

power processes involved are described as associated with minority influence parrhesia and job situation, social power (e.g., situation) as well as resource dependence. The latter poses challenges to employees because of being at the receiving end and generally fall out as victims of the truth. In practice parrhesiastes are not hated by that kind of behaviour because one characteristic of a parrhesiastes is 'readiness to suffer for the truth'. They are martyrs in their own right. Together they may assume which risk the individual runs in relation to whether a leader, a work group or organizational may react in a negative and harmful way. Fundamentally, parrhesia is less effective when top management perceives parrhesia as a threat to the protective authority and perceived integrity. Before proceeding to delve on relationship between leadership and parrhesia in detail, it is important that this paper presents some critical perspectives on definitions, myths and historical evolution of parrhesia as a concept and then as a philosophy

1.3 Origin of Parrhesia and its characteristics

One of the fundamental rights in the history of mankind is freedom of speech in many societies that individuals, groups and societies should have, yet also highly contested. As a right, it can only be appreciated if its historical development is taken into account. It is important at this juncture to know that parrhesia offers case studies in freedom of speech, its understanding and existence throughout history of mankind. They enable researchers and policymakers alike to gain an awareness of the complexities, challenges and benefits of freedom of speech. It is important at this juncture to know that parrhesia offers case studies in freedom of speech whether in politics or in business or at work and even at religious gatherings or any other gathering of any kind. However for this paper; focus is on the leaders versus their employees on work related matters. How do our leaders relate to the parrhesia phenomenon? Authors of rhetorical works in the 16th and 17th centuries had a tough time and got engaged in complicated relationships of negotiations with apparently contradicting traditions and societies at the time in terms of defining parrhesia. Fundamentally, the basic understanding of free speech was from fifth century Athens onwards, rhetorically coloured, and Greek uses of parrhesia and the definitions of *licentia* later set out in Roman handbooks are highly influential to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works on rhetoric and political advice (Colclough, 1999).

Existing literature reveals that the word "parrhesia" [παρρησία] appears for the first time in Greek literature in Euripides [c.484-407 BC], and occurs throughout the ancient Greek world of letters from the end of the Fifth Century BC. Further analysis and search of its origin shows that the word parrhesia is also found in the patristic texts written at the end of the Fourth and during the Fifth Century AD –in a number of times, for example as found in Jean Chrisostome [AD 345-407].. Etymologically, "parrhesiazesthai" means "to say everything."

Michel Foucault have written several articles and analyzed the philosophy of parrhesia. In his problematization of different kinds of truth-speaking, he argues that any social activity has to be studied not from an epistemological, but from a pragmatic and ontological point of view. Foucault (1983) proposed to categorize them according to their effects on receivers. He dwelt much on parrhesia, tracing back an old concept firstly proposed by classic Greek philosophers. From a classic Greek root's perspective, parrhesia at its extreme describes a kind of truth-speaking that, by openly and fearlessly communicating and conveying the disturbing truth in its original form, implies a risk for those telling it (parrhesiastes). Such as telling one's leader that the decision they have taken is immoral and defies the ethos of humanity. Such a statement while true may sound an attack on the leaders. The parrhesiastes is people who, being free to choose whether to do it or not, speaks a difficult truth in order to accomplish a sense of moral duty toward receivers. Table 1 below provides summarizes critical characteristics that defines a parrhesiastes.

Table 1 Characteristics of Parrhesia

<p>One key characteristic of a parrhesiastes is the fearlessness; the parrhesiastes chooses to speak frankly and truthfully regardless of any risk to him-self. Foucault (1983) argues that the parrhesiastes chooses to openly speak the truth in order to safeguard harmony between his words and his acts. To be more precise and articulate Foucault maintains that the dangerous choice of truth-speaking challenges yet empowers employees</p>
<p>The one who uses parrhesia, the parrhesiastes, is someone who says everything he has in mind: he/she does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse. This is where a clash between leaders and those led is inevitable as will be discussed in the other parts of this paper.</p>
<p>Parrhesia is a form of criticism, either towards another or towards oneself, but always in a situation where the speaker or confessor is in a position of inferiority with respect to the interlocutor</p>
<p>Individuals can critique their mentors and admit their failings (without being severely chastised), then eventually they will acquire the ability to criticize in the public arena and, moreover, receive criticism in return without being hurt.</p>
<p>The parrhesiastes is always less powerful than the one with whom he or she speaks. The parrhesia comes from “below”, as it were, and is directed towards “above</p>
<p>Another characteristic of a parrhesiastes is that the speaker is supposed to give a complete and exact account of what he has in mind so that the audience is in a position to understand and comprehend exactly what he, the parrhesiastes thinks.</p>
<p>Does the parrhesiastes say what he/she thinks is true, or does he say what is really true? True parrhesiastes says what is true because he/she knows that it is true; and he/she knows that it is true because it is really true. In those circumstances, the parrhesiastes is not only sincere and says what is his opinion, but his opinion is also the truth.</p>
<p>In parrhesia, the speaker uses his/her freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.</p>
<p>There is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth. Throughout my years of work I have observed and got convinced at personal level that this belief and truth produces resentment from those in authority for they fear being questioned about the mistakes and failures they parade during their leadership process.</p>
<p>The parrhesiastes must be willing to risk losing their reputation, their friends and even their life when pronouncing their truth</p>
<p>Foucault (1983) argues that a very notable and distinctive characteristic of parrhesiastes is that If there is a kind of “proof ” of the sincerity of the parrhesiastes, it is his/her courage. The fact that a person, in the case of this study, an employee, says something dangerous -different from what the majority believes is a strong indication that he/she is a parrhesiastes.</p>
<p>The fact that a speaker says something dangerous — different from what the majority believes— is a strong indication that he is a parrhesiastes.</p>
<p>The parrhesiastes says what is true because he knows that it is true; and he knows that it is true because it is really true</p>
<p>The narrative of parrhesia discourse articulates that a person is said to use parrhesia and merits consideration as a parrhesiastes only if there is a risk or danger for him or her in telling that truth</p>
<p>Notably in parrhesia the danger always comes from the fact that the truth that said is capable of hurting or angering the interlocutor. Fundamentally, the parrhesia involved, for example, may be the advice that the interlocutor should have behaved in a given way, or modified their thinking etcetera.</p>
<p>In parrhesia, telling the truth is regarded as a duty. The basic truth is that no employee is forced to speak the truth about the leadership gaps but parrhesiastes feels that it is his/her duty to do so..</p>
<p>Where the employee or any other person is forced or coerced to speak the truth by another person, say of high office or authority, then the speaker of that truth is not a parrhesiastes. There must be moral obligation for parrhesia to be called so</p>

Source: Compiled by Researcher (2020)

In many cases, my experience both as a trainer- consultant and lecturer informs me that, such an uneasy truth may, if accepted, make receivers, in this case employees, able to cope with some important evidence that they would have preferred to ignore. This reminds me of so many truths about leaders who have failed to do the right things, abuse their offices, abuse employees, and harass women and men but the truth is not said, because so many of the employees out there in various corporates cannot sing the ‘parrhesia song’ but whistle smartly the rhetorical percepts that their leaders want to hear. This is self-destructing and put together corporates with such cultures survive in the short term with long-term negative results because they were sitting on a time bomb-falsifying reality on their leadership performance. It should be born in mind that not all historical and corporate social sensitive issues require a parrhesiastic narrative, but that breaking a long-lasting social denial of past and those that causes untold long term suffering of both the employee and the corporate’s sustainability and survival. Apparently it seems that the concept of parrhesia, generally used in the social and business discourse (Foucault 1983), could be fruitfully used also to better understand social and psychological processes linked to the case of a historical leadership that uncovers a formerly denied truth referred to the national past-a truth that could threaten both the social and moral identity of its employees and those tasked to assume fiduciary duties (Allpress et al. 2014). The radical destruction of falsehood and rhetoric leadership in African corporates must raise interests among scholars and researchers and open a debate on the evils of suppressing frank talk- the truth that transforms corporates and create sustainable futures.

1.4 Religious confessions of parrhesia as a philosophy

As part of my effort to draw on the origin of parrhesia as an old practice since time immemorial yet appears not to be talked about mostly in our corporate cultures and business circles-I will throw you right inside Christianity journeys and points of intersection where the concept of parrhesia was widely used as an important tool to enunciate the holy gospel. Below is a table with details of selected verses that depicts parrhesia as not limited to politics, business and social life but is extended to religion evidently.

Table 2: Verses depicting the parrhesia narrative in the Christian era

(John. 11:12, 14):Jesus “spoke openly, without concealment” Again, “he spoke openly, plainly.”(Mk. 8:32)
(Matt. 25:14) : Even His confession during the crucifixion reveals intimate and vulnerable expressions of trust in the midst of agony, “my God, my God; Why have you forsaken me?” can be considered the first clear example of parrhesia
(Acts 2:29): Peter, as the head of the Jerusalem Church, preaches interpreting the events of Pentecost. “When asked, he spoke freely, confidently.”
(II Corinthians 3:10-18) : In a most curious passage Paul explains Christian liberty by contrasting his Gospel ministry to that of Moses, the Law-Giver. Paul says that he is not like Moses who ministered through concealment and secrecy, rather his ministry is open and genuine
(II Cor. 3:13): “We are not like Moses who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.” Paul contrasts himself to the practice of those at the market who deceptively put wax in the cracks of pottery to cover up imperfections.
(II Cor. 4:2): ” We do not use deception, nor do we distort... On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience...” (
(Heb.4:15.16): For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness...Let us then approach the throne of grace with parrhesia...”

Source: Created by Researcher (2020)

Discussing parrhesia from a religious perspective critical in providing insights to the births of this phenomenon, and that it cannot be isolated to business circles or politics only. That Jesus spoke openly [John 11:12, 14] without concealment typifies that parrhesia is truly a constructive philosophy and therefore a necessary practice. Another parrhesiatic show is when Jesus [Matthew 25:14] told the holy God that; why have you forsaken me’. In our traditions, it is not as easy as A, B and C to say such words to the elders or people in authority, but Jesus had to say the truth because of the pain he was going through. (II Cor. 4:2): In 11 Cor.4:2 the verse reads, ‘We do not use deception, nor do we distort... On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience...’ These and many other versus typifies the dominance of parrhesia in the Christian life yet many leaders drawn from this fraternity shy away when this principles are applied in the corporates in which they are appointed in positions of authority. The list is endless but this is what it is, thus the parrhesia philosophy is not new but an ancient practice.

1.5 Lessons learnt from parrhesiatic practices

Indeed, someone who is deprived of parrhesia is in the same situation as a slave to the extent that he or she cannot take part in the performance and political life of the organization in which they work, nor play the “parrhesiastic game”. Study findings show that knowledge conveyed by parrhesiastic historical teaching on previously silenced in group crimes allow present leaders to morally distance themselves from wrongdoings of older generations of leaders (Foucault, 1983). Unfortunately we ran scarce of such data and people have a tendency of wanting to read and know leadership issues selectively thereby bypassing important studies such as the present study. There is also a third category of players in the parrhesiastic game, viz., and the silent majority: the people in general who are not present at the exchanges between the truth tellers and leadership advisors, but to whom, and on behalf of whom, the leadership refers when offering advice to top management. One of the lessons drawn in this study is that we tend to see the faults of others but remain blind to those which concern ourselves. This is akin to the saying that the lover is blind in the case of the object of his love. If, therefore, each of us loves himself most of all, he must be blind in his own case. Another fascinating lesson is that the parrhesiastes- which everyone needs in order to get rid of his/her own self-delusion- does not need to be a friend, someone you know someone with whom you are acquainted. True leaders who want to complete their leadership role without erring appoint truth tellers [parrhesiastes] to advise them when they go wrong] - a very unusual practice in African settings. Instead those in authority are comfortable in appointing loyalists-rhetorists to surround them because by virtue of their inability to criticize always praise those above them to gain prominence.

A very important insight drawn from the study of parrhesia is the emergence of the steadiness of mind. It is presumed that the notion of steadiness takes on great significance. The theme of self-delusion and the theme of constancy or persistency of mind are highly related to the philosophy of steadiness in parrhesia. According to Foucault (1983) this self-delusion can prevent persons from knowing who or what they are, and all the shifts in their thoughts, feelings, and opinions which force them to move from one thought to another, one feeling to another, or one opinion to another, demonstrate this linkage. A key insight from this study is that leadership that is appointed because they are friends or relatives or frontiers remains weak and are highly at risk of being fed with wrong information from the flatter model which highly characterizes leader-friend follower model. Foucault argues, ‘We are our own flatterers, and it is in order to disconnect this

spontaneous relation we have to ourselves, to rid ourselves of our *philautia*, that we need a parrhesiastes’.

In general persons who are said to be truth tellers at work are actually flatterers .flatterers are believed more than parrhesiastes. The major lesson here is ‘how to deduce that certain individuals at work are indeed parrhesiastes and not flatterers. Parrhesiastes exhibit a harmonious accord between what they say and what they do. Secondly parrhesiastes show permanence, continuity, stability and steadiness in them. This is summarized by Foucault (1983) in one of his lectures where he said,

“it is necessary to observe the uniformity and permanence of his tastes, whether he always takes delight in the same things, and commends always the same things, and whether he directs and ordains his own life according to one pattern, as becomes a freeborn man and a lover of congenial friendship and intimacy; for such is the conduct of a friend. But the flatterer, since he has no abiding place of character to dwell in, and since he Leads a life not of his own choosing but another’s, molding and adapting himself to suit another, is not simple, not one, but variable and many in one, and, like water that is poured into one receptacle after another, he is constantly on the move from place to place, and changes his shape to fit his receiver.”

So many of corporate leaders are not even aware of who they are until a parrhesiastes descend on them. They can lead to the end of their careers without having realized what kind of leaders are they except the side of flatterism that will have sustained them for so long. The major concern and effect of parrhesiastic struggle is not to bring the interlocutor to a new truth, or to a new level of self-awareness (Foucault, 2083; Lewis, 2008); it is to lead the interlocutor to internalize this parrhesiastic struggle -to fight within himself/herself against his own faults, and to be with himself/herself in the same way that he/she is expected to be.

1.6 Summary of empirical results

This section of study is providing results of a snapshot study that was done at one of the training workshops I conducted comprising of leaders coming from seven African countries. The total sample size was 17—all coming from different work backgrounds from both private and public sectors. The sample composition was diverse and there data was gathered unbiasedly because the participants were not give a chance to interact before the interview and were not informed prior to the interview the theme of the survey. This was important because in that the study credibility and reliability was guaranteed. It was convenient for me to engage the participants on their experiences from their countries and corporations on the matter of parrhesia as a culture. The feedback obtained from the interviews conducted is shown in table 3 below in their verbiage form.

Table 3: Snapshot results from empirical data

Empirical results show that 79% of studied leaders confirmed high presents of falsehood and rhetoricism in African institutions-negative effect on transformation and institutional reforms
77% concurred that the employees are denied the right, the duty and the courage to speak the truth
89% confirmed their anti-parrhesia stance on work related issues
Strains relationships between leaders and their followers [77% of the respondents
90% concurred that truth teller are regarded as sellouts at workplaces and are target of victimization
80% agreed that authority is used to silence responsible employees
90% of the participants expressed interest in hearing good things about them
94% expressed that freedom of employee speeches is limited and closely monitored especially when it goes against the wishes of those in authority
<p>Verbiage extracts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>'For personal preservation; I feel disrespected when my subordinate say things as is...even if I know I erred'</i> [Ugandan interviewee] ➤ <i>'We discourage whistle blowing...but frank talk.. '</i> [Ghananian interviewee] ➤ <i>'We are scared to say the naked truth because of victimization [Tanzanian interviewee]</i> ➤ <i>We are in a fix ...work democracy is rare...[Botswana interviewee]</i> ➤ <i>'It all about professional integrity, employees the communication climate in our organization reward truth speaking...'</i>South African interviewee] ➤ <i>'It not easy to be told exactly where you err especially with a subordinate...'</i>[Liberian Interviewee] ➤ <i>'Our greatest challenge is we tend to reward those who think like us...anyone who questions our actions is adversarial...[Sierra Leon -interviewee]</i> ➤ <i>'many of us are comfortable to live in flattering institutions..'</i> [Namibian Interviewee] ➤ <i>'for the purposes of keeping our integrity, I prefer not to be harassed by a subordinate''</i> [Gambian interviewee] ➤ <i>'Self-love is a barrier to truth telling...'</i> [Mozambique interviewee]
<p>Observation over years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of confidence amongst leadership ➤ Planting of spies to register those who speak the truth, truth about them ➤ Truth speakers are antagonistic in the eyes of managers ➤ Truth speakers are denied equal opportunities in promotions and resource sharing ➤ Wasting time micro managing parrhesiastes ➤ Leadership energy re-directed towards non-productive issues ➤ Sluggish transformation of institutions ➤ Lack of confidence amongst leadership ➤ Planting of spies to register those who speak the truth, truth about them ➤ Truth speakers are antagonistic in the eyes of managers ➤ Truth speakers are denied equal opportunities in promotions and resource sharing ➤ Wasting time micro managing parrhesiastes ➤ Leadership energy re-directed towards non-productive issues ➤ Sluggish transformation of institutions

Source: Researched data (2020)

1.7 Recommendations

Parrhesia with its antecedents strives to reverse the current orgy of corporate ideological rigidity, autocracy, hardheartedness, incivility, and venomous scapegoating that distinguishes so much of corporate politics and relationship. True leadership must embrace the parrhesia philosophy as part of corporate culture as a way of undoing rhetoric and political fore instead of economic performance targeted at improving corporate image and re-position the corporate for sustainable future. The present study encourages corporates to introduce workplace corporate democracies. This is a kind of culture that allows frank talk and opinion sharing without fear of being reprimanded by those in authority. Corporations can put in place several mechanisms for exposing illegal or immoral acts and practices that damage corporate image. In addition to corporate means, there are individuals who, acting on their own account, choose to disclose such acts and must be allowed and should feel free to do so. The main reasons for the disclosure are to stop the harmful behavior and to prevent such actions of seeking praise where the consequence are negative and are detrimental to corporate performance.

Setting a culture of dialogue in workplaces cannot be over-emphasized. It is “dialogue between different levels of organizations that creates democratic negotiation and in the process, shapes relations and open clean lines of communication. Successfully adopting and implementing a culture of parrhesia require honesty to be placed at the center of it. Honesty refers to a facet of moral character and connotes positive and virtuous attributes such as integrity, truthfulness, and straightforwardness, including straightforwardness of conduct, along with the absence of lying, cheating and theft (Hilbig, Benjamin E.; Zettler, Ingo. (2009). Furthermore, honesty means being trustworthy, loyal, fair, and sincere. This should become one of the key values that embrace one’s corporate vision.

The creation of a system of corporate parrhesia that better equips both leaders and employees with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to provide honest and freedom of speech care and the ability to continually update their learning; and the availability of appropriate resources to support needed changes in corporate perspectives on hard talk policy continuum cannot be over-emphasized. Top level management and the board of directors should ensure that the work environment throughout the corporate freedom of speech continuum is conducive to the development of appropriate attitudes, behaviors and values, as well as knowledge and skills that

promotes freedom of speech and that responsible employees must be rewarded for standing for the truth. This is only possible if the corporate work environment in various corporations tangibly values the parrhesia reward culture. While these recommendations appear difficult to adopt and implement, corporations must embrace them if their communication systems and leader-follower relationships have to be improved. Corporations must acquire the capacity to pursue parrhesiastic truth-telling as an activity, an "art of life. This philosophical problem of the twenty-first century is the same problem Socrates and other ancient philosophers identified in the fifth century BC: "who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power"(Foucault (1983)

Further recommendations include:

- Encourage employees to say the truth, the truth enables managers to make corrections
- There is need to manage loyalty as over-loyalty by loyal employees can be dangerous for they use rhetoric to praise managers even where managers do not deserve
- Adopt a free speech policy within the confines of organizational development that encourage employees to be courageous in doing so
- Promote and or reward parrhesiastes-who according to this study are responsible employees, responsible in the sense that their truth is moral and is not meant to destroy but to put corporates in their rightful positions.
- Build a culture of saying the truth to enable clear relationship building without battering one another
- The truth will set employees free from enslaver and habit of making bosses happy even in cases where the truth must be said ,it is manipulated and rhetoric is used
- Corporates are further advised to promote excellence in frank talk by implementing reform in leadership paradigms.

1.8 Conclusion

In concluding this paper, it is important to pay attention to the differences between emotional reactions of employees across Africa as described in the study and I propose that, all findings and issues raised put together, be collapsed together and enable the reader to have a holistic picture-in abstract of parrhesia meta- issues. In the interest of collegiality and professionalism

and moral uprightness, the exemplum given in this paper shows how corporate leaders in Africa [of course not all leaders] emotions may be seen not only as a barrier (Bar-Tal and Halperin 2013) yet, if well regulated, as a motivational resource (Frijda 1986) to get to know a formerly hidden aspect of one's own present and historical nuisance and misdemeanors that exploits others moral duties and rights in protecting corporate interests. Falsehood & rhetoric is sweet in the short term but retards institutional developments''. The truth is not always pleasant''.

Foucault (1983) writes:

'Parrhesia... is linked to courage in the face of danger: it demands the courage to speak the truth in spite of some danger.... When you accept the parrhesiastic game in which your own life is exposed, you are taking up a specific relationship to yourself: you risk death to tell the truth instead of reposing in the security of a life where the truth goes unspoken.... Parrhesia is a form of criticism, either towards another or towards oneself, but always in a situation where the speaker or confessor is in a position of inferiority with respect to the interlocutor. The parrhesiastes is always less powerful than the one with whom he speaks.'

I conclude this paper by raising three express questions. The critical questions that critics and non-critics of my paper may want to answer include among others: Can adoption of parrhesia be a face server for those in authority? How does parrhesia free employees from truth bondage? Are corporations ready to embrace the critical ingredients of parrhesia into their operational systems? How do you balance freedom of speech versus corporate intentions? It is my humble but radical, soft but hard, simple but complex, firm but flexible submission that the subject of parrhesia needs enhanced debate to allow involvement and engagement of all stakeholders who may have both direct and indirect interest in upholding corporate truth and the empowerment of employees to become responsible employees who do not conceal the truth on failed leadership. Our only hope lies in the radical destruction of falsehood and rhetoric leadership in Corporate Africa and replace it with democratic ethos-ethos that embrace and empowers employees to become free agencies of freedom of constructive truth [*Parrhesianology*].

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