

A Theoretical Model of Fragile Authenticity Structure

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Abstract: An increasingly number of patients in Western civilizations suffer from weak authenticity structure which is characterized by a lack of self-realization, - autonomy, - character strength, stereotype behavior, inability to use (internal) dialogue in order to learn about oneself and defining oneself as a individual, and so on. In this paper a theoretical model of fragile authenticity structure and some suggestions to regain a more authentic attitude are presented.

Introduction

Living successfully in modern societies requires excessive adjustment abilities and – willingness. People who are able to do so run an increased risk to choose an opportunistic and conformistic lifestyle in order to obtain optimal materialistic profit from their capacities, anticipation skills and character flexibility. The problem is that such a lifestyle might easily interfere with deep authentic wishes, needs and development and the consequence might be weakening of and alienation from the real self. In the long run the consequence could be severe lack of or fragile authenticity that will be characterized by absence of or serious distortion of authentic activities, which have negative impact on other traits and conditions (this will be discussed later). As a psychoanalyst I have treated an increasingly number of patients who suffer from a pathological form fragile authenticity structure, which is now recognized as an independent diagnostic category (Martens, 2005c). In this article I will present a theoretical model of Fragile Authenticity Structure (FAS) and some suggestions for regaining authenticity.

Definition of Authenticity

Authenticity can be defined as to be true to ourselves. It has something to do with the self and has something to do with being truthful or sincere (Bovens, 1999). We are born into a fully-scripted, well-organized on-going social structure (into the “they”). And we will remain absorbed in the 'they' for our whole lives unless we discover how to become more Authentic (Heidegger, 1927/1962). According to Heidegger (1927/1962) understanding of being (including our own existence and identity) is itself a form of authenticity. For Heidegger authenticity is a uniquely temporal structure and a process of unfolding possibilities. According to Heidegger the conscious self is coming to terms with being in a material world and with encountering external forces and influences which are very different from itself; authenticity is one way in which the self acts and changes in response to these pressures. Authenticity concerns a person's relation with the world, it can not be arrived at by simply repeating a set of actions or taking up a set of positions. In this manner, authenticity is connected with creativity: the impetus to action must arise from the person in question, and not be externally imposed (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Authenticity can thus be understood as a form of creative self-realization, creative inquiring of the world and ourselves, and a way to liberate us from our false self, undesired conditioned responses and wrong choices. Creativity is one of the major means by which the human being liberates himself from the fetters not only of his conditioned responses, but also of his usual choices. The concept of the healthy, self-actualizing, fully-human person seems to come closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing (Maslov, 1962). Authenticity is thus a state of being that is active, congruent, contemplative, dynamic, and teleological - an agency burgeoning with quiescent potentiality (Guignon, 1993; Mills, 1997). However, the realization of authenticity is only possible in conjunction with other individuals. There is, according to (Ferrara, 1998), no such thing as an authentic identity which does not presuppose a moment of recognition on

the part of the other. It requires that we think from the standpoint of everyone else (Ferrara, 2004). The author believes that as a result empathy is involved in authenticity activities.

Psychoanalysis describes four dimensions of authenticity or fulfilment of an individual identity: coherence, vitality, depth, and maturity. *Coherence* of an individual identity is meant as cohesion versus fragmentation, continuity versus discontinuity, and demarcation versus indistinctness. *Vitality*, on its part, refers to the experience of joyful empowerment which results from the fulfilment of one's central needs. Thirdly, *depth* designates a person's capacity to have access to his or her own psyche without falling into the trap of complete transparency of the self. Finally, a fulfilled identity possesses a quality of *maturity*, which is described as the ability and willingness to come to terms with the facticity of the natural, the social, and the internal world – without losing one's coherence or vitality (Ferrara, 1998; Kohut, 1978; Mitchell, 1997; Stern, 1997).

The author regards authenticity as a set of core characteristics which is required for a discerning, unique and meaningful life. This cluster contains a rather complex pattern of interactions between traits, behavior or conditions that in turn correlate with intrapsychic - (internal conflicts, desires, primitive drives), psychosocial -, cultural -, religious - and possible even political factors. This is the reason that this phenomenon is often difficult to describe. As a consequence, authenticity is a condition that is generally not understood very well and it is frequently exchanged with other characteristics and attitudes such as charisma or freakish behavior. This is one of the reasons why people are not aware how alienated they are from their authentic self. When people do not know exactly what authenticity is, they will not be able to develop adequate and correct conceptions and associated mental model for the development of authenticity. Such guiding mental model can lead us out of our prison of self-alienation, harmful and false self-myths, feigning, and self-denial. Such mental and emotional liberation that is the

result of growth of authenticity correlates with happiness and even remission in difficult-to-treat patients with antisocial personality disorder (Martens, 2005b).

The author suggests that a lack of authenticity could also be the result of a) fear of life, b) lack of character strength, c) lack of awareness of the possibility to be authentic, d) lack of awareness of or knowledge about what authentic is or not (as a consequence cognitive disorder, negative impact during development and upbringing; deprivation or trauma), e) mental disorder such as personality disorder that are characterized of character flaws and social-emotional and moral incapacities; and neurobiological and genetic abnormalities.

Interactional Model of Authenticity

The author likes to present his interactional model of authenticity and its correlates. These correlates of authenticity are: empathy; self-realization; self-investigation/self-knowledge; reality testing; honesty; optimal social-emotional, cognitive, and moral development; alertness, character strength, perseverance; courage, creativity, originality; favorable neurobiological and genetic conditions (determine social-emotional and moral development see Martens, 2002, 2004) and upbringing, cultural and environmental impact (determine social-emotional development; see Martens, 2005a). (See *Tables 1 & 2* at end of article.)

Authenticity and Associated Troubles

Becoming authentic is intrinsically difficult, due in part to social pressures to live inauthentically, and in part due to a person's own character. It requires self-knowledge, it alters radically our relationships with other people (with the risk of loosing popularity, - social contacts and associated social isolation), and it carries with it its own set of moral obligations (Taylor, 1992). Moreover, authenticity is a revelatory state, where one perceives oneself, other people, and sometimes even things, in a radically new way (Taylor, 1992). The author

suggests that this might lead to excessive adjustment activities and serious problems in persons on the road to authenticity and people in their environment. The author suggests that becoming authentic might provoke feelings of distrust (it might easily be regarded as deviant, maladjusted, indifferent and/or anarchistic attitude) and jealousy in other people and this will easily lead to experiences of being rejected and cast out. Another problem as a consequence of the search of authenticity might be a) confusion about one's identity (self-investigation can make us increasingly aware of our dark sides, mental blindness, and cowardice), b) relapse and associated internal crisis (lack of self-confidence/esteem), c) stress and exhaustion as a result of the long-lasting and difficult process of changing attitude, behavior and ideas and fight against old impulses, habits and tendencies.

Significant Correlates of Lack Authenticity

Lack of authenticity might have following significant and aversive correlates:

- Being not true to oneself might result in missing the point in his or her life. Only an authentic person is able to effective self-realization and associated optimal self-knowledge, self-development and fruitful choices;
- Lack of autonomy and dependency upon other people. Cast into the blind, purposeless whirl of existence, we must either choose our own lives or have our lives chosen for us by the social forces already in operation when we were born. There are no given, automatic meanings in human life. We human beings must create whatever goals we will pursue (Park, 1999). The author believes that a lack of autonomy correlates with a lack of self-respect, (unconscious) feelings of inferiority and guilt because of self-neglect and lack of courage to be authentic;
- Lack of empathy (Orange, 2002), lack of ability to think from the standpoint of everyone else (Ferrara, 2004) and associated social-emotional and moral underdevelopment.

Authenticity and empathy are not only compatible with but also necessary to each other (Orange, 2002). The author speculates that authenticity can only become mature when there is a balance between our internal and external world, when we have such a commitment to other persons that we are able to use their information about ourselves and the world adequately (in order to detect our blind spot and specific limitation). In contrast empathy will be mature when its expression and motives are inspired by our real Self (authentic). As a consequence a lack of authenticity will be linked to lack of empathic capacities/development, which in turn is determined by a lack of social-emotional and moral awareness/ability (empathy is a moral emotion) and/or neurobiological (dys)functions (see Martens, 2002, 2004).

- Overadjustment and linked stereotype thinking/behavior, lack of self-realization and associated lack of self-investigation and individuality. The author suggests that stereotyping thinking itself is characterized by predictable behavior and a lack of creativity, - individuality, - courage, and - originality. Furthermore, stereotyping thinking/behavior is in the long-term boring for the individual itself and its environment and it might easily lead to exhausting and despairing reactions of all parties which are confronted with it. Consequently, the person in question will be more and more aware of his or her lack of original behavior and weak character. However, even when such person becomes gradually motivated to change attitude (as a result of this awareness) he or she will often not be able to determine the precise nature of his or her uninteresting behavior and weak character and what could be done about it.
- Lack of internal dialogue (Martens, 2003 a, b), lack of dialogue (Taylor, 1992) and lack of use of optimal feedback from other individuals (Martens, 2003a,b). Taylor uses the case of Oedipus in order to illustrate and support his thesis. Oedipus is given ample opportunity to engage in dialogue. However, when Oedipus talks to others, he only listens to what he

wants to hear. When Teiresias tries to tell him the truth, he becomes angry and says, And who has taught you the truth? Not your profession surely. Instead of trying to understand what Teiresias is saying, he immediately discards it because it does not fit into his plan to pull Thebes out of the plague. He is unwilling to engage in true dialogue, because he is afraid that it might cause him to question his own beliefs. Oedipus is not living his life authentically; he is not being true to himself. In his arrogance he believes himself greater than he really is, and this prevents him from truly seeking his own individuality. Oedipus becomes so caught up in himself that he cannot see his own shortcomings. This prevents him from truly knowing himself. When he goes to the oracle at Delphi to ask who his parents are, he does not follow the advice inscribed above the gate, Know Yourself. His lack of self-knowledge leads to a lack of interest in dialogue. If he had known himself going into the oracle, he would have realized that running from his fate would solve nothing. Had he been more secure with his individuality and allowed himself to engage in conversation he might have avoided his ultimate demise. Dialogue and optimal utilization of feedback of other persons is essential if we want to be truly capable of defining ourselves as individuals. The author revealed in his psychoanalytical research (see Martens, 2001, 2003a) that a lack of (capacity to) internal dialogue is a significant requirement for optimal and individualistic moral and social-emotional activities/development, which is necessary for authentic development.

- Lack of self-investigation (was noted before) that will result in a lack self-knowledge, - self-criticism and - self-correction; self-alienation; self-confusion; and lack of self-esteem and lack of happiness. Unauthentic individuals know (unconsciously and often in a vague manner) what is going wrong, although they try to avoid introspection in order a) to avoid conscious awareness of their lack of authenticity, and b) to prevent coping with

the difficult consequences of such awareness such as problematic change of attitude/lifestyle and social and materialistic difficulties. This process of avoiding awareness and possible problems will lead to an absence of or delayed development of abilities that have significance for a meaningful life such as a) capacity to choose friends that are appropriate for us (who stimulate us and who can learn us about ourselves), b) capacity to find out how we can live in this world without self-denial and losing our individuality, and c) ability to develop special social-emotional, cognitive and moral awareness in order to optimize social interactions and stimulate effective and correct judgments that may also protect against harmful influences;

- Harmful self-myth and false self-image (as a result of lack of self-investigation, - reality-testing, and - use of external feedback that is provided by other people), and playing roles that are not supported by their real self. A lack of authenticity will be linked to a lack of (ability to) acceptance of other person's real-self because this might be experienced as a confrontation with his or her own self-neglect/denial. A lack of authenticity is also linked to incorrect cognitive processes and mental representations as consequence of a lack of reality testing experience and ability;
- Internal emptiness (lack of real inner vitality) and inner suffering (and associated feelings of shame and guilt) because of our unconscious awareness of losing our true self;
- Lack of authenticity will be linked to specific inner blindness or incapacities (lack of recognition and judgment ability regarding correlates of authenticity such as true self; integrity; lack of ability to introspective internal dialogue; lack of assessment of reality of truth, also in other persons behavior; lack of capacity to find inspiration in ourselves; lack of internal anchor; lack of inner strength, - steadiness and - durability; lack of sensitivity to essential mental, emotional and moral values; lack of self-love and self-happiness).

- Deviant intrapsychic mechanism such as repression, denial, excessive shame-rage reaction (anger as a reaction on shame), pathological narcissistic development (self-glorification in order to neutralize excessive feeling of self-hate and shame), and lack of satisfaction of developmental need (each individual is unconsciously or consciously aware of it).

Strategic Steps Towards Authenticity

Maslow (1970) and Park (1999) gave some suggestion that might be very useful for candidates who attempt to enhance their authenticity. If persons are not pleased with the enculturation they received, there is no way to avoid or skip that part of human development. They had to become integrated conformists before they could consider becoming more autonomous. This process of self-investigation and becoming motivated for change itself empowers them to look back on the social processes that created them. Park (1999) speculates that when persons understand their own enculturation, they can begin to resist and transcend that socialization. Autonomy means being self-governing —from the Greek for self (autos) and law (nomos). We can become more autonomous thru a long process of making free choices (Park, 1999). If patients want to become more authentic, they will devise their own reasons for living, which might go beyond what anyone they ever tried before. Their first task is to explore, imagine, and experiment with various life-meanings until they devise a set of purposes and goals that seem worthy of our comprehensive efforts (Maslow, 1970; Park, 1999). Instead of spending their lives trying to satisfy our deficiency needs, individuals can become more self-actualizing by creating meaningful life-purposes. Persons are self-actualizing if they pursue meanings and values beyond themselves and their families. They transcend their earlier concern for what other people think and focus instead on being the persons they choose to be. In short, they grow away from conformity toward autonomy

(Maslow, 1970). Maslow and Park, however, did forget to mention some important issues in this context. The first step in this process of change is self-investigation. But, persons who lack authenticity are not used to self-investigation (they do not know how, what, why and when). Without professional guidance this first step will not succeed for many persons with fragile authenticity structure. Furthermore, the process of becoming more autonomously and making free choices will be fail for many of them without profound support (these issues will be discussed later).

The author (Martens, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2003c) revealed that authenticity in severe personality disordered and “normal” persons might be significantly provoked and stimulated by shocking and/or impressive life events (such divorce, death of partner, disease), positive experiences (falling in love; academic and/or vocational success after a long episode of bad luck) and harsh confrontation with other individuals (that will be clear up the negative consequences of their behavior). In educational and therapeutic settings it is very important to make persons aware of these important learning moments and to help them to use these moments in an optimal manner. But, the author revealed also that ethical (Martens, 2001a) and spiritual activities (Martens, 2003a) during and after such learning moments might be very fruitful for increase of authenticity and remission in persons with severe personality disorders and possible also in normal individuals.

Education, Training and Therapy as A Means to Enhancement of Authenticity

FAS is a rather complicated cluster of interactional features and conditions. Therefore all correlates of FAS should have our attention during educational and therapeutic activities that are targeted towards personal and authenticity growth, especially stimulation of social-emotional, moral (also empathy) development, reality testing, self-investigation, (internal) dialogue and

optimal utilization of feedback from other individuals, and self-realization. Most types psychotherapies are equipped for stimulation of these capacities, but some special psychotherapies such as ethics therapy (Martens, 2001a) and spiritual psychotherapy (Martens, 2003a) are especially constructed and suitable (eventually in addition to other therapies) for treatment and correction of negative correlates of authenticity and authenticity itself (Kahn et al., 2004).

It is the purpose of ethics therapy to fill the patient's moral and social emotional developmental gap by means of specific narrative and contemplation strategies. Ethics therapy is directed towards an enhancing of moral/ethical awareness and associated dimensions such as cognition, social-emotional awareness, empathy, adequate information processing, aspects of the will, authenticity, creativity, responsibility, self-knowledge. During spiritual psychotherapy important issues such as authenticity, vanity; emotional, moral and social capacity; reality testing; creativity and faith in life; and religiosity might be examined. Spiritual activities might likely lead to or support sublimation, because spirituality may enhance the quality of characteristics and conditions that are significant for adequate sublimation such as authenticity, reality testing, self-examination (and linked self-knowledge, contemplation), constructive creativity, social-emotional and moral capacities (see also ethics therapy) and philosophical activities.

Training or stimulation of following abilities might be helpful in enhancing authenticity, also in the context of ethics and spiritual psychotherapy:

- **Reflective judgment.** Kant's notion (1790/1987) of reflective judgment provide us with a concept of validity that is based on judgment rather than on principles. The point is that both Aristotle (1970) and Kant (1790/1987) provide us with a concept of validity that is compatible with our intuitions about the plurality of language games and the impossibility of a non-linguistic access to uninterpreted reality. Reflective judgment leads, according to Ferrara

(1998), to the notion of the authenticity or integrity of an identity. However, Ferrara failed to explain precisely why and how this happens. The author believes that every access to uninterpreted reality might include access to our own internal reality and correlated (lack of) authenticity (reality testing, self-investigation. Studying the world is studying ourselves (we are related to that world). But, only when we are as honest and alert as possible we will be able to develop a correct judgment and validity (also about ourselves as part of the world). As a consequence of the fact that reflective judgement is independent of methods and general principles and that is undemonstrable (see Kant, 1790/1987) it is difficult to learn and utilized in therapy. However, the author believes that some guidance is possible that might facilitate a solid start and progress in practicing reflective judgement. Ferrara (1998) links the idea of validity (as authentic intersubjectivity) to reflective judgment and more particularly to the judgment of taste taken as a model for the kind of judgments in terms of which we evaluate the degree of appropriateness of a course of action, or of a life-project, to an identity (he refers to Kant).

If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding) we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgment, and so not logical, but is aesthetic-which means that it is one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective. Every reference of representations is capable of being objective, even that of sensations (in which case it signifies the real in an empirical representation). The one exception to this is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. This denotes nothing in the object, but is a feeling which the subject has of itself and of the manner in which it is affected by the representation (Kant, 1790/1987)

The author suggests that the search for authenticity is partly a matter of aesthetic activity. Persons who are motivated to enhance authenticity must develop their sense and judgement of character beauty. Authenticity has its own irresistible attractiveness even for persons who are not trained to assess it. Persons in search of authenticity should learn to consider and estimate the beautiful authentic features of other persons in order to increase the quality of their judgement of taste and to construct an internal model of authenticity that will be suitable for themselves. However, the author believes that this kind of intuition (judgement of taste) must be accompanied with more specialized cognitive, ethical and social-emotional activities (requires increase of associated capacities) in order to create more abstract models for internal guidance (action, development of attitude and adequate mentality) for optimal authenticity growth. Such adequate model of internal guidance can only be constructed with help of introspective material in combination with the social-emotional and moral fruits of social interactions and reference to others (well-balanced use of internal and external valuable information).

- **An ability to choose appropriate conceptual schemes development of authenticity.** Ferrara (1998) defines postmetaphysical *phronesis* (*practical wisdom see Aristotle, 1970*) as the ability to choose between conceptual schemes embedding incompatible or differently ranked values in contexts where no a priori or external standard can be invoked. If *phronesis* is reconstructed along these lines, as related to the weighing of values, it is argued that such a weighing is conceptually linked with the furthering of the authenticity of the identity in whose service it is carried out (Ferrara, 1998). The author believes, however, that such weighing of values is only associated with a growth of authenticity when it is characterized or accompanied by a) self-investigation, b) obligation and motivation for growth of authenticity, c) growth of social-emotional and moral awareness/capacities (in such way that it is not

excessive self-centred), d) adequate maturity and intelligence, e) capacity to learn from experiences and, f) ability to use social-emotional and moral feedback from other people.

- **Empathic abilities, reference to others, recognition of the importance of others that will stimulate authenticity.** Being the fundamental 'source of normativity', authenticity as conceived by Ferrara (2004) has to incorporate a moment of reflection (Ferrara, 2004), the reference to others', namely the intersubjective moment of mutual recognition. Thus in our pursuit of an authentic identity, recognition on the part of others is always presupposed. It requires that we think from the standpoint of everyone else (Ferrara, 2004). The author suggests that training of empathic abilities and increase of awareness of the importance of other persons must be paired with specific cognitive activities (reality testing, critical information processing and reflections) in order to estimate correctly the value, needs and position in our life of other persons, and associated use of this information for catharsis, sublimation and transformation of undesirable into desirable features and characteristics (which facilitate authenticity).

- **Finding the point in his or her life when authenticity was still present.** Buddha (2004) developed his own technique to regain authenticity. In his contemplations he searched the point in his childhood when he lost his pure and authentic self and when his self-alienation and self-denial began. By finding out how he was before that point, Buddha developed further in this line his authenticity self. This might also a useful technique for candidates who want to stimulate their growth of authenticity. The author suggests that this might be a difficult technique for persons who lack authenticity severely, because remembering such transition requires a minimum of authenticity which supports the ethical self-observer in us (who controls our virtues attitude, purity and honesty) even during and after those moment when character development went dramatically wrong.

Conclusions

Authenticity is a psychiatric, psychological, sociological, educational and philosophical significant phenomenon. Authenticity and a lack of authenticity appear to be correlated with the many important personality traits, capacities and psychosocial conditions. It seems to play a central role in our life since it determines our mental health and well-being and as a consequence the quality of our life. A lack of authenticity leads to enormous intrapsychic social, emotional and moral frustrations for the person in question as well as individuals who are confronted with unauthentic attitudes of other persons. However, it is important to know that all vital correlates of authenticity such as social-emotional and moral capacities are neurobiological determined (Martens, 2002, 2004). As a consequence a lack of authenticity could be linked to neurobiological abnormalities. But, in turn, these neurobiological dysfunctions can be normalized by means of development a much healthier and social-emotional and moral attitude (Martens, 2001). Furthermore, the gender-, age – , cultural, religious, and ethnic related aspects and possible specific neurobiological correlates of FAS are largely unknown and should be studied profoundly, because only in this manner it is possible to construct suitable educational, training and therapeutic programs for all categories of individuals with fragile authenticity structure.

Table 1

Dimensional Model of Authenticity

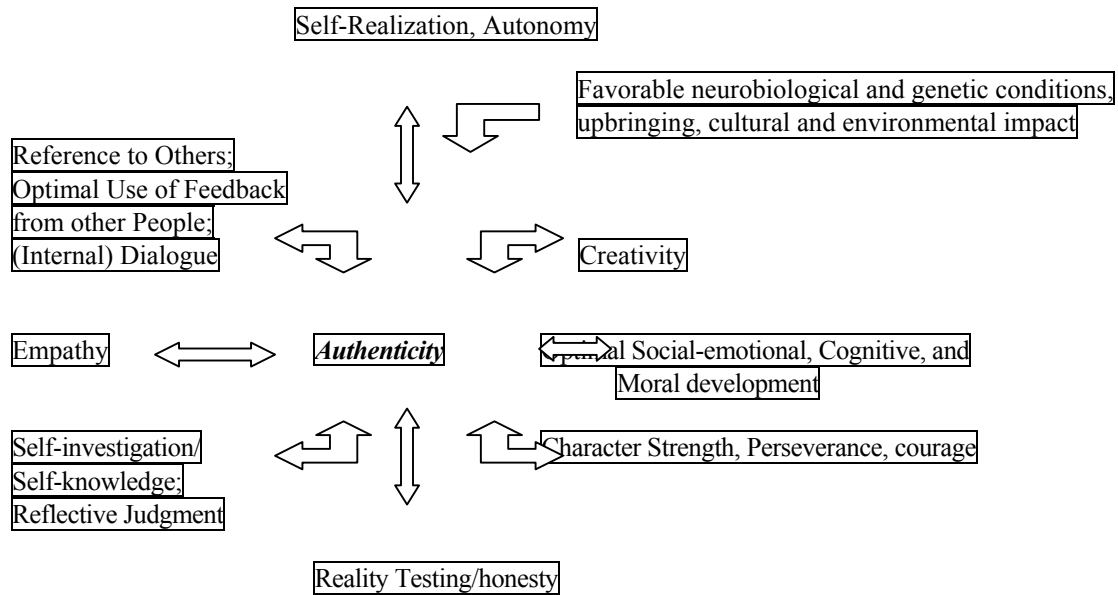
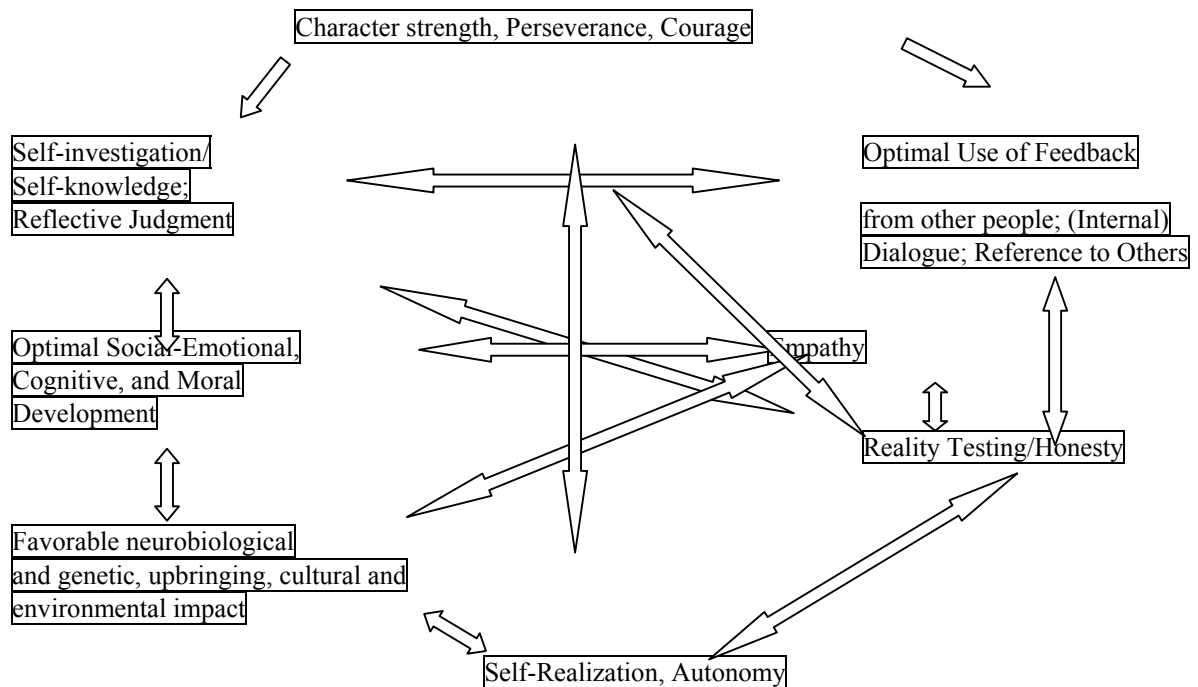


Table 2

Interactions Between Dimensions of Authenticity



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