Servant Leadership: A Worldview Perspective

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The concept of worldview is introduced and explored as a framework for creating a philosophical foundation for servant leadership. The author uses the work of Schaeffer (1968), Pearcey (2004), Murphy and Ellis (1996), and MacIntyre (1984, 1988) to demonstrate the fragmented nature of modern philosophic and scientific traditions, how this affects ethics and morality, and how this fragmentation can be remedied to produce a unified and cohesive worldview. Five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) are examined for their overall compatibility with servant leadership. An eight-component worldview based upon the Judeo-Christian tradition is offered as a potential foundation for servant leadership and an answer to the question: Why should I practice servant leadership?

While attending the 2005 Servant Leadership Roundtable at Regent University, I was struck by the frequency of a recurring question from the audience: What are the philosophic foundations for servant leadership? Whenever asked, it was answered by speakers or participants with a wide variety of responses ranging from purely religious explanations to vague allusions to particular values. Ultimately, the question was never fully answered to the satisfaction of the person asking it. The overall impression was that there really were no philosophic, conceptual underpinnings to servant leadership other than the essays of Greenleaf (1996, 1997) and the commitment to treat people with kindness.

Does Servant Leadership Literature Offer a Philosophic Base for the Theory?

Greenleaf's (1997) theory of servant leadership was formulated after he read Herman Hess' *Journey to the East*. Greenleaf (1997) stated that the story greatly impressed him, but the idea laid dormant for over 11 years before he began to write essays expanding on various ideas related to the blossoming theory of servant leadership. These essays touched on various aspects related to power, manipulation, hope, responsibility, strength, and so forth. Eventually, they coalesced into a theory of servant leadership consisting of 10 attributes: listening, empathy,

healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 1995).

The development of servant leadership as a theory has been a slow process as researchers struggle to articulate an adequate theoretical infrastructure. Theorists have explored servant leadership attributes (Russell, 2002) and values (Russell, 2001), offered models (Buchen, 1998; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003; Wong & Page, 2003), compared servant leadership with other theories (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Humphries, 2005; Matteson & Irving, 2005; Rennaker, 2005; Smith, Montagno, & Kuzemenko, 2004; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Whetstone, 2002, 2005; Winston & Hartsfield, 2004), offered a typology of servant leadership (Laub, 2004), explained its benefits theoretically or through research (Banutu-Gomez, 2004; Greenleaf, 1997; Greenleaf, 1996; Irving, 2004; Irving, 2005; Polleys, 2002; Reinke, 2004; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Spears, 1995; Spears & Lawrence, 2002; Stupak & Stupak, 2005; Winston, 2004), explored contextual appropriateness (Humphries, 2005; Smith et al., 2004), and criticized its assumptions in relation to gender (Eicher-Catt, 2005).

Very few studies have offered a philosophical base for the theory, anchoring it in a particular worldview. There have been attempts to link it to Christianity since the New Testament records Jesus Christ telling his disciples that "…the greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:11-12, New International Version; Russell, 2003; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Wong & Page, 2003). However, these attempts have not sought to create a cohesive rationale for servant leadership in the context of a worldview or explained basic aspects of what would constitute a biblical worldview. Russell provided the most comprehensive textual support for servant leadership from a Judeo-Christian perspective but fell short of showing a philosophic rationale supporting why servant leadership should be practiced (Russell, 2003). In addition, attempts to link servant leadership to a religious tradition have met resistance in a pluralistic society where a myriad of worldviews compete for attention, where it is assumed that there will be a separation between religion and public life, and where a logical framework for the inclusion of religious values in everyday life is missing. This position of separation flows from presuppositions fueled by a fragmented modern worldview, as explored later in this paper.

Patterson (2003) used the concept of virtue as a descriptor for servant leadership. Virtue, first defined by Aristotle, involves doing right things through moral character (Patterson, 2003; Whetstone, 2002). Patterson (2003) identified seven virtues associated with servant leadership: agapáo love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Winston (2003) used these virtues as a basis for building an interactive model of servant leadership. Stone and Patterson (2005) revisited it when placing servant leadership within a historical continuum of leadership development. By building on Aristotle's philosophic framework, the beginnings of an underpinning for servant leadership were offered. However, Aristotelian ethics have been criticized for gender bias; impracticality in application; and the observation that virtues divorced from theology are the product of socially constructed agreements and, therefore, schemes of virtue may include diametric opposites in different cultures (Hauptli, 2002). Whetstone (2005) stated that an Aristotelian approach to ethics is inadequate to stand on its own. MacIntyre (1984) stated that since the enlightenment, there has been no agreement among modern philosophers as to what specific virtues exist. This inability to agree upon what constitutes virtues opens any list of virtues to criticism.

Table 1 lists a comparison of the virtues identified by Aristotle and what are recognized as traditional Christian virtues and those outlined by Patterson (2003). Aristotle valued pride,

while Patterson listed humility as a virtue. Finally, Aristotle's concept of the fulfilled or complete person came from a reflection upon the nature of the pantheon of Greek gods. His ethic was rooted in his religious tradition, providing the ethic with a means for determining how humans ought to live or what is sometimes called a teleology. Virtues are moral in nature (Whetstone, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005). Drawing attention to virtues, an arm of morality/ethics, as a basis of action raises the questions as to whether or not the virtues mentioned are grounded metaphysically or philosophically? If virtues have no grounding philosophically, are they merely another form of relativism?

Table 1: *A Comparison of Virtues*

Aristotelian	Traditional Christian	Patterson (2003) and servant leadership
Courage	Chastity	Agapáo love
Temperance	Abstinence	Vision
Generosity	Liberality	Altruism
Pride	Humility	Humility
Self-control	Patience	Trust
Truthfulness	Kindness	Empowerment
Justice	Diligence	Service
Wittiness		
Friendliness		
Practical knowledge		
Scientific knowledge		

Patterson's (2003) approach of linking servant leadership to virtues implies that servant leadership is a moral form of leadership. Whetstone (2002, 2005) originally raised the same sentiment by demonstrating that servant leaders operate out of a moral concern for others. I believe the absence of a philosophic foundation for servant leadership, which conceptually anchors ethics or morality in a specific philosophic system, causes one to be unable to answer clearly the question: why should I practice this form of leadership? Is servant leadership merely another technique which can be applied and discarded at the leader's whim or according to the bottom line? Or, is it a philosophic orientation, linked to a cohesive worldview which gives meaning to values and attributes in servant leadership and functions as an orientation that governs perceptions, understanding, and praxis in the world?

I will first examine the concept of worldview, defining and clarifying its role in the selection and organization of values. Second, through a summary of Pearcey (2004) and Schaffer's (1968) work in philosophy and Murphy and Ellis' (1996) analysis of the modern hierarchy of scientific inquiry, I will explain how current fragmented and competing worldviews undermine a sound philosophic base for any justification of values or ethics and result in a quandary as to how to classify ethics. Thirdly, the question of whether or not philosophy can offer a foundation for servant leadership is answered. This is followed by Murphy and Ellis' explanation of how to repair the fragmented worldview of science and philosophy while maintaining the integrity of science through MacIntyre's (1984, 1988) approach of requiring any philosophic or worldview system to be linked to a traditional religion in order to create cohesiveness and consistency within the worldview and objectify the fields of ethics and

morality. Having argued that there is a necessity to link worldviews to religion, the paper then examines extant leadership literature linking religion to leadership studies and specifically whether or not the five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) have any serious incompatibility with servant leadership. The next section presents a specific worldview drawn from broad principles of a Judeo-Christian perspective as a potential foundation for servant leadership. This worldview is then examined as to how well it aligns with leadership theory in general and servant leadership in particular, comparing worldview components with servant leadership attributes, followed by a concluding section.

What is Worldview?

"Worldview comes from the German word 'weltanschauung' meaning a 'look into the world.' It refers to a wide world perception. It constitutes the framework through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it" (*Worldview*, 2006, p. 1). Nash (1996) stated that the writings of philosophers identify assumptions about the make-up of reality or how the world works, conceptual schemes, or patterns of ideas or values and organizes them to form a worldview. In the same manner, religions offer a scheme for interpreting the world and, therefore, are recognized as worldviews as well (Nash, 1996). A worldview is used to interpret and make sense of the world. Perceptions of the world and reality can greatly differ between people or cultures since their assumptions of what is important and true differ. There are many types of worldviews vying for supremacy. These include religious systems (formal philosophic systems such as modernism or postmodernism), less formal systems including large group perspectives such as a particular culture, or personal systems.

A history of challenge, debate, and theorizing within the philosophic community demonstrates how worldviews may have inherent weaknesses, inconsistencies, or inabilities to account for various beliefs or practices. This is consistent with Kuhn (1970) who; in explaining the history of scientific advancement; identified the challenges, shifts, and transformations associated with comparing belief systems and selecting the most stable or cohesive.

Which Worldview? How Fragmentation in Modern Worldviews Breeds Confusion

Schaeffer (1968, 1976) and later Pearcey (2004) argued that modern Western worldview suffers from a fragmentation of false dichotomies which affect every aspect of life, particularly morality. Beginning with Plato and his dichotomy of form and matter, the authors examined western philosophic thought, showing how this false dichotomy confuses morality and ethics in particular. The dichotomy is currently expressed as a juxtaposition of values and ethics against science and facts. This placing of ethics in the realm of relativism spurred Murphy and Ellis (1996) to look at the problem of ethics in the fragmented scientific paradigm and whether or not there is a rationale which would unite the current fragmented philosophic reality into a unified worldview.

If one agreed with Pearcey (2004), Schaeffer (1968, 1976), and Murphy and Ellis (1996) that the fragmentation of modern worldviews has created an unsure foundation for ethics or morality, are there implications for leadership? It is not difficult to find the effects of this fragmentation within companies and individuals as they go about daily life and business. The most glaring effect is that values or morality are cast as a purely individual or relative matter. In its most extreme form, it could be called hyperrelativistic. This is relativism that goes beyond

cultural norms, mores, and folkways into a type of anarchism in which companies and individuals recognize no law but themselves. This is exemplified in the excesses and questionable practices of leaders and businesses. As business expands globally, authors such as Greider (1997) document labor and manufacturing practices of business in the developing world that rival egregious activities associated with Europe and the United States in the 19th century. The more common effects of a fragmented worldview in business relates to dichotomies that often breed conflict between competing values. One such occurrence relates to the conflict between shareholder and stakeholder focus found in arguments of social responsibility in business. The shareholder perspective promotes profit alone as the major consideration in business decisions while the stakeholder perspective promotes human and social impact as the major considerations in business decisions. Another effect would be the dichotomy between task and people orientation in leadership.

Fragmentation of worldview affects every level of science as well. In science in general, this fragmentation is exhibited when scientists defend certain inquiries as value free. The pursuit of knowledge is held as the highest value, and the collateral damage done by a logical application of certain findings is seen as the broken eggs necessary to make an omelet.

Can philosophy provide a foundation for servant leadership? The ultimate question is why should one practice servant leadership? The values of servant leadership lean heavily toward human consideration and morality (Whetstone, 2005). Without having a sound, unified worldview that justifies use of servant leadership; one falls prey to the reality that, ultimately, the reason is either utilitarian/pragmatic or situational. The utilitarian/pragmatic reason contradicts the idea that people are to be viewed as an end as opposed to a means, a key value in servant leadership. If the only reason we use the servant leadership approach is that it causes people to work harder to obtain organizational goals, then we undermine the very theory itself. If we take a purely situational approach, stating servant leadership can only work in certain settings and contexts, we again undermine some of the key values described in the theory. In the situational approach, humans are only to be valued if their culture or personal beliefs align with the theory. Pragmatism and situational ethics both fail as reasons for practicing servant leadership.

This brings up the question of whether or not modern philosophy is a suitable base for servant leadership. Kantian philosophy and humanism have been used as potential foundations for leadership. Bowie (2000) argued for a Kantian form of leadership which is highly egalitarian. However, he also stated that "Kant specifically rejects the notion of servility as an acceptable stance for any person-leader or otherwise" (p. 188). To Kant, a servant leader allows himself or herself to be used as a means to others attaining their goals. The idea of one agent using another, even if it is voluntary, is unacceptable. From Bowie's perspective, Kant's philosophic position cannot be used as a foundation for servant leadership.

Humanism has been examined in relation to leadership in general by McGuire, Cross, and O'Donnell (2005) and found wanting. After articulating how humanistic approaches; which emphasize meeting job-related personal, self-esteem, and self-development needs; are normally applied in the workplace, the authors concluded that those who adhere to humanism are "misguided because they fail to grasp, take into account or make explicit the core principles that continue to underpin the capitalist enterprise" (p. 132). They stated that "humanist approaches may mislead employees, and perhaps HRD professionals, by fostering the illusion that the needs of the employees and organizations are always mutually inclusive" (p. 133). Their response uncovers how a fragmented worldview has shaped our concept of capitalism, framing its goals as diametrically opposed to individual development.

In addition, humanism itself seems to be on the decline as it appears to be forsaking its original commitment to human interests as the center of civilization. Veith (2005)outlined how one prominent scientist equated humans to bacteria who need to be cleansed from the planet. Merriam (2004) argued that population growth has cheapened our concept of the value of humans to the point that there is greater outcry over the torture of an animal as opposed to a human. Although an examination of Kantian philosophy or humanism hardly represents an overview of all aspects of modern thought, they do illustrate how Western philosophy as it now stands cannot be used to justify servant leadership.

MacIntyre (1984, 1988), in seeking to provide a firm foundation for ethics and virtues, argued that if ethics are divorced from a religious tradition, they are robbed of a high view of humans. The whole concept of how people ought to live has been the focus of philosophers for centuries. However, MacIntyre (1984) feels that it cannot be convincingly argued outside of a religious tradition. According to MacIntyre (1984), how humans ought to be treated becomes entirely relativistic and essentially meaningless when divorced from some religious tradition.

With this understanding, Murphy and Ellis (1996) addressed how fragmentation in worldview creates a scientific paradigm void of ethics. By following MacIntyre's (1984) method of creating a narrative for examining the cohesiveness and consistency of paradigms, Murphy and Ellis reasoned through the process of placing various scientific fields into a hierarchy based upon their complexity. Once Murphy and Ellis completed the hierarchy, they noted that there is no scientific sphere for ethics or morality. The authors explained how unacceptable this is by demonstrating that values and assumptions of morality and ethics are embedded in each scientific field and in how science is conducted as a discipline. Murphy and Ellis then suggested that since ethics/morality are embedded at every level in scientific inquiry; they are required as part of a scientific hierarchy of disciplines and, because the very nature of ethics and morality implies an oversight role, are required to be placed at the upper levels of the hierarchy where they are able to govern all levels below. Having shown the necessity for ethics/morality as a scientific discipline; the authors use the research and reasoning of MacIntyre (1984) to link morality to a religious system, demonstrate that it is necessary to place ethics and morality below some metaphysical belief system, and unify the fragmented scientific system.

If all levels of science (including the social sciences) are saturated with ethical and moral assumptions in either their theories or practice, if all levels of science require an ethical/moral discipline for critique, and if morality and ethics must be linked to some traditional religion in order to have coherence; then servant leadership must also be linked to some overarching worldview. What then could serve as a foundation for servant leadership? According to MacIntyre (1984), one of the first places to look is religion.

Five Major Religions' Worldviews and Their Compatibility with Servant Leadership

Kriger and Seng (2005) posed a contingency theory in leadership based upon the worldview of five religions that together represent over 82% of the world's population. They compared the worldviews of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism in relation to factors such as the nature and exemplars of leadership, core vision, basis for moral leadership, source of wisdom for leaders, levels of being, and the role of community. The explanations of worldview were not exhaustive or critical in their appraisal of each religion. In fact, they stated that their primary focus was upon Buddhism and Islam, followed by Hinduism, with sparse reference to Judaism and Christianity. They concluded that leadership in the five religions

corresponds more closely to charismatic leadership theories since each tradition provides a series of individuals as role models who exemplify leadership behavior as well as acceptable life patterns, not to mention their inclusion of heroes and heroines who arise in times of crises to provide guidance and inspiration.

Kriger and Seng (2005) also provided a list of values drawn from the study of spirituality in the workplace that included forgiveness, compassion/empathy, integrity, kindness, honesty/truthfulness, patience, humility, loving kindness, service to others, peacefulness, thankfulness, guidance, joy, equanimity, and stillness/inner peace. They stated that these values were also found within each of the five religions. How well did each of the religions embody these values? As pointed out earlier, Russell (2003) identified key support for servant leadership within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) along with Wong and Page (2003) made a strong case for linking it to Christianity in particular. However, the components of a Judeo-Christian worldview were not explained in any detail by any of these authors. It is therefore necessary to present, in broad terms, essential elements of the Judeo-Christian worldview in order to understand its compatibility with servant leadership theory.

This exploration of a broad worldview of the Judeo-Christian tradition will not be a theological treatise encompassing all the details and complexity associated with theology or praxis. Rather, it is an exploration of broad concepts associated with practical theology as evidenced in how individual and community roles and values are explained. Eight different components of worldview are defined. These components highlight the tension that exists when seeking to reconcile the inalienable rights of individuals with the ever-present responsibility to community and the community's responsibility to protect and serve the individual. These eight components consist of human dignity, personal responsibility, character, community, the use of power, compassion, stewardship, and justice. These components have been reduced to broad topics from an examination of the Old and New Testament teachings related to how individuals are to be treated and the essential values associated with what the Scriptures teach a healthy society should embody. Many find their roots in Old Testament instructions from God to the nation of Israel regarding the structure of the Hebrew society.

Human dignity. Individuals are important and are to be treated in a manner that makes them ends, not means. This is because God has created each person in His image. Each person is worthy of respect because of their potential life with God. Each person, no matter how damaged or hopeless they may seem, has worth. People have value that exists apart from any sense of utility. Individuals have rights to specific types of treatment, and leaders have an obligation to ensure that individuals are treated in a manner that affirms the image of God in their lives. Each person, consciously or unconsciously, feels this dignity that God has placed inherently in them. Cahill (1998) pointed out that one of the gifts of Judaism to the world was the idea that the individual is important. Prior to this, the emphasis was upon the group or tribe. The emphasis on the individual is a key aspect of personal dignity. Whenever this dignity is injured, the individual suffers loss; and, ultimately, the community of which the person is a part suffers. Human dignity assumes that leaders affirm the ideas, visions, goals, and aspirations of followers. People have the right and responsibility to shape their own destinies. People have certain rights that exist apart from socially constructed law. We express this dignity through a sense of personal integrity. When a person has a strong sense of dignity or self-respect; he or she strives to live in a manner that affirms that dignity, giving honor to the image of God within him or her.

Personal responsibility. Dignity produces a sense of personal responsibility. Individuals take responsibility for their actions. When a person's sense of dignity is injured, one of the first things to suffer is a sense of personal responsibility for his or her actions. Peterson, Maier, and Seligman (1994) outlined extreme cases that result in a sense of helplessness or what is currently called a victim mentality. The person embracing this victimhood places responsibility for his or her life and actions on others. Steele (1990) and McWhorter (2000, 2005) outlined how this loss of dignity and victim mentality can permeate not only the psyche of a people but how it can influence leaders to formulate solutions to problems that perpetuate this sense of helplessness and lack of responsibility. Central to the idea of personal responsibility is the concept of character.

Character. Character focuses on the necessity to not only do good, but to be good. Specific character traits are isolated in Scripture as not only being pleasing to God; but beneficial to the self, the family, and the greater community. Some of these include wisdom, teachability, loving kindness, joyfulness, peace making, humility, meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, self-control, courage, self-sacrifice, trustworthiness, truthfulness, empathy, and foresight. The presence of these attributes is expected to be seen in how one lives and conducts business within the world.

Community. In the Old Testament, the idea of community embraced extended family, village location, tribal affiliation, and national identity. Most people were members of small groups of friends, family, and business associates with whom they had interaction on almost a daily basis. The emphasis on the individual is tempered by emphasizing the need for individuals to be aware of the common good of the community. This tension between individual needs and wants and community needs and wants permeates all of Scripture. There are expectations related to how communities were to relate to individuals; with special emphasis on the marginalized, disenfranchised, or unfortunate. There were also expectations related to the responsibilities individuals had to ensure that communities were peaceful, prosperous, and just places to live.

Use of power. How leaders use power is a key area of interest in the Scriptures. The recurring theme is one of sharing power; not amassing power, misleading or manipulating people, or using them as pawns in some grand vision or scheme of the leader (Berkhof, 1977; Christian, 1994). Each person should have the opportunity to participate in shaping their individual destiny. The use of power must affirm and strengthen human dignity. Power usage must involve the average person having the means to act upon their dreams and desires.

Justice. Of particular note is the attention given to those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and downtrodden in society in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. This concern is a dual concern. On the one hand, it reveals the value God places on an individual regardless of whether that individual is rich or poor, a member of the community or not, useful or not. It emphasizes that communities have a responsibility to care for these marginalized people. On the other hand, it reveals that a community's concept of justice exposes the strength or weakness of that community and whether or not its worldview is sufficient for its long-term sustainability (Perkins, 1995). Is the community a just community? Mott and Sider (1999) pointed out that this theme is captured by the prophets and enriches the concept of justice found in the Scriptures beyond what was common apart from Scripture. The concept of justice found

within Scripture includes (a) procedural justice, which specifies fair legal process for rich and poor alike; (b) commutative justice, which defines the fair exchange of goods and the conducting of business (e.g., fair weights and measures); (c) distributive justice, which specifies fair allocation of a society's wealth; (d) retributive justice, which defines fair punishment for crimes; and (e) restorative justice, which is an aspect of distributive and retributive justice and specifies fair ways to correct injustice and restore socio-economic wholeness for persons and communities. Specific admonitions exist in the Old and New Testaments relating to the marginalized in society and the responsibility of leaders to care for them.

Stewardship. God declares that the earth and all that is in it is His: "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Pslm 24:1). Humans are given the responsibility to care for God's creation. People have the opportunity to use resources placed in their care as stewards, one who manages resources according to the wishes of another (Block, 1993). Stewardship includes the development of personal skills and abilities, stewardship of community, management of personal and social resources, management of social systems, care for the marginalized, and care for the environment, among other things. Young (2003) argued that stewardship involves a redefinition of capital to include physical, social, financial, reputational, and human capital.

Compassion. It is interesting that throughout Scripture are economic principles of capital redistribution, part of distributive and restorative justice. This is justice coupled with love. Here God is seeking to correct and restore community that has been fractured by material need (Mott & Sider, 1999). It makes leaders responsible for removing oppression that causes members of a community to be excluded, devalued, or merely forgotten.

God was so committed to caring for the marginalized and to economic parity that He declares that to fail to do these things reveals a heart that does not know Him. He explains to a leader that commitment to these principles is of paramount importance:

> Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 22:15-16)

This represents an institutionalization of compassion, along with the cluster of justice principles, within Jewish society. Leaders were judged by how they revealed compassion.

These broad components of a biblical worldview align quite well with numerous theories outside the realm of Scripture that extol the need for respect for human dignity, human responsibility, justice, community, compassion, stewardship, and proper use of power (Bachrach & Baratz, 1972; Block, 1993; Borda & Rahman, 1990; Ellul, 1972, 1976, 1984; Etzioni, 1993; Field, 2003; Garbarino, 1988; Gaventa, 1982; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2002; Greider, 2003; Lukes, 1974; MacIntyre, 1984; Margalit, 1996; Mott & Sider, 1999; Perkins, 1995; Roby, 1998; Schneider, 2002).

Whetstone (2002) used the five themes of personalism as a potential basis for practicing servant leadership. Although personalism does not exist as a formal field of philosophy and is not clearly defined, its five themes are very similar to the broad aspects of a biblical worldview. The themes in personalism are (a) the centrality of the person, people are of value apart from utility; (b) subjectivity and autonomy, the necessity for autonomy and self mastery; (c) human

dignity; (d) the person within the community; and (e) participation and solidarity, the requirement to love others and avoid alienation.

Five Religious Worldviews and Areas of Incompatibility with Servant Leadership

By focusing on the list of values or attributes associated with servant leadership, Sarayrah (2004) outlined how Bedouin Arabic culture exhibits values that seem compatible with servant leadership. Kriger and Seng (2005) also isolated similar values based upon the admonition that followers in Islam bestow power upon the leader and give them the right to lead. The authors assumed that any worldview anchored in a traditional religion will be compatible with servant leadership. Is that the case?

Buddhism's values seem closest to Patterson's (2003) virtue approach to servant leadership. Buddhism is technically a nontheistic religion and poses virtues which guide the follower. These virtues relate to inner states and external practices of the leader. Of particular interest are the four immeasurable states of mind: love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Buddhism places a strong emphasis on the leader practicing and embodying the virtues appropriate to daily situations (Kriger & Seng, 2005). Although this represents a strong contingency theory approach to leadership, the values outlined by Kriger and Seng seem consistent with servant leadership values. Would these religions serve as a philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

Values flow from a philosophic position or worldview. When only values are considered, each religion reveals some level of agreement with servant leadership. What is missing is a consideration of the hot buttons associated with each of the five religions' worldview. These hot buttons are part of the greater worldview associated with each religion and raise questions about whether or not a specific values comparison alone is sufficient.

For instance, no mention is made of the dual system of justice existing in Islam regarding Muslims and non-Muslims that incorporates the concept of jihad and challenges the broad worldview concept of the dignity of all humans. Sarayrah (2004) drew parallels between Bedouin-Arab tribal leaders and the values they embrace and servant leadership. However, no mention was made of how non-Muslims are treated.

In Islam, non-Muslims are divided into two basic categories: pagan idol worshipers and people of the book (Jews and Christians) who are generally referred to as dhimmi (Ye'or, 1985). The harsh treatment of these groups has been catalogued historically from the inception of Islam until present day (Bostom, 2005; Ye'or, 1985). For instance, dhimmis are not allowed to present evidence against a Muslim in a court of law governed by the Koran; their oath is considered invalid (Ye'or, 1985 p. 56). They are required to pay a submission tax that is determined entirely by the whim of Muslim leaders, are not permitted to build nor repair centers of worship not related to Islam, and are prohibited from holding any position that places them in authority over a Muslim (Bostom, 2005; Ye'or, 1985).

In addition to the tiered Islamic social structure in which dhimmis are second class citizens, Muslim women also suffer under a dual standard and experience second class status (Creevey, 1991; Mostafa, 2003; Nicolai, 2004; Sidani, 2005). A typical response by an Islamic scholar to the reality that the rights of women and non-Muslims under shari'a are not equal to male Muslims is to argue for a nonuniversal approach to human rights. Rather than adhere to a universal declaration for human rights as declared by the United Nations, they would say human rights need to be evaluated based upon local values and worldviews, essentially legitimizing

significant human rights violations (An-Na'im & Henkin, 2000). Is it possible for a tradition that adheres to these positions to be regarded as a possible philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

In Hinduism, the hot buttons relate to the caste system and karma. The Hindu doctrine of caste divides people into Brahman, kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudra, and untouchables (or dalits). Brahmans embody the highest, most respected level; while dalits represent the lowest and least respected level. This division denies the value of the individual, forcing a solidarity in which all are expected to conform to caste in behavior and self-image and in which individuals are not to be judged apart from caste (Saha, 1993). Caste determines job allocation as well as access to resources and services (Borooah, 2005). Mandelbaum (1964) noted that the concept of karma teaches that what one experiences in this life is the result of one's conduct in previous lives, precluding the striving to change one's fate or social position. Both these doctrines seem to conflict with concepts of essential human dignity. Is it possible for a tradition that adheres to these positions to be regarded as a possible philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

Compared to the two previous religious traditions, Buddhism seems more compatible with servant leadership since it has an emphasis on the interrelatedness of all creation and humanity. Like Hinduism, it too has a strong emphasis on karma and how previous lives create the current reality in which individuals find themselves. Current suffering can be traced to errors in previous lives or incarnations needing correction in the current life. Although there is an embracing of suffering, there seems to be little mention of offering a helping hand in the present or a transformation of society to reduce poverty, disease, or disabling environments (Miles, 2002). There is conflict between Buddhism and the concept of human rights as well as Buddhism's view of common labor. Buddhists feel humans have no inalienable rights as defined by western thinking. This follows logically from their teaching that the self is an illusion. To place value on any one thing, such as the self, is to ignore the interdependence of all things. This is described in an article examining the failure of privacy rights in Thai culture (Kitiyadisai, 2005). In spite of this, it appears that distinctions are made by Buddhists in relation to the value of individuals. In examining the traditions of giving in religions of India, it is found that Buddhist monks discriminate between donors based upon ideas of merit and impurity, thus creating a type of caste system within Buddhism, denying certain individuals or groups the ability to earn merit toward nirvana (Brekke, 1998). Is it possible for a tradition that adheres to these positions to be regarded as a possible philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

Judaism and Christianity hold similar positions related to issues since they share a portion of the Scriptures, the Old Testament. This worldview has come under criticism for an apparent gender bias that discriminates against women (Cohen, 1980; Eicher-Catt, 2005). It could be argued that the case is not as strong for Christianity when one includes the protestant denominations that endorse the ordination of women and promote women having access to all levels of leadership. Both Judaism and Christianity still suffer from practical issues related to gender discrimination, yet they tend to have a better track record in their treatment of women than the three religions previously examined. The criticism is valid but not critical enough in scope to warrant setting aside the broad Judeo-Christian worldview outlined earlier, particularly when the definitions are applied equally to both genders.

Ultimately, all five religions suffer, to a greater or lesser degree, from inconsistencies or teachings that seem incompatible with the values of servant leadership. However, as worldviews, three of the five have serious contradictions with servant leadership. Does this mean that one has to abandon all religion as a basis for servant leadership because of conflict with specific values? I

believe that the answer is no. Two of the traditions reveal only minor conflict with overall values, and current social trends associated with those religions show much movement toward reconciliation. Consequently, it is possible to use a broad Judeo-Christian or biblical worldview as a foundation which would be compatible with servant leadership. When viewed in broad, sweeping language such as presented in this paper; the broad biblical worldview is compatible with personalism, servant leadership as well as many other leadership styles expressed in leadership literature. Rather than linking a theory like servant leadership to a specific teaching, linking it to a comprehensive worldview provides a stronger philosophic base. Even Jesus' command to be servant leaders grew out of His understanding of Hebrew worldview.

Worldview versus Nomological Nets?

Pearcey (2004) and Murphy and Ellis (1996) have shown how the inclusion of worldview provides cohesiveness and unity as well as a rationale for determining ethical choices. Nomological nets outline the essential structures of theories by linking other theoretical constructs to a particular theory. Kuhn (1970) pointed out that since each new theory introduced into a paradigm is measured by existing theories in the paradigm, a circular logic is constructed. It is possible to construct a theory or paradigm that is internally logical, supported by an extensive nomological net, and morally repugnant. An example of this is represented in the field of bioethics. Some ethicists in this field have asked how one can support the destruction of life in order to protect life (Gushee, 2006). Ultimately, this decision is made not based on science but on worldview. Fragmented modern worldviews may support this type of reasoning. However, it still remains that the issue is a moral issue and, ultimately, a moral decision. When that decision is made purely upon relativistic frameworks, not only varying but frightening decisions can arise. Although nomological nets provide rational support for what *is* (the arena in which science thrives), they provide no support for what *ought to be* in an ideal sense (the realm of worldview since it deals with teleology). Guidance regarding how to live or what constitutes good or bad behavior is ultimately rooted in worldview even though we often experience it through the lens of culture. Culture and worldviews are intertwined to a very great degree.

The applicability of specific leadership theories supported by empirically verified nomological nets has come under scrutiny as culturally implicit theories of leadership have been explored (Banutu-Gomez, 2002; Boehnke, Bontis, DiStefano, & DiStefano, 2003; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Evaristo, 2003; Hartog, House, Hanges, & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002; Kim, Danseruau, Kim, & Kim, 2004; Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999; Volkmar, 2003). Although leadership theory to this point has not been explained in terms of worldview and no specific worldview inquiries have been a part of studies such as the GLOBE project; worldview lurks in the background, shaping cultural values which in turn shape implicit ideas of leadership. With more examination of culture, we may find that our understanding of leadership theories and their fungibility can be traced to worldview. How compatible will some theories be with some cultures? Servant leadership theory has been used in this paper as a starting point for comparison.

A Broad Biblical Worldview and Its Compatibility with Servant Leadership

The values and attributes of various leadership theories including transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978, 2003; Tichy & Devanna, 1986), servant leadership (Bass,

1990; Greenleaf, 1996; Spears & Lawrence, 2002), self-sacrificial leadership (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999), and authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Gardner, Avolio, & Luthans, 2005; Klenke, 2005) are compatible with one or more of the eight broad Judeo-Christian worldview components. These components as outlined in the earlier section provide strong support for the various attributes of servant leadership (see Table 2). Each of the individual values of servant leadership finds a basis for expression in multiple aspects of this worldview. Each component in the worldview provides a different perspective on the expression of each value in servant leadership. In addition, the components of this worldview provide a broad framework that should prove acceptable within secular circles. The five themes of personalism as outlined by Whetstone (2002), being secular in origin, have significant overlap with a broad biblical worldview. If the components of a broad biblical worldview themselves were presented to a secular group without mention of their linkage to a religious tradition, they would find strong support.

Another essential point to grasp is that a single worldview may support more than one leadership theory. Individual leadership theories may embody worldviews in differing degrees of application. This may infer that a person's choice of which leadership theory to employ depends upon (a) the person's dominant worldview and (b) personal traits, talents, and preferences. Leadership theories initially may be chosen based upon psychological fit, brought about by external worldview and internal states and preferences. This, of course, is not a new revelation.

Table 2: *How a Biblical Worldview Supports Servant Leadership Attributes*

Biblical worldview components	Human dignity	Personal responsi-bility	Character	Community	Use of power	Stewardship	Compassion	Justice
Servant leadership attributes								
Listening	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Empathy	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Healing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Awareness		x	x		x	x	x	x
Persuading	x	x		x	x			
Foresight		x	x	x	x	x		x
Stewardship	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Growth of people	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Community	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Conceptualizing		x	x	x	x	x		x

Conclusion

The identification of a philosophic base for servant leadership, or the need to define one, has been absent from the literature but has been found to be a question asked in discussing why one should practice servant leadership. Patterson (2003) promoted the concept of virtues as a potential explanation for the necessity of practicing servant leadership and, as such, presented the theory as being essentially moral. In modern philosophy, there is little agreement as to which virtues to select or how to select them. This is largely due to the fragmented worldview present within current Western thinking.

Through the work of Schaffer (1968, 1976), Pearcey (2004), and Murphy and Ellis (1996); the effect of a fragmented worldview upon everyday thinking and particularly upon the sciences was explained as well as the need to bring about a unified approach which places ethics/morality back in its rightful place in the hierarchy of the sciences. MacIntyre's (1984, 1988) work explained the need for worldviews and ethics/morality in particular to be linked to a specific traditional religion in order to have consistency and cohesion. Accomplishing this removes morality and ethics from the continually shifting sands of relativism and cultural change.

Since servant leadership has been defined as a moral or virtuous leadership style and, according to MacIntyre (1984), it is necessary to link such a system to a traditional religion in order to maintain cohesion and consistency; five major religions were examined for whether any of the key components of their worldview created serious conflict with the values of servant leadership. The work of Kriger and Seng (2005) served as launching point related to religious worldviews and leadership theory. Eight components of a broadly defined biblical worldview based upon the Judeo-Christian tradition were explained. Using extant literature, these five major religious worldviews were examined for compatibility with servant leadership. Significant contradictions with servant leadership theory were found within Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. These contradictions do not preclude servant leadership from being practiced within those traditions but raise serious questions as to how compatible these traditions actually are with the whole theory and its implications. The potential problems associated with Judaism and Christianity were less serious. For this reason, a broadly defined Judeo-Christian worldview, consisting of eight components, was compared with each value in servant leadership (as shown in Table 2). The values or attributes of servant leadership were found to be strongly supported within this worldview.

There is significant compatibility between the values and components of servant leadership and a biblical worldview. Linking servant leadership to such a worldview would answer the question posed in the introduction: what are the philosophic foundations for servant leadership? It would also provide a more objective answer to the question: why should I practice servant leadership? An answer based upon the broad biblical worldview suggests that one should practice servant leadership because it affirms human dignity, increases the bond of community by fostering compassion and attention to people's needs, empowers people and helps them develop character, moderates and critiques the use of power, and provides an environment that promotes justice.

When looking at servant leadership through the lens of worldview, one is brought back to the thought that servant leadership may be more than a leadership theory, as leadership theories have been traditionally presented. Leadership theories have been generally explained or presented as styles or techniques open to picking and choosing based upon preference or

situation. Research in culturally implicit leadership theory has shown that worldview has an impact on whether or not the theories are transferable between cultures and, as a result, whether leadership theories would be compatible with specific worldviews. Although worldview has not been a primary issue in the development and understanding of leadership theory to this point, that very well may change. Consequently, I have sought to show that servant leadership is more a personal orientation toward life which grows from a particular worldview. I offer a broad interpretation of a Judeo-Christian worldview as an explanation. A key implication is that servant leadership does not exist as merely a tool to use; rather, it is more of an archetype or ego ideal that governs daily interactions. It does not represent leadership that merely serves, but servant leadership as a whole. It has more to do with *being* than merely *doing*. In my view, what servant leadership presents is being a servant.

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