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The alchemy of authenticity: Lessons from the 2016 US Presidential Campaign



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Donald Trump's descent from the heavens into the Iowa State Fair just prior to the Iowa Caucus via his TRUMP-embazoned helicopter was derided as an attention-grabbing stunt. And of course, that's exactly what it was. But it also showcased exactly what is right about the Trump campaign and what is wrong about others, particularly that of Hillary Clinton.

Trump's splashy entrance was vintage Trump. He is indeed a showman, an attention-grabber, and a braggart. The fact that he doesn't attempt to be anything else is exactly what has put him atop the polls. American voters like the common touch. But what they crave even more is *authenticity*, a sense that a candidate means what he says and will do what he intends to do when he gets into office. This is what Trump is really selling.

At exactly the moment multimillionaire Hillary Clinton was milling about the fair pretending to be one with the proletariat, Trump was hovering overhead pretending to be nothing but a rich man in his own personal aircraft. (Koffler, Lifezette, 2016)

What an era we live in, when full frontal 'being yourself' is hailed as the decisive factor for the US presidential election campaign. Donald Trump is considered 'authentic' because he is unashamedly rich and audaciously outspoken. Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton appears to be a fraud, trying to blend in, eating a pork chop on a stick. And in the background was Bernie Sanders, whose candid alignment with social justice and his army of supporters startled political commentators. It would be easy to write off the 2016 US presidential election as a once-in-a-lifetime media circus. We believe, however, that the 2016 campaign deserves some thoughtful reflection on what it means to be an 'authentic' leader. Not just because it is a race for one of the most powerful—possibly the most powerful—leadership role on the planet, but because the campaign

has become a very public stage where 'authentic' leadership has played a starring role at both ends of the political spectrum.

In the opening quote we get the impression that Trump is presenting as who he really is, while Clinton is pretending to be someone she is not. Authenticity is treated as being integral to the individual candidates, as something that Trump patently has and that Clinton does not. Authenticity has been heralded as the 'it' factor of the 2016 US presidential election campaign. But, why and how has the notion of authenticity shifted from leadership buzzword to mandate? In this article, we ask the questions: How did we get here, i.e., where did the rise and rise of authentic leadership come from? What is the role that others ('followers') play in co-creating authentic leaders? What responsibility does an authentic leader have? And, why is it so difficult to develop our own authentic style?

In the media's rendition and in a great deal of the scholarly leadership literature, authentic leadership seems to exist with or without followers. However, authenticity is a quality that matters enormously to followers. Indeed, they (followers) have participated in the campaign process with great gusto, seemingly due to the 'real' nature of Trump, and in the earlier stages of the campaign, to the 'realness' of Sanders. In this article we suggest that implying leaders are as they are—authentic, or not—completely separate from their relationships with followers is a deceptive idea. We refer to the 'alchemy of authenticity' to evoke a different view, taking the focus wider and deeper than the inherent qualities of individual leaders to what can be created, for good or ill, when a relationship with followers is added to the mix. This is the proverbial caldron where the alchemy of authenticity happens.

We begin with a look back over two decades of authenticity as a construct in the leadership field. Next, we return to the campaign trail. Here we affirm the importance of authen-

ticity while turning to sociologists to reposition it as a social and relational phenomenon. We suggest that authenticity in leadership really matters when it evokes an authentic experience with and for followers. We argue that the space between 'authentic' leaders and followers is brimming with potency, which implies particular responsibilities for leaders. Finally, we argue that the alchemy of authenticity renders authenticity as less individual and rationally achievable than leadership scholars suggest.

THE CRUCIBLE: PC VS BS

Authentic leadership encourages us to connect with our true selves. This is distinguished from developing a list of competencies determined by others, attempting to mimic those who are clearly successful or trying to be someone we are not. The thought is not new and is found in the frequently quoted line in Hamlet when Polonius admonishes his son: 'This above all else, to thine own self be true.' (Never mind that what is often missed in the use of this quote is that Polonius was a bore to his son because he was given to trite kernels of wisdom!)

In Western thought, the Renaissance particularly empowered humankind to think on our own rather than blindly follow God's will or way. Leadership scholars really grabbed hold of the concept in the late 1990s. Following the era of transactional leadership, which emphasized the exchange relationship between employer and employee, connecting workers' motivation with concrete rewards, scholars and practitioners became attracted to the notion that motivation could go far beyond basic transactions. In laying the foundations of transformational leadership, Bernard Bass argued that staff would give discretionary effort to leaders who exhibited charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, cynicism and doubt arose around transformational leadership. Events such as the Enron scandal revealed the potential danger of blind faith in visionary leaders. Popular business magazines began referring to 'the dark side' of leadership, while Michael Maccoby's 'Narcissism, the incredible pros and the inevitable cons' was awarded a McKinsey prize for being one of the two best *Harvard Business Review* articles of 2000. Scholars of transformational leadership responded to these criticisms by adding an extra adjective to their particular school of thought. They now referred to 'authentic transformational leadership' and contrasted this with what they termed 'inauthentic, quasi- or pseudo-transformational leadership' in order to distinguish the villainous from the virtuous leader. As such, authenticity served as the litmus test to reveal false prophets.

The ground was shifting in other ways during the 1990s. Traditional images of 'leading from the front' and heroic leadership were being challenged. The promise of authenticity was directly linked to leadership for the new century and framed as an antidote to the cynicism that prevailed in organizations. Bruce Avolio and his colleagues popularized the concept of authentic leadership during the early 2000s. They positioned authenticity well beyond referring to those who had a deep knowledge of themselves. Authenticity also came to imply a range of attributes, including Avolio and

colleagues' assertion that authenticity was connected to hope, resilience and high moral character. Who could possibly object to such qualities? Avolio and Gardner drew on American literary critic Lionel Trilling to make a crucial distinction between authenticity and sincerity. While the latter focuses on being true to others, Avolio and Gardner argued that the focus on self as distinct from the needs or concerns of others was essential to understanding the meaning of authenticity. Indeed, Avolio and Gardner suggested that an authentic self is one that is entirely self-referenced. This self has a high degree of autonomy and is not fazed by others' needs and expectations.

It is precisely this self-referential quality, however, that we see as posing problems in leadership. As we go on to discuss, focusing on one's inner self runs the risk of producing not reflective leaders, but leaders who are self-obsessed and/or immune to doubt or viewpoints that are disruptive to their own. Moreover, and most importantly, we suggest that holding authenticity as a quality that is inherent to individuals rather than existing *between* leaders and followers, may produce leaders who feed off followers' fantasies, rather than asking them (followers) to face and take responsibility for complex realities.

From a sociological perspective, Rebecca Erikson connected the accelerating interest in authenticity with the questions raised by postmodernism about what is *real* and not real. She argued that authenticity became increasingly important because being 'real' was experienced as rare and at risk in the postmodern world, with its emphasis on a multiplicity of values and perspectives, the erosion of scientific certainty, firm identity and 'truth.' With postmodernism, previous social distinctions that maintained inequities of class, race and gender began to weaken, creating space for new voices, including those who had been marginalized and silenced. Erikson suggested that the renewed interest in authenticity provided a language for those whose social world was becoming less certain. Returning to the campaign trail Rebecca Traister, writing for the *New York* magazine, has suggested that this election is 'a referendum on the country's feelings about inclusion, about women, people of color and their increasing influence.' As historic inequities and social distinctions are questioned those who stand to lose power frame new voices and viewpoints as capricious through the language of political correctness. Indeed, Trump has done exactly that, gaining ground by creating a dichotomy between political correctness and authenticity. He is the guy who, to quote Bill Maher, says: 'I don't bend to your bullshit.' And, once a 'real' leader calls something BS, the conversation is ended, as any protestations are framed as the bleating of the politically correct.

In summary, it is ironic that authentic leadership emerged in part as an antidote to the dark side of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was called into question when several high profile leaders were found to be charlatans, whose followers would go the extra mile, but in the wrong direction. Authentic leadership became a qualifier to transformational leadership, serving as a morality check against the risk of leaders who could excite followers to act in ways that they would later regret. Interest in authenticity may also be seen as a yearning for a salve to the discomfort of postmodernism, holding out the hope of a return to an earlier time and the

promise of stability aboard an epistemological boat that rocked.

The definition of authentic leadership has become ideologically broad, but remains focused on being true to one's self—a self that is distinct and entirely independent of another's viewpoint. But, does authentic leadership allow one to hover above the clamor of the social world? We suggest that the pursuit of detached self-actualization ignores the fundamentally social and relational dynamic of leadership, including authentic leadership. We also see problems with the promise of authenticity as a corrective stabilizer in an uncertain world. We next consider these issues from the perspective of the 2016 campaign trail.

THE NEW 'IT' FACTOR: LESSONS FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

There will be much to remember from the 2016 US presidential campaign, not the least of which will be a time when authenticity became a critical and distinguishing factor between would-be world leaders. The campaign has provided examples of authentic leadership, of Trump and Sanders who 'were telling it straight' and willing to say that the 'emperor has no clothes.' By contrast, Clinton has faced the curious postmodern dilemma of needing to 'quick, create an authentic image.'

On the campaign trail, however, authenticity is not a simple nor peaceful panacea. And, it is not just about being yourself. It is a cauldron of distinctly human elements including intense feelings, desire, needs for social connection and hubris—for both leaders and followers. Next, we address four lessons from the campaign trail. We focus on intense feelings and social connection in lesson two and hubris and desire in lessons three and four. But, first we turn to lesson one—authenticity matters!

LESSON ONE: AUTHENTICITY MATTERS

The first lesson from this campaign is the obvious one, namely that authenticity matters. . . a lot! Commentators at the University of Southern California argue that authenticity will be seen as the defining issue of the 2016 campaign:

What Biden has, what nervous Democrats fear Clinton lacks, is authenticity, the new *It* factor. The old *It* was ideological (Do they hate big government or racism as much as I do?), positional (Are they with me on guns or climate change?), demographic (Do they care about people like me?) and personal (Who I want to have a beer with?). The new *It* is ontological: Who's real? Biden is real. His personal tragedies testify to that. He's not a politician, he's our brother: There but for the grace of God go I. The goofy stuff he sometimes says just shows that he's a living, breathing person. . . .

Two candidates in the race are running on *It* (authenticity). Bernie Sanders is drawing the biggest crowds of the campaign because he seems as honest as his hair. But his manifest authenticity ("Yeah, I'm a socialist") may make him unelectable—the same fate Clinton is feared to be facing, though for the opposite reason. Donald Trump has

It, too, but, like his hair, there's artifice about it. Is Trump real? Or is he "real"? Trump works both sides of that aisle. (Kaplan, The Norman Lear Center blog, University of Southern California, 2016)

So, authenticity is not just a trump card for Trump, if you'll pardon the pun. It was also associated with the other surprising and somewhat random radical on the campaign trail, Bernie Sanders. Meanwhile, authenticity (or rather the lack of) follows Hillary Clinton around like a cloud and keeps observers nagging about her dearth of 'it.' While some have pointed fingers at the media for prodding on these caricatures, it has been the crowds of followers and the media who have made Trump and Sanders 'real' contenders in this race. Thus, we would argue that social context is not just the wind in the candidates' sails, but the crowds are part of the fabric of the sail itself (into which hot air blows, one might suggest). Lesson two takes up this point.

LESSON TWO: IT TAKES TWO TO BE AUTHENTIC

Seeing the campaign as a leadership race, it is tempting to stick with traditional portrayals of authentic leadership, namely candidates' demonstration of true selves and thereby rate Clinton, Sanders and Trump on a hypothetical scale of personal authenticity. Alternatively, we return to sociology to shed new light on authenticity in and around the 2016 presidential campaign. One sociologist, E. Doyle McCarthy, has noticed a phenomenon that she terms 'dramas of authenticity'. These are sporting events and memorials—and we would add campaign rallies—that have attained a new level of emotional significance. These are planned, public events and significant places where people encounter emphatic dramas of shared feeling with others. McCarthy observes that dramas of authenticity produce intense feelings enabling people to experience themselves in ways that are sharp and new. Sociologist Rebecca Erikson argues that these moments are experienced as authentic because they say to us: "This is *me!* This is who I *really* am." We suggest that occasions that frame and enable intense shared feelings are a vital element in the cauldron of the 2016 US presidential campaign.

Viewed as 'dramas of authenticity', campaign rallies can be seen as holding the potential for participants to play a part in an experience of true (authentic) fellowship with others who share similar beliefs or backgrounds. Dramas of authenticity are highly visible, but also intensely social in nature, pulling in those who are physically remote, but who are connected to the event via social media, as they drive in their cars or sit at home on the couch following tweets and using Instagram. This perspective takes the authenticity question far beyond the authenticity of particular individuals. Followers express or project their own needs onto the leader. 'Who can make my concerns real?' 'Who identifies with me?' 'Who cares about my experience?' Seen in this light, authenticity becomes less about the qualities of the leader and more about how deeply the occasion enables the follower to feel in relation to their life predicaments. As another Clinton said on a different campaign trail: 'I feel your pain.'

'Dramas of authenticity' suggest that authenticity is not only concerned with a candidate who is experienced as authentic, but with a broader public performance where followers are stirred to intense feeling and connection with one another triggering the experience of a new reality for themselves. Indeed, it is fair to say that both Trump and Sanders have engaged with this space between followers as well as an observing, participating public. Many followers have tasted very 'real' experiences, filled with emotion that is cranked up by virtue of being shared with others and the smartphone cameras that capture and transmit it all, over and over again. While campaign rallies have long held the potential of high emotion, if not frenzy (for instance, the Chicago police riots of 1968), the megaphone of social media brings the tent meeting to the masses, and vice versa.

Bernie Sanders did not have Hillary Clinton's problem when it comes to appearing down-to-earth. In fact, with his crumpled shirts and unruly white hair he comes across as everyman, which resonates authenticity as traditionally defined. He knows who he is and what he stands for. But, there has been more to Sanders' authenticity than this. Many of Sanders' followers are university-educated millennials, who are still living at home, working part-time and being attended to by anxious middle-class parents. Sanders offered them the prospect of joining a movement to recast the United States of America!

For his part, Trump's intense performances offer up a show that includes—along with his antics—new identities and powerful shared experiences for his followers. No longer powerless, voiceless, marginalized and excluded from the privilege of wealth, his followers can become righteous fighters who are willing to do and say whatever it takes to 'make America great again.' While, the prospect of Trump as president defies imagination, his campaign has created the experience of something new and 'real' for his followers, and therein lies its power.

In short, leaders don't exist without followers, no matter how well they know themselves. Furthermore, we challenge the notion that we have 'one true self', to the exclusion of other selves. As we are a social species, the self is defined in relation to others. To find one's true self is to deny new possibilities as roles, relationships and circumstances change. Moreover, our 'best' self is context-dependent. Contingency models of leadership have long acknowledged the fact that leadership effectiveness depends on responding to the circumstances and conditions in which the problem is situated. We would not go so far as to say that being 'real' does not matter from a leadership perspective. But, what matters as far as authenticity is concerned is performing a reality-shaping function with and for others. Indeed, as journalist Rebecca Traister observes, "the presidency is a public, performative job". In this case, Trump and Sanders have both demonstrated the power of authenticity performed.

The relational aspect of authenticity has drawn us toward engaging with deep and somewhat gritty social needs, be it a need for power, a frustration with the powers that be, or both. The authenticity of Trump and Sanders that gained traction in the 2016 campaign captured the intense feelings of large proportions of the US population and offered them a new role to play, a new part in a better story. Far from being oversold, it may be the case that the quest for and fascination

with authentic leadership represents a very powerful socio-drama. The 2016 presidential campaign has taught us once again that a crowd of leaders *and* followers who *both* want to change the world represents an experiential as well as an experimental chemistry that neither could achieve on their own. Writing for *Time* magazine, Dorfman sums it up nicely, arguing that, "Without these troubled multitudes who project onto him their uncertainties, nightmares and desires, Trump would not exist."

We are not the first to draw attention to the social dimension of authenticity. After all, self and society are two sides of the same coin. Taking a critical philosophical perspective, Nicholson and Carroll, in their 2013 article, 'So you want to be authentic in your leadership: To whom and for what end?' reposition authenticity as something in between an individual and a social virtue. They draw on the philosophy of Charles Taylor and Charles Guignon, who reject the pursuit of a self that retreats from the social world in order to become more whole. Taylor argues that shutting out the social world is a route to ignoring the social issues that matter most. He argues that to be authentic, one must be true to others and that involves being mindful of history and the duties of citizenship. For Taylor authenticity that arises from looking inward can only be trivial. Nicholson and Carroll therefore pose the question about authenticity: Who is it for, for me, for others, or for a purpose beyond us all? These questions are important because they shift authenticity from something one has (or does not have) to something one does with or for others and for a purpose beyond the self.

LESSON THREE: TO BE AUTHENTIC IS TO BE RESPONSIBLE

Recognizing the relational and social dimension of authenticity takes us to leaders' responsibility. We have suggested the alchemy of authenticity taps into and fires up followers' fears and desires. Psychoanalytic perspectives are helpful to our understanding of this dynamic because they give credibility to unconscious factors in the dynamics between leaders and followers. Yiannis Gabriel draws on psychoanalytic theory to consider leadership. He argues that the leader/follower relationship has the potential to stir up powerful emotions with the potential for fearsome fantasies to be set loose.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the alchemy of authenticity is not at all unexpected. Gabriel refers to the emotional resonance between leaders and followers that is connected to subconscious hopes and fantasies. Recognizing this dynamic, he argues that leaders have a responsibility to focus and tame the emotional energy of followers. In distinct contrast, back on the campaign trail hubris in the cauldron creates a runaway reaction. When Trump's followers yell, stomp and chant 'build the wall, build the wall,' Trump yells along, intensifying the rage. On these occasions the alchemy of authenticity can run amok as powerful emotions are fired up rather than restrained. This raises the question of what can or should a leader do when he or she is both inciting and riding a social stampede? Is being 'real' enough once the gates are opened? Probably not. Ironically, and unfortunately, a leader who ignites the power of the people and suddenly

wants to 'slow things down' or moderate social reaction may in fact be powerless to do so, a point not lost on those fearing the possibility of Trump actually winning the Presidency.

LESSON FOUR: THE AUTHENTICITY TRIAL BY FIRE IS NOT GOING AWAY

The final lesson from the 2016 election campaign concerns authenticity as a metaphoric trial by fire. For would-be or developing leaders, becoming more authentic or 'real' is likely to proceed amongst accusations of being disingenuous, or pretentious. We have already referred to political correctness as a judgment that is set in opposition to being authentic. Indeed, the implication of 'pretense' is often linked to the accusation of being politically correct. Writing for *The Guardian* newspaper Steven Poole, has reflected on how accusations of pretentiousness are used as a weapon in power plays and moral judgements. He notes that the Latin root for pretend was 'praetendere' which meant "to stretch in front". Not until 1725 did the notion of 'pretend' come to be associated with ostentatiousness.

The assumption that who we are is relatively fixed and that attempts to be different are signs of inauthenticity needs to be challenged. Returning to the opening excerpt, authenticity is commonly understood to be a direct and firm connection between true self and action, and therefore anything experimental or unfamiliar can be considered suspect and framed in derogatory terms as 'fake'. Trump knows exactly who he is. He is a rich man and so he brazenly shows up at a county fair in his private helicopter. The danger here is that having one true self rules out the possibility of alternatives, suggesting that the rich braggart Trump can be right for all situations.

Clinton faces complaints that she seems to be aloof and difficult to connect with as a person. Therefore, she is trying to show more humor and heart by mixing with ordinary Americans and eating pork on a stick at a county fair. However, when observed putting on her Sunday show face, she's perceived as inauthentic. Journalists for the *Washington Post* have asked 'Is Hillary Rodham Clinton a McDonald's Big Mac or a Chipotle burrito bowl? A can of Bud or a bottle of Blue Moon? JC Penny or J. Crew'. Thus, she is caught in the 'authenticity doom loop,' a term used by the US media critic Brendan Nyhan, who observes the impossibility of extending one's repertoire for self while remaining the same.

In her recent (2015) *Harvard Business Review* article, entitled, 'The Authenticity Paradox: Why feeling like a fake can be a sign of growth' Herminia Ibarra considers the dilemma of needing to 'fake' a new leadership approach until it feels genuinely yours. Ibarra's research suggests that especially as one's career advances, we find ourselves in situations where we are torn between being true to 'who we are' and the requirements of our new role. In order to be effective, we literally have to act in ways that are not natural, and that can make us feel like we are faking it. Ibarra's analysis urges managers not to turn the weapons of authenticity against themselves. Stepping into the space between our old and new self takes considerable courage, but Ibarra encourages leaders not to be limited to a single way of being. Her perspective, however, is less helpful for handling the alchemy of authenticity.

Ibarra would probably point out that Clinton's attempts to mingle with common people may indeed look awkward, but are the only way for a more formal and conservative high-achiever to learn to relax in down-to-earth settings, much as Barack Obama has had to work at not appearing aloof, while maintaining his natural statesman demeanor. However, the alchemy of authenticity would suggest a problem for Clinton that is more complex because it is entwined with followers' emotional needs. Drawing on his own research and psychoanalytic theory Gabriel observes that one of four experiences followers most need from leaders is that leaders are seen and felt to be accessible. His research suggests that being experienced as distant and aloof is less related to what leaders do than to unconscious dynamics between leaders and followers. Like it or not, the authenticity test is likely to be a leadership challenge for years to come and one that will not be traversed by behavioral change alone.

CONCLUSION

Observing the 2016 US presidential election campaign offers insights into authentic leadership that have implications for other settings and contexts. Next, we summarize our four key observations with some implications for organizations and managers. First, it is clear that, like it or not, at this point in history, leaders are being judged heavily on how 'authentic' they appear to be. During the campaign, authenticity was presented time and time again to be the 'It' factor in this high-profile political contest.

Second, despite the association of authenticity with properties of the individual leader, we have argued that it is inaccurate to think of authenticity as something that a leader has (or does not have). We suggest that authenticity emanates from an alchemy between leaders and followers and that authenticity is relational in nature. The relational dynamics between leaders and followers are played out, in part, through 'dramas of authenticity', such as campaign rallies. In these events, which include both the face-to-face and social media versions, people participate in a powerful, amplified experience with others. The amplification of experience makes it feel more 'real', more authentic. So, the leader is not alone in producing or enacting authenticity. Unwittingly perhaps, followers play an important and active role in the construction of authenticity, which they nonetheless tend to attribute back to the leader.

Repositioning authenticity as social and relational and as an alchemy between leaders and followers disrupts the notion that authenticity is something solid - that one possesses or not, or that is 'discovered' through contemplation and reviewing one's life story. For managers this means that faking it, through practicing new, unfamiliar behaviors that don't immediately feel authentic is important but is only part of the story. Managers would do well to consider not only their behavior and individual characteristics but also the alchemy of authenticity. This means becoming interested in those moments and experiences during their work with followers that feel potent and that seem capable of producing something of a 'new real'. Such episodes signal dynamics that have the potential to be virtuous or vicious, offering leaders and followers a chance to begin co-creating new realities.

Our third point is that there are particular responsibilities for leaders who are constructing these experiences with their followers. Leaders who use being 'real' as a call to action have a particular obligation to consider the implications of amplified shared emotion. Trading on (understandable) disdain for the status quo, leaders who pass the authenticity test must recognize that encouraging others to follow their true selves and 'do whatever they think is right' can have dangerous consequences. Passing the authenticity test is not an end in itself, but rather it is a signal that followers can be asked to step up. It provides a vital opportunity to drop illusions, reject hubris and to confront reality. We urge managers in organizations to ask the question: "Authenticity for what?"

Finally, we point out that developing into an authentic leader requires more than 'finding yourself'. 'Fake it 'til you make it' advice is encouraging, but experimenting with different versions of your 'self' requires courage, conviction and time. Moreover, as we have seen on the campaign trail, many followers desire predictable leaders (even those who are predictably 'random' in their actions), and are suspicious of those who try to be different, even if it is to connect better with others. So powerful is the authenticity card that being seen as inauthentic has become the ultimate insult. We recommend that leaders who are interested in developing their authenticity attend to their encounters with others. This should include recognizing the importance of events and appreciating that occasions such as workshops and conferences where people come together can produce a great deal more than boredom or hangovers. Such events carry the potential for people to experience authenticity, to imagine different roles and to engage with issues beyond themselves.

At the start of this article we noted that interest in authentic leadership responded to the conditions of postmodernism, offering some certainties just as certainty was being lost. The rise of authentic leadership represented an antidote to the dark side of leadership and nostalgia for an earlier, more predictable world. The 2016 campaign mixes belief in the antidote and nostalgia with new forms of authenticity. This is authenticity as it is *experienced* in public events and live performances, recognized by those who taste a new identity for themselves, narrated by the media and experienced by those who are right there and also by those who participate at a distance in real time and in lapsed time, from their desks, kitchens, cars and couches.

The 2016 presidential campaign has ignited a fire under many Americans at both ends of the political spectrum. The unprecedented and unanticipated rise of both Trump and Sanders has been attributed to authentic leadership. Looking back, it may be difficult for anyone to understand Trump's meteoric ascendancy and his disruption of a 100-year old political party. Will observers continue to describe his success in terms of 'authenticity', or will other words come to mind? No doubt Trump's head-to-head challenge to Clinton will be a tussled test. Dramas of authenticity will compete with other qualities of leadership, such as experience, discipline and gravitas. Win or lose, future citizens might ask, what happened and where did Trump come from? The alchemy of authenticity may help us answer that question.

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