



Leadership at the Spiritual Edge

Emerging and Non-Western Concepts
of Leadership and Spirituality

Edited by Mohammed Raei, Stacey K. Guenther,
and Lisa A. Berkley

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LEADING THROUGH EMERGENCE

Engaging the Future from Awakened Wholeness

Geoff Fitch and Abigail Lynam

Introduction

How do we conceive of and support leadership in an emergent practice field where notions of self, other, and collective become more complex and interpenetrative? As we step into transpersonal states and stages of development, how might we orient to leadership as arising from a deeper spiritual ground? This chapter will describe the experiences, lessons learned, and essential practices of an approach to leadership that synthesizes spiritual practice, shadow work, collective intelligence, embodied awareness, and transformative change, all of which are central to the work of Pacific Integral. For twenty years, Pacific Integral has been exploring, facilitating, and researching transformative change in an integral and developmental context through its Generating Transformative Change program, the Emergent Leadership program, and through other offerings and communities of practice. We have convened, facilitated, and engaged with over 100 residential retreats and virtual courses involving over 1,000 individuals, including developmental programs lasting from nine months to several years, and offered the in-person programs on three continents.

The orientation to spirituality and leadership we describe is trans-religious and focused on practices framed in a trans-contextual way that draw on a variety of wisdom traditions: Western, Eastern, African, Indigenous, and others. The work is also based on the theory and practice of constructive adult developmental theory (Cook-Greuter, 2004, 2013; Kegan, 1994; O'Fallon, 2020; Torbert, 2004), which supports a rich, integrative approach to meaning making. As such, participants from many religious and secular

orientations have comfortably participated in this process. Likewise, our developmental orientation brings a complex view of leadership that transcends an orientation to individual and collective, leader and follower, insight and action, and being and doing (Lynam et al., 2022).

We originally referred to this approach as causal leadership (Ramirez et al., 2013), orienting to the movement of leadership from the ground of being. We later came to call the approach emergent leadership or simply leading through emergence. In this context, emergence carries several meanings. The experience of leadership from the causal ground is one of engaging in an emergent field, an orientation to the whole of individuals, collectives, and systems emerging into new forms. Likewise, we can say that leadership itself is part of that emergence. We recognize that the various expressions that wisdom and action take toward a more whole and just future, arise as needed in different contexts or dimensions of the whole. Whether or not we experience or refer to this movement as leadership, it carries some essential qualities we might attribute to leadership, which suggests we should include and evolve our conventional notions of leadership into new modes of human being and doing.

At its essence, our practice transcends the separation of individuals and collectives. It is an engagement with the future from awakened wholeness, by which we mean the confluence of two paths of spirituality, the ascending path of awakening and the descending path of embracing and enlightening all that is. This involves a movement toward the future in which action springs from everyone participating, from the collective as a whole, and from a ground of transpersonal awareness.

This approach is novel in that it is grounded in later-stage, transpersonal understandings. It includes an embodied experience of thinking and action that flows from a deeper ground of being and is understood to transcend the orientations of individual and collective, leader and follower, and other polarities (Gunnlaugson & Moze, 2012; Lynam et al., 2020). To support the development of these deeper dimensions of leadership, we have learned that it is profoundly important to support capacities for embodiment, relational and interpersonal agility, practical application, shadow work and ethical maturity. These capacities deepen the stable foundation for more expanded awareness and support it to be embodied and enacted in the world.

Our work is grounded in research, through an ongoing longitudinal study of the developmental growth and experience of participants, before, during, and for years after they leave the learning communities. The chapter describes our intentions, theoretical orientations, experiences, and learning.

Impact and Potential

What potential does this approach hold for the complex challenges we face today? When we originally wrote about this approach, we said:

[We] consciously and collectively have the capacity to create new ways of being, relating, and functioning as a species. We can create new possibilities that meet the unprecedented requirements of our time, while envisioning a more elegant and generative future for humanity and for all of life. Through causal leadership, doing is done through us and by us, spontaneously, as wakeful collective intelligence. In this way, leadership is effortless, an emergence of the One seeing itself through the many, an act of grace that follows the natural order of things.

(Ramirez et al., 2013, p. 3)

In the intervening years, we have seen this potential reflected over and over in the lives of the participants in our programs and in our own experiences. Today, we see the practice of emergent leadership as part of a larger unfolding of consciousness and action in the world, an awakening to our depths, and an evolution of our complexity, which expresses itself in countless contexts in the world today.

Background

Theoretical Orientation

The first orienting principle we hold is that the ground of this practice is awakened wholeness. This brings together a foundational polarity that may arise from perspectives of transpersonal states or of later stages of adult development. This is the polarity of transcendence and immanence.

On the one hand, awakening indicates a transcendence or emptiness of the mind's tendency to reify its own constructions and a grounding in awareness itself (an awareness that is not completely identified with the body, thoughts, emotions, and constructed sense of self). This transcendence can be accessed either as a state (a temporary experience) or as a stable stage of development (enduring or more stable). Transcendent awakening is a process, which can develop over time to deeper levels of awareness (Brown, 2006). This is recognized as at least the beginning stages of transpersonal experience. Developmentally, these capacities are reflected in O'Fallon's Metaware stages of development (in the STAGES model of adult development) starting with 5.0 (5th person perspective) also referred to as Construct Aware in ego development (O'Fallon, 2020).

Wholeness, on the other hand, indicates that what arises in awareness can be seen as whole and complete, and embraced by an immanent presence. Meaning first that our experiences are real and worthy of respect and inclusion, even while they are also inherently partial including blind spots, unconscious bias, limiting beliefs, and shadow. This draws on the recognition of holons and holarchies (Koestler, 1972; Wilber, 2001) that everything is both a whole

and a part simultaneously. It is consequently important to work to surface, integrate, include, and celebrate our inner and outer diversity—the multiple dimensions of ourselves and our experiences. And to seek to integrate, heal, and include what is missing or distorted through practices such as shadow work including projection and introjection and other forms of personal, and interpersonal healing and development (for more details on Jungian shadow work, see Chapter 13). This is a movement of immanence or fullness.

We view this polarity of transcendence and immanence itself to be an interpenetrating whole, even while at a given moment one may be oriented to one dimension or another. The realization of awakened wholeness as a state or stage gives rise to a perception of a sense of completeness, beauty, and perfection of what is already the case, while paradoxically, calling or beckoning for more healing, liberation, and integration, essentially a greater wholeness.

A second orienting principle implicit in awakened wholeness is a non-dual ethical orientation (Fitch, 2012). We seek to balance, integrate, and ultimately see the unity of what divides us, not just as a spiritual ideal but as an intention to relieve ourselves (and all of life) of the suffering and confusions that arise out of the way we separate from each other and from parts of ourselves. As we grow developmentally, the divisions we attend to are more subtle. In other words, awakened wholeness is *not* an abstract ideal but an impulse to support each other to live life more awake and more whole. Doing so, we can live an existence that is more humane and en-souled and can construct a world that is more just and beautiful. In its essence, this is simply being as our spiritual nature, but the path to get there involves care, healing, restoration, grace, insight, and attention to what we are absencing or leaving out.

As we explore the relationship between spirituality and leadership, we are therefore suggesting that the ground is a spiritual realization—awakened wholeness—and that action arises from and as an expression of that ground. Next, we explore how we can make sense of spirituality and leadership from the view of awakened wholeness. Some questions we might ask are: what values is action sourced in? Whose vision influences the action, from where does this action flow, and how? These questions are fundamentally rooted in our experience of I and We, and evolve over time. We explore these questions through the perspectives of stages of consciousness and adult stages of development (our becoming), to which we turn now.

Transpersonal States and Stages

In this chapter we refer to states and stages as markers for certain capacities and orientations in consciousness. The term “states” refer to states of

consciousness, largely categorized into gross (also called concrete and refers to the physical world perceived through our senses), subtle (the territory of thoughts, emotions, and subtle energies), causal (awareness itself and Witness consciousness), and non-dual (non-separation and unity of all), following the terminology used by Wilber (2000). The term “stages” refer to stages of development (described in the next section), following the frameworks of constructive adult development theory (Cook-Greuter, 2004, 2013; Kegan, 1994; O’Fallon, 2020; Torbert, 2004). We draw on the STAGES model developed by O’Fallon, which organizes stages of development into analogous tiers: concrete, subtle, Metaware, and unified. Our explorations of leadership and spirituality are informed by the capacities that arise in the more subtle states and later stages of consciousness, which open into transpersonal territory—awareness beyond the ordinary self.

Stages of Adult Development and Leadership

The STAGES model of adult development (O’Fallon, 2020) can support our understanding of leadership, because it clarifies the important ways that our conception of I and We changes as we develop, and as such, how we might conceive of the flow of leadership. Understanding developmental diversity can support individuals and groups to design structures and processes to accommodate this diversity and to maximize its creative potential. It also supports working with the misunderstanding and miscommunications that are even more common without developmental awareness. Fundamentally, it supports a deeper ethical and compassionate embrace or inclusion of human diversity.

The STAGES model describes 12 stages (four in each tier) that occur through iterating patterns over three tiers—concrete, subtle, and Metaware (Figure 1.1). These 12 stages include six important shifts in perspective

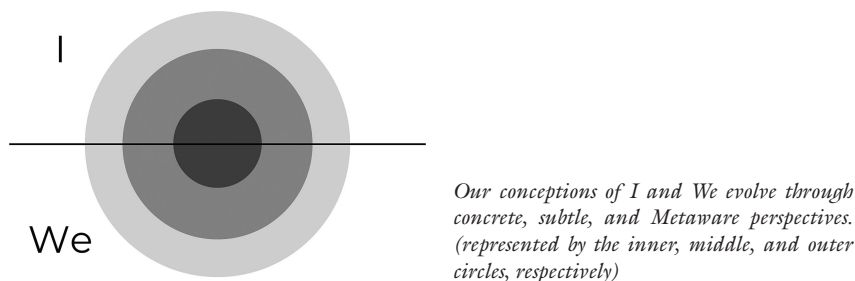
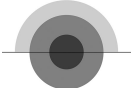


FIGURE 1.1 Concrete, Subtle, and Metaware I and We (Fitch, 2016; O’Fallon, 2020)

taking (first-person, second-person, third-person perspective taking, and so on). Each tier consists of two I-oriented stages and two We-oriented stages, although how we conceive of I and We in each tier varies in important ways. Thus, as humans move through this evolution (which spans from infancy to rarer, later stages of consciousness), we go through six unique understandings of I and We, and thus six orientations to leadership (Table 1.1). Each of these six person perspectives has two stages associated with it, an early and a late version. For example, for first-person perspective, there is the developmentally earlier, more receptive stage (1.0 or Impulsive) and the more developmentally mature and active stage (1.5 or Opportunist). Each stage transcends and eventually includes the prior experiences and meaning making.

In the first-person perspective, we are in the concrete I stages. In these stages, it is “all about me” and there is no understanding yet of a We. One can see others but does not have a truly unique identity separate from others, nor does one see others as unique in their own right. The focus is on one’s concrete needs and wants. The second-person perspective stages foreground the concrete We (these stages are called 2.0 Rule-oriented and 2.5 Conformist). In this perspective, I see that others exist separate from me with their own needs and wants. These others see me and in order to satisfy my needs, I must work with them and make and follow rules together. In these We stages, the I is present and understood, but backgrounded,

TABLE 1.1 Six Distinct Understandings of I and We (Fitch, 2016; O’Fallon, 2020)

<i>Perspective</i>		<i>Foreground</i>	<i>Background</i>
	First person	I (concrete) body, senses	(none)
	Second person	We (concrete) groups, rules	I (concrete)
	Third Person	I (subtle) thoughts, ideas, emotions	We (concrete)
	Fourth Person	We (subtle) contexts, paradigms, systems	I (subtle)
	Fifth Person	I (Metaware) awareness, source, emptiness	We (subtle)
	Sixth Person	We (Metaware) manifestation, Kosmos, whole	I (causal)

or deprioritized, in favor of relationships and groups. The groups here are families, groups of peers, community and cultural groups, religion, and other institutions. The sense of self and right and wrong comes from the collective and their norms and behaviors. For example, how to dress or behave is socially defined and it is important to know who is a part of your community or collective, and who is not. Leadership in the second-person perspective is hierarchical, based on the authority in the collective, which is defined by position, and tends to be rule-based, bureaucratic, authoritarian, and unchallenged.

The next perspective gives rise to subtle I stages, where we realize we have a subtle self—the thoughts, emotions, and independent mind of rational consciousness (3.0 Expert and 3.5 Achiever). We can think for ourselves and begin to think about our own and other's thinking. This is again an I-oriented space. The We that is present (but in the background), is still the concrete collective, which includes family, groups, organizations, and their norms and rituals, since no new subtle We has yet been discovered. This territory of the early subtle stages of third-person perspective comprises what we largely think of as conventional leadership. It tends to be focused on the individual leader, is goal driven, behavior-, merit-, and outcome-based, and orients from rational and abstract thought. As Torbert has suggested, in the concrete stages, power is vested in either unilateral force (Concrete I) or positional authority (Concrete We) (Torbert, 2020). In the subtle stages, power arises from the use of the subtle mind. These stages, which focus on the individual, give rise to conventional views of leadership, what Joiner and Josephs (2007) call heroic leadership, with a focus on an individual leader's behavior.

This pattern continues with the fourth-person perspective, where the individual becomes aware of more subtle dimensions of self and systems. There is a recognition of contexts and social construction. This includes a recognition of the multiple dimensions of self and self-identity, and how these identities or experiences have been shaped by context and culture. Given that there are multiple dimensions of self and systems, there is an interest in exploring who we are in relationship with others, through dialogue and other forms of reciprocity. In the fourth-person perspective, the subtle We is foregrounded. The subtle We consists of the perception of being situated in and arising out of a plurality of contexts (in the 4.0 Pluralist and 4.5 Strategist stages). The We is not, then, a specific group, but a space, and that space is complex. It consists not only of outer manifestations, such as a room, the systems in which the context is embedded, and the cultural context and form, but also inner manifestations, such as the attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, states of awareness, and ontological dispositions expressed by the group members. Here, people begin to understand that contexts

shape us, and we can create contexts to support development and to experience coherence and flow with others. It is at this level that the notions of transformative learning, collaborative leadership, collective intelligence, and collective evolution begin to be of interest (O'Fallon et al., 2014; O'Fallon, 2020). These stages comprise most of what we think of as post-conventional leadership: inclusive, process-oriented, complex, adaptive, contextual, relational, and participatory. We understand that the leader's view is limited and contextual and that power is vested in our ability to bring about transformative interventions (Torbert, 2020).

As expected, newer, post-conventional forms of leadership, which arise out of these fourth-person perspective stages, have begun to acknowledge the wisdom in followers, such as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002) (for a discussion of leadership as opening space as it relates to servant leadership, see Chapter 5), adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009), and post-heroic leadership (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). They also recognize the wisdom and contribution of the collective and associated systems, such as network leadership (Ehrlichman, 2021), self-organizing systems (Laloux, 2014), and collaborative leadership. Post-conventional leadership models tend to focus on overcoming the pitfalls of hierarchical leadership, see leadership as socially constructed, while integrating and accounting for formal organizational hierarchies (Reams, 2020).

While spiritual insight, values, and commitments can be expressed at any stage, the next stages, at the Metaware tier open levels of awareness that are transpersonal and bring forth deeper questions about the relationship between spirituality and leadership.

At the beginning of the Metaware tier, individuals at fifth-person perspective awaken to their ever-present awareness as the ground of their own being. They begin to identify with this being as a new self, both empty and full, transcendent and immanent. In these stages (5.0 Construct Aware and 5.5 Transpersonal), the I is foregrounded, but the subtle We remains as a context for this I. The I is however not what we conventionally think of as I—our concrete bodily self or our subtle thinking or narrative self, but rather our Metaware self, the limitless open horizon of awareness that we paradoxically seem to share with everyone and everything. Knowing that transformative, adaptive, and deeply subtle collectives or relationships are possible, individuals often desire to bring in the Metaware experience by bringing the practice of witness consciousness into their collective experience (Gunnlaugson & Moze, 2012), and to provide a context in which their Metaware selves can express themselves and be recognized. In these territories, individual leadership can be seen as intense but non-demanding, sometimes in-the-moment, sometimes multigenerational in the scope or vision, outside of the conventional and postconventional constructions and

pretenses, usually focused on the visionary potential expressed individually, and grounded in awareness itself.

At the sixth-person perspective, there is a shift from the I to the We. The I is backgrounded as it lets go into a much larger, Metaware or causal We. In the sixth-level stages (6.0 Universal and 6.5 Illumined), the We is all of concrete, subtle, and Metaware manifestation itself, the Kosmos, the utterly full and empty existence, eternal and beyond time, infinite and beyond space. Here one experiences themselves as this whole, with their apparent Metaware I birthed by and birthing the whole. At these stages, there is a sense of the vibrancy of the whole, of leadership as something expressed in and through all of existence, through the evolutionary unfolding and immanent embrace of all. In orienting to this, there is a deep care of each part, recognized as a microcosm of the whole and a reflection of this wholeness back through each individual. Every individual and every collective is leading and being lead, even as there are intuitions of a higher mind or divine domain that may be working through all of us, as us, and everything. In the later sixth-person stage, there is an interest in universal patterns and structures that form and shape the movement of these worlds.

There is a keen interest at the sixth-person levels in living as this larger collective, which has its own sense of We, and in allowing the intelligence of the whole, and that which births the whole, to express one's existence. In this sense, this very much reflects the interest in collective emergence at the fourth person stages, but is no longer grounded in any specific group or context but in reality itself.

As mentioned, each of these six unique perspectives (first-, second-, third-person perspectives, and so on) of I and We is further divided into two distinct stages: first, a more receptive stage, which is about awakening to a new perspective taking capacity and exploring the many dimensions of it; and second, a more active stage, in which one wants to move forward and create with these capacities. Altogether, this points to an extraordinary diversity of the constructions of human mind and deeply informs our approaches to seeing, engaging, evolving, and altogether letting go of leadership.

Leadership

As we can see from the developmental perspective, the question of leadership becomes confounded by a shifting and complex understanding of what we take to be I and We. One theorist identified over 1,500 definitions of leadership and more than 40 theories of leadership (Kellerman, 2012), but even these are largely viewed through conventional stages of development (McCauley et al., 2006; Reams, 2017). To take a developmentally informed

view of leadership (or any essential distinction such as love or justice), we seek to tease out a sense of its essential qualities. Because our language and meaning making differ and evolve so profoundly, this is sometimes more of an art than a science, sometimes more poetry than prose. After exploring these essential qualities, we will return to reflect on how they are expressed from a view of awakened wholeness.

Some essential qualities of leadership that we might consider:

- Leadership is an expression of values and, considering a context of spirituality, we would expect these values to reach toward our sense of the greatest good.
- Leadership is about a transcendent vision, an immanent sense of possibility, and potential beyond what is habitual or predicted.
- Leadership is about action inspired by this vision, an evolutionary movement toward more of what is needed, and less of what causes harm or suffering.

While each stage of development would have a different view of who (or what) is leading, who is following, what values are being expressed, who (or what) determines the values and vision, and so on, these essential qualities can be seen to characterize leadership.

We should also note that in retrospect, leadership can sometimes be an expression of our worst limitations, character flaws, and blind spots. Individual leadership can be an act of narcissism. Collective leadership can be an act of group think and marginalization. Leadership can also be an expression of extraordinary human capacity and human dignity. So, we might add a fourth quality to leadership, which is that it is a process of human becoming, not one thing but a stream in the evolutionary unfolding of human being, in which each of us is a transient participant.

Engaging the Future from Awakened Wholeness

Taking a view from the ground of awakened wholeness, we find we naturally orient toward a desire for the liberation of wisdom and care in service of a more beneficial future. We understand this in a context of a complex view of I and We that includes concrete, subtle, and causal or Metaware realities, and as much of the spectrum of being that we can realize. Consequently, one experiences that there simultaneously is and is not a leader, that one is simultaneously a leader, a follower, and neither, and that the field of change is intersystemic, holistic, and complex. We are in a wider field of change and movement, not separate from it, influencing and influenced. As Barad notes,

We are not outside observers of the world. Neither are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity... knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part.

(2007)

We orient toward a resonance with the emergent future and with ourselves as participants in it. We do not seek agreement, but full expression of each and all in a field of coherence and wholeness, seeking to hold our conceptions lightly. Vision touches this field just as the light of the divine touches and informs all of reality. We seek to learn to trust our own knowing and sense of what is needed and to be humble in the realization that we are participating in a developmental journey that is vast and seemingly endless.

To support the development of these deeper capacities for leadership, we have learned that it is profoundly important to support the development of capacities for transpersonal awareness, embodiment, relational and interpersonal agility, practical application, shadow work, and ethical maturity. These capacities deepen the stable foundation for more expanded awareness and support it to be embodied in the world.

Principles & Practices

In this section, we share tools and practices for supporting individual and collective emergence or emergent leadership by engaging the future from awakened wholeness. The primary context of this learning arises from working with cohorts in Generating Transformative Change (GTC), Pacific Integral's nine-month program. GTC has been offered since 2004, on three continents (North America, Oceania, and Africa). The program enacts and facilitates a new way of being and action in the world, grounded in developmentally mature subtle states and stages of consciousness. GTC integrates a range of theories and practices designed to help participants not just acquire new skills but grow the inner capacities necessary for effective leadership in complex and demanding contexts. The program consists of four residential retreats and inter-session learning, coaching, and application. Cohorts include 14–16 participants with two to three faculty per cohort. Participants in GTC range in age from 20 to 75 and come from diverse cultures, countries, and professions including coaching, non- and for-profit leadership, organization development, social change, sustainability, education, the arts, and healthcare.

The principles that guide the design of GTC are that it be integral (encompassing as much of reality as possible), developmental (not merely

asserting a single worldview, but situated in an ongoing, evolutionary trajectory of perspective-taking capacity), interpenetratively emergent (recognizes that individual and collective development and emergence are interpenetrative and unpredictable-meaning the development in one supports the development in the other and who or what a cohort becomes is to be discovered), and motivated by universal compassion (serving to reduce suffering and increase fulfillment in the largest span and depth imaginable). Key learning areas include adult development theory and practice (Cook-Greuter, 2004; O'Fallon 2020), Theory U and Presencing (Scharmer, 2018), dialogue (Bohm, 1996; O'Fallon & Kramer, 2008), integral theory (Wilber, 2006), integral polarity practice (Kesler, 2014), awareness and somatic practices (Brown, 2006; Pierrakos, 2005), developmental action inquiry (Torbert, 2004), paradoxes of group life (Smith & Berg, 1997), collective evolution (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016) and emergence (Baeck, 2021), communication, truthfulness, and intimacy practices (Golabuk, 2012; Richo, 2014), and individual and collective shadow work (Hubl, 2020; Masters, 2018).

As designers and facilitators of GTC, it is our intent to discover the developmental unfolding in each participant and each cohort rather than to predict it or impose a particular form of development on groups or the individual as some transformative programs consciously or unconsciously tend to do. We encourage participants to continue to reveal their own implicit intentions for growth and transformation through their own responses and actions. This is a process of discovering and uncovering intentions, as well as consciously creating intentions for growth and development (Fitch, 2016). Ultimately, the provocation to emergent leadership offers a learning opportunity with the intention to expand creativity, impact, and service in the world.

GTC continues to evolve as we engage with and learn from participants and the cohorts' developmental and emergent process, and in relationship to the times we are living in. We have also engaged in longitudinal developmental research with participants, including pre- and post-developmental assessments, and ongoing assessments every two years for those that choose to participate. The results of this research, plus ongoing engagement with GTC graduates and their cohorts, have provided insights into what supports development in the context of GTC and beyond (Lynam et al., 2020). Over time, our recognition of how interpenetrative individual and collective evolution and emergence has deepened. In response to this, we developed a framework for the coemergence and coevolution of the individual and collective through a process of differentiation, embodiment, integration, and enactment.

Cultivating a Field of Awakened Wholeness

A primary orientation we practice is to cultivate a holding field that embodies awakened wholeness. This field holds the paradox/unity of the condition of openness and embrace. The field is open, in that we recognize the transparency, interconnectedness, and emptiness of what is present. We are in our experience but to some degree not purely identified with it. We recognize it is constructed and “empty” in the sense that it is in essence insubstantial. The field is embracing in that we practice acceptance of whatever is arising with compassion, love, and curiosity, recognizing it is an essential part of the whole (for a discussion of compassion as it as a component of adaptive leadership and adaptive work, see Chapter 2). This does not mean there is no discernment or boundaries toward unhealthy parts of ourselves. This too is part of the whole. When this holding field is deep and present, the experience is a sense of arriving home to our spiritual core and having parts of ourselves that we may feel shame or rejection toward welcomed unconditionally. The space is both safe in that there is a deep welcome and acceptance, and challenging in that there is less need for our defenses, which may leave us feeling more vulnerable at times. The space or field is the background and context for all our work, held by the facilitators but progressively held by the participants as they become oriented to it.

In this context, we engage in a variety of practices designed to support an integral constellation of skills and capacities. These practices cultivate awareness of awareness, complexity of sense making, embodiment, moral depth, authentic relationship, self-regulation, generative conflict, awareness and integration of individual and collective shadow, collective presencing, coherence and intelligence, creativity and play, and working with complexity and emergence.

Coming Home to Real Relationship

What often draws people to this work is the opportunity to engage with this deep practice and capacity for transformative change and development. What they initially encounter, sometimes to their surprise, is a holding field that offers a deep sense of welcome (McCauley et al., 2006). Expecting to engage in change, they find a kind of self-acceptance that paradoxically frees them to be and act in new ways. What reveals itself over time is a deeper dimension to the work; that of real relationship. One’s own individual unfolding and leadership in the world takes place in the context of a collective. The quality of the collective is shaped by the unfolding and leadership of the individuals engaged with it. The I and the We interpenetrate, coshape, coevolve, and coemerge together (Lynam et al., 2022). We are inextricably

bound up with each other. This understanding has led to the development of we-space practice as a core of our work (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016). We have come to realize the importance of the cultivation of practices and containers that deepen our relational field. But it is not just about the quality of relating, but about real relationship. The depth of relating that is needed for our future only arises as we become friends and partners and as we work and cultivate community together. When we commit to each other, get involved in each other's lives, attend each other's wedding and funerals, work and create together all in the context of awakened depth and authenticity, we cultivate the capacities to sustain and embody our realization in the work of life and service in the world. Again, we experience this not as an instrumental benefit, but as a birthright, a sense of coming home (with and for each other), and microcosm of a more whole and integrated world.

Cultivating Emergence

All of these orienting practices are balanced by the intention to engage in emergence. We endeavor to view each individual, relationship, and collective as an unfolding mystery. How will this unfolding wholeness express itself? We cannot truly know, so we practice attuning to the subtle reality of this unfolding, supporting it as it emerges, staying present and grounded in our deepest sensing and values, while impartial toward and curious about the specific of the unfolding events. This emergence is ultimately what is leading, although we are its vehicle. Emergent leadership, the movement toward greater wholeness through us, takes many forms depending on what is needed or called for in the moment, including some of the forms of leadership that we may be familiar with. It can also be experienced as a spontaneous unfolding in the collective, as insight arising, transformations in energy, and bursts of creativity and novelty. Paradoxically, we come to embrace as part of this wholeness and even as an expression of leadership, times of confusion, stuckness, ambivalence, and "lack of leadership." The essence is to be in the space of emergence with an orientation toward love, truthfulness, depth, and wholeness. It is also to discover together what wants (and needs) to unfold and to meet each other, the moment, these times, and our challenges with humility, boldness, grace, wonder, and a commitment to a greater whole.

Conclusion

A legitimate challenge to this approach might be to call into question what we are describing as a form of leadership. Like many distinctions we hold, "leadership" comes with a mixed history and a multiplicity of meanings

that we likely have to integrate and transcend should we want to become the fullest expression of human potential. What is leadership at the spiritual edge? Each spiritual tradition has pointed to enlightened service and compassionate action as the true measure of its realization. We have a true purpose here that is part of humanity's purpose expressed uniquely through us. Our spiritual path is an unfolding of that purpose in the world. The mystical understanding of this purpose is that it is not of our own making. We may be guided by this higher mind (Aurobindo & Ghose, 1993) or God's purpose or primordial wisdom (Brown, 2006). Our spiritual path is to open to that, to purify what obscures it, and to learn to move with it.

Ultimately, we suggest, this leads us to realize that we already always are an expression of this deeper purpose, that the reality we inhabit is primordially pure and complete as it is, and that this deeper wisdom has always guided us. Understanding this, it can be tempting to say there is no need for leadership. Paradoxically, the expression of this perfection is to serve the unfolding of the world, to endeavor to address our limitations and realize our potentials, and to reduce suffering and injustice. So, we make room for and honor leadership as part of this sacred mandala, and to use the distinction of leadership to describe what is happening, if it serves the unfolding that is beyond all distinctions.

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