we discovered our common calling for ecclesial leadership in the midst of the post-apartheid challenges of broken people. We discovered this from within the richness of our different journeys across race, class, and gender divides, and the fun of arguing our nuanced differences on theological perspectives and philosophical approaches.

Elizabeth says, *"As a 'colored' child I grew up during the 1970s and 1980s in a family with nine siblings and part of a Pentecostal church which taught that, as Christians, our responsibility was to pray for our leaders and not to get involved in politics. For the most part of my childhood during the years of segregation under apartheid, I was very confused and understood almost nothing of what was going on in our country. However, what I knew for certain since the age of six already was that God's purpose for my life was to 'help people.' At the same time though, my early experiences of racial and gender discrimination at school, in church, and within the 'colored' community left me feeling ashamed of myself. And yet, I found my solace in my personal faith and continued to pursue my calling.*

"I thought going to university was going to fix my profoundly damaged self-esteem and help me understand how I would be able to 'help people.' To my devastation, when I accepted the social work position at a church-initiated shelter for abused women and children in 1993, I was still very insecure and had no idea of how I was going to help these broken people. Listening to their stories in those first few working days at the shelter further exposed my own brokenness even more. Their pain and suffering were raw, naked, uncovered, and just rough. None of my academic theories for this

made sense anymore. In fact, I still remember my encounter with one of these women during those early days. She told me in no uncertain terms that she preferred the white social worker to work with her rather than me. She did not believe I was able to help her.

"At that stage, it was a huge shock for my already fragile self-esteem when I discovered how much I depended on a 'needy,' 'poor,' 'abused' woman to affirm my value and to accept my generosity and goodwill. It was this confrontation that woke me up to my own neediness and forced me to answer for myself what I thought I had to offer to these women whom I sought to 'help.' Since that moment, I began to realize that these women and children were going to help me find my voice and that I needed them to help me find the expressions for my calling as a social worker. The Broken Ones became those who kept me accountable for living my calling with integrity and authenticity.

"I began to find God in and through the voices and stories of those who have been stripped of their human dignity through sexual, physically violent, and other forms of abuse. I began to discover the life-giving presence of God in the midst of my engagement with these women… co-suffering and co-creating with us all."

Jannie says, *"I grew up in a 'white' town during the apartheid years of the 1960s and 1970s. I was brought up to believe separation is the will of God, and I was socialized in the apartheid prejudices and stereotypes of racism. It was not until my university years in the early 1980s that I began to question the social injustices of the apartheid system. After periods of tremendous confusion in wrestling with apartheid and its alternatives, and then experiences of alienation and rejection from some family and friends due to radically different opinions, I eventually joined anti-apartheid initiatives in the mid- and late-1980s. This was a period of intense transformation during which I had to find my own voice.*

"Many influences played a role in my political conversion during this time, but it was mainly through building relationships, networks, and friendships with people that I was isolated from in my upbringing that the deconstruction of the racial, class, and gender stereotypes and prejudices happened. Visiting many of these

people in their homes in the poorest of communities, and experiencing hospitality, acceptance, and forgiveness in the so-called 'margins' of society, brought about the beginnings of a new identity formation beyond my upbringing of racial superiority and status as perpetrator of violence against humanity. What started as my gradual acceptance of the inhumanity of apartheid, and eventually grew into taking personal responsibility for the confession of apartheid as sin, became a journey of transformation in which I could experience my own liberation through the forgiveness of others, and discover my own humanity through their brokenness and suffering. As I continued to build relationships and networks across the apartheid divides, my good intentions of extending good will to 'victims' of a system of oppression increasingly became my own journey of liberation and transformation. All the typical center/edge dichotomies were truly relativized."

Giving these diverse backgrounds and upbringing in a closed society of separation, we find ourselves in a continuous learning process around what it means to respect each other's dignity in an open society. Above all, it involves the learning environment of not being threatened by the other but exploring the richness of an interconnectedness only made possible through true otherness. The importance of embracing true otherness and diversity as a gift and enrichment rather than a burden and threat is a key constitutive feature of how both of us came to view the task of leadership in the South African society. It is a feature related to what is sometimes referred to in South Africa as *ubuntu*, of which Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "a person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured and oppressed."[2] For Tutu, *ubuntu* means "that you can't exist as a human

[2] Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 31.

being in isolation. It speaks of interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality…you are known for your generosity."[3]

Our effort to develop this article's argument together began with this realization that we cannot be separated from one another as children of apartheid who now learn to embody *ubuntu*. As we worked together, we learned to appreciate our differences and true otherness in many respects. We especially learned to understand how we need this otherness to be whole and to develop an argument that is much richer than it would have been without the other's participation.

It is an argument that ends up being a proposal for a phenomenological theology of ecclesial leadership that suggests the Body of Christ's participation in God's presence and activity in the midst of the Broken Ones in post-apartheid South Africa. We suggest this proposal as appropriate for both the theological embodiment and philosophical approach to ecclesial leadership in post-apartheid South Africa. It attempts to integrate a socially-embodied theology and a phenomenological philosophical approach as the condition of possibility for an incipient-and-cultural, rather than injecting-and-instrumental, understanding of ecclesial leadership that transcends typical center/edge stereotypes in the power relations of engagement with broken people.

Via the Broken Ones captures both the theological embodiment and phenomenological way of ecclesial leadership. From within our own experiences of brokenness in the South African context and what we have learned as leaders in ecclesial settings and in relationship with the Broken Ones, we have discovered that theological wisdom and discernment are only possible *via* the Broken Ones (Christ and the broken others in our society). We had to learn what such a theological embodiment means for a leadership posture and approach when facilitating such wisdom and

[3] Tutu, 31.

discernment in ecclesial settings where people are in relationship with the Broken Ones.

Ecclesial Leadership in Post-Apartheid South Africa

The Broken Ones, or marginalized, in South Africa have many faces and profiles. The societal transformation in post-apartheid South Africa presents new challenges and opportunities for focused ecclesial participation and leadership in the midst of the Broken Ones. The social challenges related to issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, crime, and reconciliation are immense. At the same time, these challenges create new opportunities for re-envisioning the task of theology and ecclesial leadership beyond the dominance of liberation concerns during the apartheid era. These challenges and opportunities are not only related to theological and ecclesial engagement with societal issues of concern, but to the very task of theology itself in the midst of post-apartheid transformation.

One of the areas of current debate in this regard concerns the positioning of theology within the multiplicity of disciplines required to address these issues. Anthony Balcomb asks the question, "how much theology has actually been done in South Africa post-apartheid, rather than just a preoccupation with social analysis?"[4] Balcomb is not arguing that social theories are unnecessary or redundant in relation to theology, but rather expresses the concern that they become "ends in themselves" when integrated into the primary concern of theological reflection.[5] He specifically refers to the noticeable lack of attention to the transcendent dimension in South African liberation theology when contrasted with Latin American liberation theology.[6] This

[4] Anthony O. Balcomb, "Is God in South Africa? Or Are We Still Clearing Our Throats?" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 111 (2001): 58.

[5] Balcomb, 62.

[6] Balcomb says, "Unlike the Latin American liberation theologians who lost no time in laying the foundations of a spirituality of liberation to accompany their political reflections, their South African counterparts did no such thing, thus making vulnerable the entire dimension of the transcendent. At the end

article shares the importance of theology, as faith seeking understanding, always to make a focused contribution regarding God as a present and acting subject in the midst of societal challenges,[7] even though the very argument for an integration of theology with an explicit philosophical methodology rejects the notion that the integration of theology and social sciences has to be problematic for theology proper.

Another area of debate is about the extent to which the focus of theology may have shifted in relationship to how issues of concern changed from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa. In exploring the wide-ranging agenda and tasks of African theology, Sam Maluleke refers to theologies of reconstruction as a typical post-colonial theological response in attempting to overcome the limitations of both the enculturation and liberation paradigms of doing theology during eras of colonialism.[8] The rationale is that "both [e]nculturation and liberation responded to a situation of ecclesiastical and colonial bondage which no longer obtains" and that a more "proactive theology of reconstruction" is needed rather than the mainly "reactive" theologies in colonial circumstances.[9] Even though one can question some of the assumptions of this rationale, as does Maluleke with regard to the unnecessary either-or choices between enculturation, liberation, and constructive engagements,[10]

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of the day, to define liberation simply in sociopolitical and economic terms is to set oneself up for alienation once the so-called liberation does or does not come." Balcomb, 63.

[7] James Cochrane describes this challenge as "intrinsic to theology per se, and not merely an ethical or practical consequence of a changed context." James R. Cochrane, "No Way Through: Theology and Its Future," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 111 (2001): 35.

[8] Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 22-23.

[9] Maluleke, 22.

[10] Mark Lewis Taylor, in his Christology of "reconciliatory emancipation," also argues for not detaching dynamics of all these types of components from

it nevertheless reflects a valid underlying concern that the focus of enculturation and liberation theology on the struggle for independence, freedom, and democracy does not necessarily attend sufficiently enough to the specific dynamics of social and structural changes required for addressing issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, violence, crime, etc.[11]

This article shares the emphasis on doing theology from within the particularity of very specific circumstances, and therefore wants to argue for a theology of ecclesial leadership that makes that possible. As John de Gruchy suggests, "the failure of ministers to think theologically and to deepen their theological insight in doing their work seems to me to be one of the reasons for the failure of many churches to meet the challenges of apartheid. I fear that the same remains largely true in terms of current challenges facing us."[12] At the same time however, this article argues for a renewed focus on the primary and explicit theological interest within these particularities. It shares Cochrane's conviction that "responsible theological reflection seeks to break open new possibilities amidst the limits of present actualities. Such theological reflection partakes of what is to come, refuses to possess the truth, supports the struggle of human beings to actualize themselves, takes its stand against suffering, and incorporates the Other in just institutions and ways of living well together."[13]

Ecclesial leadership as a theological task is to facilitate these possibilities among those who participate in God's presence and activity in their midst, so that they become

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each other. Mark L. Taylor, *Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-Political Theology for North American Praxis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 150-93.

[11] A similar argument from another continent is made with reference to the post-colonial realization in India that "we have only changed 'masters' but the roots of the cause of poverty in society…were unchanged." Marie Tobin, "Working with the Poor and Marginalized in India: The Process and Choices," *International Review of Mission* 76(304) (1987): 522.

[12] John De Gruchy, "How My Mind Has Changed," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 111 (2001): 33.

[13] Cochrane, "No Way Through: Theology and Its Future," 40.

openings for the in-breaking of God's promised and preferred future among them. In this sense, ecclesial leadership has its roots in a Trinitarian theology and is profoundly shaped by a pneumatology within the context of Christian eschatology.

Ecclesial Engagements with the Broken Ones

Elizabeth contributes to the development of such a phenomenological theology of ecclesial leadership through her involvement with a century-old, Anglican-initiated shelter for abused women with young children.[14] As a Christian institution, the leadership challenge during apartheid related to demonstrating the love of Christ to help-seekers across the racial divides. In the post-apartheid era, the leadership challenge relates to addressing issues of transformation, critical reviews of traditional punitive intervention approaches, as well as addressing broader policy matters with the intention of reclaiming the common humanity of clients and service providers.

Since the leadership and staff in the shelter are all persons of color who have survived oppression under apartheid, a new kind of leadership is required, namely a kind of leadership that facilitates positive change for both the clients and those who seek to serve. This new dispensation in South Africa invites all participants to examine themselves as leaders in a quest to address social evils such as violence against women and children, crime, poverty, etc. It requires a type of personal leadership that Crosby and Bryson call a lifelong process of achieving beneficial change when one works at understanding

[14] The vision of this shelter is "to see women with children living free from abuse, poverty and discrimination by offering the world a model of care and social empowerment," and their mission statement is "as an expression of God's love, we seek to provide shelter and support for pregnant, abused and homeless women with children; through an holistic self empowerment program that develops social, personal, creative, vocational skills within a framework of Christian values and discipline and a culture of mutual learning, accountability and respect for the unique value of every human being."

oneself and others.[15] It is a kind of "soul work" that helps leaders claim their power "as co-creators of the universe and discern the unique gift we can make to the world."[16] It requires of leaders to tap into not only their own wisdom, but also that of others. This dependency on "appreciating diversity" (identified by Crosby and Bryson as one of three practices of personal leadership)[17] is something that we had to learn the hard way through the pains of apartheid and the new opportunities of post-apartheid. In the argument of this article it takes on a very specific theological embodiment that concurs with Crosby and Bryson's reference to leadership as *soulwork*.[18] They argue, "It is not about separating from the mundane material world… it is about seeking the mysterious in the ordinary."[19]

Jannie contributes to this argument from his pastoral leadership responsibility in a local congregation which partnered with business and non-governmental organizations to provide job creation for jobless women from disadvantaged and impoverished communities.[20] This predominantly white, Afrikaans-language mega-church within the Dutch Reformed tradition struggled with its own identity formation as the "church of apartheid" in rapidly changing post-apartheid neighborhoods. The job-creation partnership was one of their attempts to broaden and intensify their already existing community projects as acts of benevolence across racial and class divides.

Reflections from within these engagements with Broken Ones in South African society present us as authors of this article not only with experiences of both

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[15] Barbara C. Crosby and John M. Bryson, *Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems in a Shared-Power World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 49.
[16] Crosby and Bryson, 52.
[17] Crosby and Bryson, 49.
[18] Crosby and Bryson, 52.
[19] Crosby and Bryson, 52.
[20] This congregation's vision is "to be a multicultural, multilingual congregation" in post-apartheid South Africa.

the failures and successes of ecclesial engagements in these settings, but also with the opportunity to articulate how our own understandings of ecclesial leadership were reshaped via the Broken Ones. Being part of ecclesial leadership discernment on the Church's participation in the presence and activity of God in the midst of the Broken Ones presents us with an opportunity to shape a theological methodology of embodiment via the Broken Ones. Our argument for such a possibility attempts to integrate impulses from a theology of embodiment, phenomenological philosophy, and a cultural theory of leadership. We call this integration a phenomenological theology of ecclesial leadership via the Broken Ones.

As Winston Persaud observes, "The only time the marginalized make news is when they are presented as a problem" within the language paradigms of the powerful versus the weak or marginalized. These depictions "stereotype others and define them in ways that do not lead to their freedom but promote subjugation, domestication, and dependence."[21] The integration of an embodied theology and phenomenological methodology suggests that an ecclesial leadership posture in the midst of these communities can only be shaped *via* the Broken Ones. In this sense, *via* has a reference to Christ as the Way for a theological understanding of leadership, as well as a reference to a particular methodology for a phenomenological understanding of leadership.

In suggesting a phenomenological theology for ecclesial leadership, we remember our own experiences of how the possibility of such a leadership posture and approach can deconstruct existing center/edge dichotomies in the midst of the Broken Ones. In dealing with "center and boundary" issues in his book, *Circles of Dignity*, Cochrane tells the story of a burial ground in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where Judge Theodore Sedgwick, founding patriarch of the Stockbridge Sedgwicks, is buried. Apparently, Sedgwick is buried

[21] Winston D. Persaud, "The Marginalized: Makers of History," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 14(5) (1987): 354-55.

under a high-rising obelisk in the center of a great circle. Cochrane says, "Spreading concentrically outwards are the graves of his descendants, generation upon generation, all laid to rest with their heads facing outward, their feet pointing in toward the obelisk."[22] The legend has it that the reason for this is that these descendants will have to see no one but Sedgwick when everyone arises on Judgment Day. This image not only reflects "the modern notion of state organization and the model of Copernican astronomy," but also captures this article's understanding of typical center/edge dichotomies in leadership understandings that project leaders as wielding authority over successive circles of subjects. In this picture, leadership belongs to the authority of the center, and the edges need to know their place and keep their proper orbits.

The theological and phenomenological impulses suggested for leadership theory in this article reject such a heliocentric view of leadership, and present an alternative in which the Broken Ones are not mere objects to be ignored, manipulated, and denigrated, but are the significant partners for an incipient understanding of leadership, shaped via an engagement with the Broken Ones in the midst of their circumstances of brokenness.

An Embodied Theology of the Broken One

Christian theology provides profound traditions of embodied understandings of God's presence and activity in the world as appropriate impulses for an incipient and cultural understanding of ecclesial leadership. Embracing these traditions of embodiment is rooted in a particular Trinitarian theology that funds mutual relationality and genuine otherness as constitutive for participation in truth-seeking. Such a Trinitarian theology, which presents God as a community of love rather than a single acting

[22] James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 157.

subject,[23] encourages a participatory God-world-church relationship of mutual influence rather than an instrumental relationship of origin in which the world only becomes the object of God and the church's actions.[24] It is a theology that takes seriously the presence and activity of God within the messiness of all of creation, and it encourages an ecclesiology of participation in God's presence and activity deep into the thickness of life. It is a theology and ecclesiology that agree with Cochrane's conclusion, "We know that belief in God, when focused on the internal life or away from the world, easily conceals the material or social contradictions under which people suffer and are broken."[25]

Rooted in such a Trinitarian tradition, it is particularly the Christian story of the Incarnation that provides theology with an intelligible approach to human brokenness as a theology of embodiment that also becomes the Body of Christ's participation and leadership in the midst of the Broken Ones. We find the key to Christian Incarnation and embodiment in a *theology of the cross* that goes back to Luther's critical distinction in his Heidelberg Theses between a *theologia gloriae* and a *theologia crucis*. In his twenty-first thesis, Luther says, "a theology of glory calls evil good and good evil," but "a theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."[26] In this sense, a theology of the cross as the expression of God's embodiment through the Incarnation becomes ecclesial leadership's formation in *the thing it actually is* where God is present and active in the midst of the Broken Ones.

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[23] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 139.
[24] Scott Hagley, Mark Love, John Ogren and Jannie Swart, "Toward a Missional Theology of Participation: Ecumenical Reflections on Contributions to Trinity, Mission, and Church," *Missiology: An International Review* 37(1) (2009): 75-87.
[25] Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection*, 21.
[26] As quoted in Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 16.

The meaning of this Lutheran notion of a theology of the cross via embodiment can best be understood through what is rejected in a theology of glory. A theology of glory reflects a posture of triumphalism. Douglas Hall says, "*Triumphalism* refers to the tendency in all strongly held worldviews, whether religious or secular, to present themselves as full and complete accounts of reality, leaving little if any room for debate or difference of opinion and expecting of their adherents unflinching belief and loyalty." It represents a posture in which ignorance, uncertainty, doubt, incompleteness, hurt, brokenness, and eventually suffering, cannot be tolerated. In fact, it leads to the urge of always wanting to triumph over rather than live through the messiness of life. This posture is familiar to us through our experiences of the structure and consequences of the apartheid ideology. The challenge for ecclesial leadership in a post-apartheid environment is to unlearn the posture of triumphalism that so many have been subjected to during apartheid, and to learn the habits and practices of living with how relationships *actually are* with the Broken Ones in our society.

Hall also points to the political consequences that could very well also be the leadership consequences of a triumphalistic worldview sponsored by a theology of glory. He refers to "mechanics of authority, to shore up alleged truth with power, potentially with absolute power."[27] A theology of glory clearly funds all hierarchic systems that manifest in some form of imperialism or demonstrate pretentions of finality. It is a short step from promoting the leader as expert who can provide the interventions and answers from some ideological position outside *the thing it actually is*. It is an expression of leadership abstraction, disembodiment, and instrumentalization at its best.

In contrast to the distortion of a theology of glory's claim of "immediate awareness of divine presence and glory" as a straightforward and authoritarian posture of

[27] Hall, 17.

certitude and silencing the other, there is a theology of the cross's posture "not to overwhelm but to befriend."[28] God's radical otherness is embodied in his close proximity to us, as God's expression of true passion (love) for the other in true compassion (suffering with) for the other. Divinity is first of all in God's extraordinary compassion rather than in a sovereign omnipotence. Leadership formation takes place when the grandeur of a posture of triumphalism is decentered into a receptive posture of participation in the presence and activity of a truly compassionate God in the midst of the Broken Ones. It is a leadership formation via the presence of the Broken One in the midst of the Broken Ones.

An important implication of such a theology of embodiment is that leadership can never be unaffected by participation in God's presence and activity among the Broken Ones. As we have experienced in our exposure to the Broken Ones on our journey of transformation from apartheid to a new dispensation, identity formation and leadership posture are shaped when the Broken Ones are drawn into the hegemonic centers of discourse, to the extent that this process creates opportunities for transformation by questioning prevailing assumptions and offering new insights. This transformation introduces contrast experiences into dominant discourses that have the possibility to reframe existing center/edge dichotomies. Thus leadership becomes an incipient discipline in which wisdom emerges from within God's presence and activity via the Broken Ones.[29]

In this sense, an incipient knowledge, as a knowledge that begins to exist or appear in the midst of the Broken Ones, is a subjugated knowledge for an ecclesial participation in what God is up to in the engagement with broken people. It becomes an epistemologically privileged condition of possibility for leadership via the

[28] Hall, 20.

[29] For an understanding of "incipient theologies," see Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection*, 21.

Broken Ones. It rejects a domestication of the truth outside of God's embodied presence and activity in the midst of the particularity of mutual relationality constituted by genuine otherness. As Cochrane sums it up, "To possess the truth, to close it down, to impose it, to demand that all bow before it, is to act unjustly. It is a tyranny. It diminishes the actualization of human being. It causes suffering; or excuses suffering. It works against the truly other and tries to force the other who is different to be the same."[30] We know this very well from the apartheid experience. We have committed ourselves to leadership formation that represents the opposite in post-apartheid South Africa, and we believe it begins with a fundamental grounding in a theology of embodiment based on a theology of the cross.

A Phenomenological Approach in the Midst of the Broken Ones

A theology of the cross as a theology of embodiment, that attends to *the thing as it actually is,* also suggests a possible conversation partner in phenomenology as a philosophical movement with a similar knowledge claim. We suggest that impulses from this philosophical tradition can complement our theological grounding to give further profile to an ecclesial leadership approach in this regard. In fact, many consider the phenomenological movement in twentieth-century philosophy[31] a philosophical *approach* rather than a philosophical system. Dermot Moran describes phenomenology as "a *radical* way of doing philosophy, a *practice* rather than a system."[32]

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[30] Cochrane, "No Way Through: Theology and Its Future," 38.

[31] It is the preference of many to describe phenomenology as a *movement* to emphasize that it is "not stationary, but rather dynamic and evolving." Susann M. Laverty, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2(3) (2003): 3.

[32] Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.

There is a striking similarity between the basic assumption of phenomenology and how Luther described a theology of the cross. Although phenomenology can be characterized in a variety of ways, the central motif of the phenomenological approach is to describe "things just as they are, in the manner in which they appear."[33] As such, it represents a twentieth-century movement in which philosophy is "returning… to the life of the living human subject" after the "arid and academic" neo-Kantian nineteenth-century philosophy.[34] From a methodological perspective, it is "not concerned with origins or a deductive exploration for invisible substances in causes, but rather a method for investigating and describing the presence of any phenomenon given to consciousness, precisely as it is given or experienced, in terms of the meaning that the phenomenon has for those experiencing it."[35]

Husserl, considered by many as the father of the phenomenological movement, announced the phenomenological cry of "back to the things themselves" as a claim for the ability to carefully describe phenomena themselves, and therefore "to be attentive only to what is *given* in intuition."[36] Husserl's foundation represents the original phenomenological attempt to avoid the alternatives of *rationalism* and *empiricism* and to reject the *subject-object distinction* altogether by offering "a *holistic* approach to the relation between objectivity and consciousness, stressing the mediating role of the body in perception."[37] As such, it presents the argument for leadership rooted in a theology of the cross with a

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[33] Moran, xiii. Edmund Husserl coined the precept *zu den sachen selbst* ("toward the things themselves"). Susan Kleiman, "Phenomenology: To Wonder and Search for Meanings," *Researcher* 11(4): 8.
[34] Moran, 5.
[35] Kleiman, 7-8.
[36] The role of *intuition* was also stressed by other important philosophical contributions at the turn of the century, most notably Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, and William James. Moran, 9.
[37] Moran, 13.

philosophical approach that strengthens the case for embodiment and non-instrumentality.

Phenomenology's relevance to a leadership approach of embodiment and incipient discernment in community with true others became even more clear in its post-Husserlian developments. Husserl still represents what Paul Ricoeur calls idealism. A shift away from the classical Husserlian approach already started with Martin Heidegger's critique on Husserl's "too Cartesian and intellectualistic" account of human engagement in the world, and consequently Heidegger's abandonment of terms such as "consciousness" and "intentionality," and his emphasis on *In-der-Welt-sein* (Being-in-the-world") as "an irreducible ontological relation with the world."[38] Heidegger represents a phenomenological shift towards "a radically historicized hermeneutics" accounting for an ontology of facticity and temporality that rejects a transcendental idealism.[39] For Heidegger, consciousness is not separate from the world, but is a formation of historically lived experience. Understanding is not the way we know the world, but the way we are. The shift to complete embodiment is evident.

This contribution of Heidegger led to a hermeneutical shift in phenomenology that came to further maturity in the subsequent contributions of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. It brings with it at least two significant methodological implications to take into consideration for a leadership approach. First, in Husserl, despite the intent to overcome the Cartesian subject-object and mind-body dualisms, human beings are still understood as primarily knowers, with conscious awareness as the starting point in the creation of knowledge.[40] And second,

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[38] Something that was shared by Levinas, Sartre, and Merleau Ponty in subsequent developments in the phenomenological movement. Moran, 13. For a detailed version of the phenomenological shift represented by Heidegger's contribution, see Laverty, 7-9.

[39] Moran, 20-21.

[40] Gadamer is ruthless in his critique on Husserl at this point: "he (Husserl) still seems dominated by the one-sidedness that he criticizes, for he projects the idealized world of exact scientific experience into the original experience

Husserl insisted on the possibility of bracketing out or setting aside pre-understanding and prejudices detached from tradition and situation. The hermeneutical shift, however, rejects any possibility of an idealism based on the purity of consciousness or the absence of prejudices. Following Gadamer, the hermeneutical shift brings with it the implication that method cannot produce objective and value-free knowledge separate from the knower and all the prejudices that shape knowledge. Through a fusion of horizons, understanding and interpretation cannot be separated as always an evolving process. For Gadamer, the Husserlian idealization is overcome in the fact that "language is already present in any acquisition of experience, and in it the individual ego comes to belong to a particular linguistic community."[41] This shift within the phenomenological tradition provides us with an important impulse to reject leadership theories based on idealistic and generic assumptions, and to emphasize the importance of discernment within a community of true others. We have experienced the dangers of an idealism that leads to an ideology when confronted with a colonial attitude of bringing the right answers from somewhere else to a different context, and we have seen the dehumanization and tyranny of those who think they possess the truth that everyone else needs to obey. Ecclesial leadership can fall into the same trap when leaders' theology becomes ideology, and when they approach others with the assumption that they already know it all.

We even want to take serious one further step in the development of the phenomenological tradition. We can start with a reference to how Paul Ricoeur wants to move beyond Heidegger and even Gadamer with the help of the critique of ideology "to complement the critique of

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of the world, in that he makes perception, as something directed toward merely external physical appearances, the basis of all other experience." Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 342.

[41] Gadamer, 342-43.

the object by a critique of the subject."[42] Ricoeur questions the primacy of subjectivity through the theory of the text as the hermeneutical axis. Ricoeur moves from recovering, intentionality, even discovering, to disclosure. He moves phenomenology out of a "parallelism" with psychology by "subordinating the question of the author's intention to that of the matter of the text."[43] Knowledge is constituted *between* people rather than *through* people.

More recent developments in phenomenology even take the Ricoeurian return to the matter of the text into another direction with the emphasis on the disclosive nature of what is at stake in the phenomenological description. For someone like Jean-Luc Marion subordination to the matter of the text is to receive the text as being given. The receptive and disclosive dynamic of givenness is now far removed from the intentional and constructive nature of the Husserlian consciousness. The subject-object and mind-body dualisms collapse in an *in-betweeness* where the surprise and openness of the given transcends individual and collective consciousness.

This transcending possibility in the disclosive dynamic of the given is similar to what Charles Taylor describes as the *social imaginaire*. For him, the *social imaginaire* "extends beyond the immediate background understanding which makes sense of our particular practices…, because just as the practice without the understanding wouldn't make sense for us, and thus wouldn't be possible, so this understanding supposes, if it is to make sense, a wider grasp of our whole predicament, how we stand to each other, how we got to where we are, how we relate to other groups, etc."[44] Moreover, Taylor says, "Our grasp of the world does not consist simply of

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[42] Paul Ricœur and John B. Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 109.
[43] Ricœur and Thompson, 112.
[44] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 172-73.

our holding inner representations of outer reality…, but these only make the sense that they do for us because they are thrown up (could we replace this with a Marion 'givenness'?) in the course of an ongoing activity of coping with the world, as bodily, social and cultural beings…. This coping activity, and the understanding which inhabits it, is not primarily that of each of us as individuals; rather, we are each inducted into the practices of coping as social 'games' or activities... primordially, we are part of social action."[45]

Some argue that the more recent contributions in French philosophy also represent a "theological turn" in the development of phenomenology and "distinguish it decisively from the time of the first reception of Husserl and Heidegger."[46] This so-called *theological turn* brings with it a renewed *ouverture* (opening) to the *Autre* (the Other and the invisible), and to a *donation* (givenness).[47] To some extent it is already present in Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's engagement with Heidegger to liberate themselves from Husserl's "idealist metaphysics… where the *cogitatio* continues to play a central role."[48] But it is particularly evident in Levinas' focus on "the Other."[49] In referring to Levinas, Drazenovich says, "It is a transcendent human desire for meaning rooted in the existential experience of human relationships that seeks the Other (that Lévinas sometimes renders using the Biblical imagery of Stranger) in the face of the other."[50] This argument leads inevitably to a conclusion that there is no knowledge of God possible outside relationships with the other. Drazenovich says, "Unlike the Hegelian

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[45] Taylor, 558.
[46] Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology and The "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, 1st ed., Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 17.
[47] Janicaud, 17.
[48] Janicaud, 21.
[49] George Drazenovich, "Towards a Levinasian Understanding of Christian Ethics: Emmanuel Levinas and the Phenomenology of the Other," *Crosscurrents* (2005): 37-54.
[50] Drazenovich, 37.

dialectic, the other is not like an allergy that needs to be assimilated into a systematic synthesis. The relationship is instead positive. It evokes an ethical response."[51]

These phenomenological impulses give us language for describing the importance of a non-objectifying or non-instrumental leadership approach and emphasize the ethical dimension of being in relationship *with* others as the space where discernment takes place *between* people rather than exercising leadership *on* people. It helps us integrate the importance of understanding the Other's presence in the midst of our relationships, to the extent that it becomes difficult to even distinguish at a particular moment between the Broken One and the Broken Ones. James Smith says what is at stake in the "theological turn" in this phenomenological development is "first of all, the matter of how that which is transcendent can make an appearance, and then following from this, how a discourse on transcendence could be possible."[52] For Smith, "the phenomenological ego is haunted by a nonpresence, an absence, perhaps even a *transcendence*—another, an Other."[53] The theological turn in phenomenology brings the possibility of revelation and incarnation.[54] Theologically speaking, we consider this as the pneumatological embodiment and eschatological openness necessary for members of a theological community that discern their participation in God's presence and activity amidst the cultural flows of their context, for the sake of God's preferred and promised future for them.

Incipient Leadership Via the Broken Ones

The theological and philosophical warrants for ecclesial leadership presented above help us to construct

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[51] Drazenovich, 43.
[52] James K.A. Smith, "A Principle of Incarnation in Derrida's (*Theologische?*) *Jugendschriften*: Towards a Confessional Theology," *Modern Theology* 18(2) (2002): 218.
[53] Smith, 220.
[54] Smith, 225.

a *cultural* rather than *instrumental* approach to leadership. We have presented this as an appropriate posture of ecclesial leadership rooted in a theology of embodiment that explores a phenomenological approach to the presence in the midst of the Broken Ones. In following Mats Alvesson's understanding of leadership,[55] we want to call it a *cultural* approach to leadership in which leadership simultaneously shapes and is shaped by meanings, values, ideas, and feelings in the midst of others. Most definitions of leadership highlight an asymmetrical relationship in which leadership is seen as influencing others, but not many definitions include the ways in which leadership is reshaped through the influences of others. Given our own life stories of transformation, we can testify to the powerful ways in which we have been shaped by the Broken Ones in our society perhaps more than we have shaped them.

Culture will occur in leadership studies only now and then, and then mostly in relationship to how culture is changed as a result of transformational leadership. This omission leads to what Alvesson calls "abstract and thin studies of leadership,"[56] in which the focus is mainly on individual persons as leaders interacting with a group of subordinates (and mainly in a smaller group context). Culture is objectified as something transformed through the acts of leadership. Leadership becomes instrumental.

In contrast, a cultural understanding of leadership means that "all leadership acts have their consequences through the (culturally guided) interpretation of those involved in the social processes" in which interactions take place. A cultural understanding of leadership is non-instrumental. It moves beyond a traits-based and behavioral style of leadership, or even a situation-dependent leadership, to leadership as shaping and shaped within the social processes of interaction. It is a more open understanding of what is at stake in

[55] Mats Alvesson, *Understanding Organizational Culture* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2002), 93-117.
[56] Alvesson, 95.

leadership, and it pays attention to the meanings of all the people involved. The emphasis is on community, an open climate, and the free flow of communication.

Such a cultural understanding of leadership with its core communal focus is an integral part of what Peter Block calls "the structure of belonging."[57] Block writes about "the social fabric of community" that "is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging. It is shaped by the idea that only when we are connected and care for the well-being of the whole that a civil and democratic society is created."[58] We argue that the same is true of leadership, namely that it is shaped by a sense of belonging in which its task is to facilitate structures of belonging. We have seen in the daily processes of healing in a shelter, and in the broader societal transformation in South Africa, that when leadership sets its focus on facilitating structures of belonging, then it creates an environment for personal healing and relational transformation.

In this sense, leadership focuses on other people as gifted people. This focus is of special importance in relationship with the Broken Ones, since the societal norm is usually to identify brokenness with deficiencies. Block puts it well: "If we care about transformation, then we will stay focused on gifts, to such an extent that our work becomes to simply bring the gifts of those on the margin into the center."[59] This is also the work of ecclesial leadership, namely to facilitate a structure of belonging in which people are in authentic relationship with the Broken Ones for the sake of God's transformation of everyone in the midst of such belonging.

Elizabeth has experienced it with both residents and staff. The more people feel at home and have a sense of belonging, the more they reach into their authentic selves

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[57] Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008).
[58] Block, 9.
[59] Block, 13.

and share more honestly with others. Then spaces open up for giving and receiving unconditional love and support. The mutual understanding among leaders in the daily life of the shelter is that if people care enough for each other and the common good, they will also be able to address issues related to personal matters and organizational growth. Individual healing is intrinsically related to the healing of humanity and community.

Elizabeth says, *"As we acknowledge our own need for healing, we tap into a deeper sense of compassion together with those whom we seek to serve. Acknowledging and working with the presence of God in and amongst all of us in the shelter helped us to critically reflect, deconstruct, and reframe some of the inherited beliefs, habits, and language we used which perpetuated our dysfunction. Staff members were invited to examine honestly what we believed about the women and ourselves. Together we understood that our beliefs govern how we perceive, interact, and render services to the residents. If we see the residents as poor and needy, if we believe they are irresponsible and inadequate, we will act in this way with them.*

"Staff members were invited to think about our own purposes and how they relate to our work at the shelter. We were invited to consider the possibility that every encounter works together for our common good, especially the toughest ones. The point was to find the life-giving presence of God in even the worst of experiences and be willing to be made whole. As the director, I knew I was asking staff members to go beyond what normally happens in a work environment; but as a person of faith who embraces the idea of Christ suffering with us, I believed it was important to hold this before us all in our quest to support women and children through the most difficult time of their lives.

"Two key components to the practice of ecclesial leadership within the context of the shelter related to listening and noticing what's going on. Staff members were prompted to listen closely to the residents and how they expressed their needs, noticing what happened in between official counseling or group sessions and looking for resources and connections between various experiences in shelter life. They were encouraged to pay attention to what happened internally, externally, and going for the life-giving

opportunity in the midst of all of this. The point was to be informed by what I referred to as the God moments or kairos moments and to respond as a co-worker with God during these times. The sense was that when all the elements were in alignment, healing would be made possible.

"Residents were encouraged to notice what the opportunities for learning and healing were in and through the shelter's program, staff and fellow residents, as well as the total experience of being part of the shelter community. The point was reiterated that not only did the resident come to receive, but also that she had something to share with everybody else she will meet at the shelter. God being in the midst of all of this would help bring about the necessary awakening, healing, and transformation."

When ecclesial leadership succeeds in facilitating an openness between people in community for God to emerge as the power of awakening, healing, and transformation, it becomes an *incipient* leadership shaped by the wisdom that emerges in discerning God's powerful presence and activity.[60] We have argued in this article that such an incipient leadership reflects a cultural understanding of leadership that requires an approach to work *within* culture rather than performing *on* culture. Leadership is simultaneously shaping and shaped by meaning in such structures of cultural belonging. We presented this understanding of leadership with theological and philosophical warrants to create a particular concept of ecclesial leadership grounded in a theology of the cross and framed by a phenomenological attentiveness to the way things are where people are in community with each other. The result is a leadership posture and approach that makes sense to the two of us who are struggling with the legacy of apartheid born out of quite the opposite type of leadership posture, and which give us the language and frameworks for exploring

[60] Cochrane speaks about "incipient theologies" as theologies that are "beginning to exist or appear" in the midst of ordinary people where they discern God's presence and activity. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection*, 21.

a new understanding of leadership that values true otherness and community.