Context Question Responses – Synthesis Dialogues III
The Courage of Evolutionary Leadership –
Religious, Social, and Political

1. Describe the gifts you feel you bring to a new model of leadership.

2. Share personally in the context of how your creative self is encountered in the service of your world and passion for living

3. What does spirituality mean to you? What other way(s) do you describe the sense that you are connected to a larger picture and participating with capacities that you have experiences as transformational or transcendent?

4. What impact does your own personal ethic, experience, or practice have on your role as a religious /social / political leader?

5. What do you think is important to share publicly about the relationship between inner character and outer responsibility?

Ela Gandhi

1. I have worked as a social/political and spiritual activist for many years and bring the experience I have gained to the group.

2. I have been driven in my work by a deep patriotic spirit as well as a spiritual spirit which has influenced the method of my work as well as the context of my work.

3. For me spirituality is linked to the purpose of my birth. Why was I born? What mission am I expected to accomplish? These questions are constantly in my mind and hence spiritually I feel that I need the guidance to achieve and to work towards these goals which are set for me by God.

4. I try to ensure that my personal ethic and my role in society are synonymous and that all that I do is driven by my belief in God as the guiding light.

5. I think that the spirituality in each one of us is very personal and I ensure that my own personal guide does not in any way adversely affect other people. I avoid dogmatism or forceful interventionism. I try to share my thoughts and ideas and if people identify with it I am happy, but if they do not then I do not persist. So when I share publicly my inner feelings and thoughts, I do not reflect them as any important revelations but rather some thoughts, even though for me personally they are important revelations and I live by them personally.

Craig Hamilton
Managing Editor
What Is Enlightenment? magazine

Questions 1 & 4: My main gifts in this area are those I have gained in my twelve years as part of a vibrant, engaged spiritual community. Based on the “evolutionary enlightenment” teachings of Andrew Cohen, our residential community of about 60 people functions as a sort of laboratory of evolution, in which the singular goal of transforming consciousness infuses every aspect of life, from work to relationship to spiritual practice. Within this context, authentic transformative leadership has been an ongoing focus of our exploration. Perhaps the most vital thing I have learned in this area is that one’s capacity for genuine evolutionary leadership grows in direct proportion to one’s own degree of personal evolution beyond ego. In cultivating
the willingness to relinquish our conditioned, personal, egocentric motivations, we make room for the miraculous discovery of an overwhelming care for the evolution of the whole—in the face of which our personal wants and fears pale to insignificance. It is in the discovery of this higher care that our capacity to truly lead others on an evolutionary path is born. Put in another way, if we want to be authentic evolutionary leaders, there is no substitute for the humility and care won in the trials of self-purification. Grappling with our own smallness for the biggest possible reasons opens the door to a miraculous Grace which can simultaneously bring us to our knees and empower us to do the unimaginable.

My own understanding and experience of leadership has also grown tremendously as a result of my ongoing contact with thought leaders in the emerging Integral worldview. My encounters with the integral perspective of Ken Wilber and the evolutionary model of Don Beck known as Spiral Dynamics have given me powerful tools for navigating and understanding the complexity of human diversity, particularly in relation to the evolutionary challenges of our time. Distilled, the essence of Wilber’s contribution is that transformation—personal, institutional, or societal—is a complex endeavor and achieving wholeness requires attention to the multiple dimensions of our individual and collective being. Beck’s message is that different developmental levels have different needs and therefore cookie-cutter approaches to transformation are doomed to failure. A truly evolutionary response requires a cultivated sensitivity to the developmental level of the individual or institution being addressed, in order to know how to best serve her/his/its further emergence.

Questions 3 & 2:
Spirituality takes on its deepest significance for me when it is looked at in terms of the development of spiritual conscience. Experiences of oneness or higher consciousness are inspiring, but in my own experience, it has only been a growing willingness to embrace the inherent moral implications in these experiences that has begun to transform my outer life in a meaningful, enduring way. Particularly at this time when our world is confronting such profound crises (with greater challenges promised in the not-too-distant future), the potential for authentic transformation beyond the separative ego seems to be not only a moral obligation but an evolutionary imperative. In its ultimate sense, I would say that spirituality is not only our capacity to connect with or realize the unmanifest divinity behind all forms, but to become a living expression of the creative principle itself, and in that, serve as a conscious agent of evolution in this world.

In recent years, the focus of my own spiritual life has shifted dramatically from an interest in personal transformation to a pursuit of collective evolution. Beginning about three years ago, groups in our spiritual community began to experience the emergence of a mysterious higher collective consciousness and intelligence when we would gather to discuss spiritual matters. Shattering the boundaries between us, and opening the door to a seemingly limitless potential for individual and collective transformation, this newfound capacity soon became the central focus of our spiritual practice. Initially, this powerful collective consciousness emerged in fits and starts. But over time it has grown increasingly stable within the community as a whole, to the point that it now serves as a reliable ground for all of our gatherings. This unanticipated collective emergence has had a profound transformative impact on my own life, on the lives of my fellow community members, and most significantly, on the nature of our life and work together. It quite literally feels as though we are daily discovering the potential for a new order of human relationship, and ultimately, a new world.

In awe at the power that has been unleashed in our midst, I last year launched an in-depth research project exploring the phenomenon of “collective intelligence” that is coming forth in groups around the world. The results of this research are documented in my recent feature article, “Come Together: The Mystery of Collective Intelligence,” published in the current issue of What Is Enlightenment?. Discovering how widespread this phenomenon is, I have become all the more convinced of its immense evolutionary significance. Enabling us to think and create together, accessing a larger perspective than we can reach on our own, this capacity for group wisdom can empower us to confront our global and local challenges with a creativity and insight previously unimaginable. Melting the walls of separation that have kept us divided for millennia, it shows the way to a future in which the laws of love and perpetual evolution reign supreme. Creating that future will require the wholehearted participation of all who feel called to this work, and by all indications, we have a lot of work ahead of us if we are going to make it. It is my life’s work and passion at this point to communicate the potential we are discovering to as many people as possible, and to
facilitate the deepening of this collective emergence both in our own community and in communities and groups throughout the world.

Jim Keen
Antioch University

1. Describe the gifts you feel you bring to a new model of leadership.
Some years ago, I made a life transition from working in leadership roles to being present for others who are working as leaders. In my current practice as a coach to leaders involved in transformative change processes, I bring together my extensive research into how exemplary people develop and sustain commitments to working on a common good inclusive of the diversity of the whole human family (see my book, Common Fire), and my long experience designing and leading innovative learning environments. The model of leadership I’ve been working with supports leaders in engaging complexity as they work for change. Towards this end, the model challenges leaders to clarify and reflect upon meaning and purpose in their lives and to locate specific connections between their spirituality, the goals and strategies of their work, and the overall balance of their lives.

2. Share personally in the context of how your creative self is encountered in the service of your world and passion for living.
I feel most alive and creative when I am able to coach individuals and groups in framing new challenges and acting to meet them. One recent example is my work with young professionals who chose careers in banking as their vehicle for making a difference in the world. The result of my coaching was the development of young bankers for change group in one of the world’s ten largest banks, which has paid immediate dividends in producing initiatives in environmental funding and microlending.
Currently I am working with colleagues at the Quaker United Nations Office (where I serve on the board) to develop a new, user friendly, methodology for mapping complex relationships among multiple issues which QUNO hopes will be useful at a number of levels both within the UN and within the UN-NGO community.
But I also feel the current creativity flowing within me when I meet in a one-on-one coaching encounter or witness a breakthrough of understanding in a student in one of Antioch classes. Likewise when playing my guitar and singing I experience “flow” in music making. My passion for living is fueled by the sense that a current of creativity is flowing within me, by the moment of seeing an outcome of the work bloom before my eyes and by my quiet moments of meditation, contemplation and reflection.

3. What does spirituality mean to you?
Spirituality holds evolving meanings for me. In 1997 I co-founded a group called the Initiative for Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education, which has worked, with surprising success, to get spirituality on the agenda of American higher education. I’ve just completed co-authoring an article with my IASHE colleague, Alexander Astin, American’s leading researcher in higher education, in which we explore equanimity as a key aspect of spirituality. So, the capacity to find possibility where many see only bleak hopelessness is what comes immediately to mind. Last year, when Brother Wayne asked me to write a brief spiritual autobiography, I focused on three pathways that have been important in my personal experience of spirituality. One is meditation; the second is service to the world; the third is interfaith encounter and dialogue where the way opens to appreciate irreducible differences and to discover the authentic common ground that unites us both in our humanness and in our search for ultimate meaning.

3a. What other way(s) do you describe the sense that you are connected to a larger picture and participating with capacities that you have experiences as transformational or transcendent?
For the past 30 years a core interest that has driven my work has been the question, “how do people mediate their lives in relation to larger contexts (micro in relation to macro)?” It was a key theme in
my doctoral work as Harvard and in the contributions I made to No Limits to Learning. Since the mid-70’s when the question grasped not only my mind, but my very soul, it has been a constant focus of my research, my role in developing innovative learning environments, my teaching and my coaching practice. It was this question, “how do exemplary individuals relate macro to micro in their lives,” that thrust me into fifteen years of research that culminated in Common Fire. That research confirmed for me the importance of the spiritual dimension in the process of relating the particularities of life to a sense of an ultimate, inclusive whole. As a result, I’m convinced that agents of transformation in the world usually are in touch with a spiritual apprehension of the whole – an area of insight that they work from in constructing more rationally framed horizons toward which they aim their goals and strategies. My own sense of connectedness to larger pictures (framed both as ineffable ultimacy and as articulated horizons toward which to work) begins with a direct experience of ultimacy that is, for me, most aptly described by the term, “imminent mysticism.” In my direct experience my larger sense of ultimacy is spiritual and has its rational analogues in the horizonal aims of my life, while the most intimate sense of ultimacy is in my experience of my own being and the features of ultimacy that I encounter in my immediate, daily life.

5. What do you think is important to share publicly about the relationship between inner character and outer responsibility? 
The Common Fire research leads me to believe that human beings carry tensions within themselves with which they are bound to struggle. The Dalai Lama, for example, has, in the past, addressed his challenge of coming to grips with anger in response to the treatment of Tibetans by the Chinese, which he redirected into constructive energy. In Common Fire we found many examples of this process, which requires acknowledging something within oneself that proves troubling and then consciously working to transform it into positive energy. Other transformational leaders including Gandhi, Mandela and Jimmy Carter have been similarly forthcoming about inner struggles. Generally, whatever dimensions of inner character a leader chooses to share, it is best shared in the context of furthering their highest (horizontal) aims as leaders and in the context of connecting to others on a human level. It’s important for people to know that transformational leaders are fully human. Otherwise, it’s too easy to dismiss their example as not relevant to our own lives.

Azim Khamisa
Tariq Khamisa Foundation

1. Describe the gifts you feel you bring to a new model of leadership:

One of the most important lessons I have learned is that good decisions are the result of the alignment of head, heart and soul - when thought, feeling and inspiration meet. From the head comes thought, from the heart comes feeling and from the soul comes inspiration. Of these three faculties of thought, feeling and inspiration – inspiration is the one to connect with the most as a leader. Because inspiration will always propel you into action – where thought and feeling may not.

Wisdom is so much more important than intellect. I used to think that being smart was all I needed. But in my deepest crisis, I needed not a fast-working brain but the wisdom that comes from the heart, and inspiration that comes from the soul. Most leaders rely only on the intellect. To quote Einstein – the preeminent intellect of the last century and to date of this century: “We must be careful not to make intellect our God. Sure it has powerful muscles but no personality. It cannot lead – it can only serve.” I have learned that intellect is needed to convert information into knowledge but experience is needed to convert knowledge into wisdom.

When you hear about the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) story, which you know well – you are left with all of the faculties satisfied. It makes sense to the head, it feels good to the heart and it is inspiring for the soul! When you put the war in Iraq to the same test – it might make sense to rid Sadam from the world but it does not feel good and it is not at all inspiring.
I feel the gift that I bring to a new model of leadership is the concept that it is crucial to check in with your head, heart and soul prior to making an important (or any) decision. What does this mean? How do you create wisdom? How do you make sense from something so random and meaningless? These were the issues facing me at the deepest crises of my life when I lost my only son at the prime age of 20. This tragedy emptied me of joy, and filled me with despair. Any vision of a fulfilling life was forever destroyed. The path that I took in the aftermath of this tragedy ironically has helped me find joy and fulfillment again and to an inner strength that I never knew I possessed before and to a life devoted to ending violence. I think that nations and religions can use the same path to find peace.

2. Share personally in the context of how your creative self is encountered in the service of your work and passion for living.

When Tariq died the size of the wound was similar to the size of Planet Jupiter, which is 1400 times the size of planet earth. I remember for months after Tariq passed away I could not utter the word “die”. My mouth would freeze. Even today and over the last nine years as I recount this event it is like taking the scab off the wound. However, when the scab reforms it is smaller. The other side of the coin is that we are all vessels of the divine spirit (you called it life-force). When Tariq was alive the capacity of my vessel was akin to a wine barrel. Today it is like the State of California. What gives me juice (your words) in the continuation of this work will eventually reduce the size of my wound to a microscopic scar (it will never totally go away) but simultaneously the capacity of my vessel will increase to the size of Planet Jupiter. What a gift my son gave me! He made the ultimate sacrifice but he kicked me into my path. This is awesome gift! Thank you, Tariq! Many go through their lives not knowing their path! I do not have that problem. And as you know when you are on path the Universe supports you and the spirits are at your beck and call to guide you. So if you want this kind of juice – you need to figure out your path! That is the hard part – the rest will fall in place. Although, let me warn you – it never gets easy. What life has taught me is that God never stops challenging me to grow – but I have learnt this is a good thing!

3. What does spirituality mean to you? What other way(s) do you describe the sense that you are connected to a larger picture and participating with capacities that you have experienced as transformational or transcendent?

My deepest spiritual experience came when I got the phone call that Tariq had been shot and killed. At first I did not believe that this could be true. So I quickly hung up on the Coroner’s office and called Tariq’s home number. Jennifer (Tariq’s girlfriend – they had moved together just a few week before he died) answered but was crying. She could not speak. At that time I knew it was true. It felt like a nuclear bomb had detonated in my heart – I was broken into million of pieces that could never all be found or come together. The pain was so excruciating that I clearly remember life draining out of me from the head through my feet and I left my body, as the pain was unbearable. I feel went into the loving arms of my maker. I do not want you to think that I talk to God openly and daily – I would like to but I do know that day I went someplace where I had never been before. After the explosion subsided and it was safe for me – God returned me back to my body with the vision that there were victims at both ends of the gun. I felt this way from the onset.

18 months latter I made the following journal entry while vacationing in Paris with my daughter: “From the onset I saw victims at both ends of the gun – Tariq a victim of his assailant, Tony and Tony a victim of society. A society we have created together and must take full responsibility for it. I therefore take my share of the responsibility for the bullet that took Tariq’s life and so should every caring American”

Society just did not happenstance. It reflects each of us individually. I believe that in every crime there is an opportunity to better society. (What a concept – this comes from Restorative Justice – Chapter 7 of my book) If you hang the 14 year old who took Tony’s life – how did you improve society? Who is the real culprit here? Is it the 14 year old that took Tariq’s life or is it the societal forces that led a 12 year old to join a gang to feel respected and protected who latter at age 14 committed murder to prove himself to the gang. If you fix the societal forces – that forced this kid you do indeed better society! That is what we do at TKF. And who better to help us get there than Tony and his grandfather Ples. The are both part of the TKF story. Ples and I have been together doing this work for 8.5 years and we
look forward to Tony joining us when he is out of prison. He knows that there is a job waiting for him when he comes out. Who better to teach kids about not making the choices he made at age 14 than Tony?

This is what spirituality means to me. Solutions like this can only come from the soul. The brain is not capable of it. I have had an established practice of meditations since my early twenties. I see meditation as a dip in the river of love, compassion and wisdom. Singularly this practice has helped me deal with my loss. There were many nights that I meditated longer than I slept. This still happens but my ability to meditate has helped me not only deal with this loss in a positive way but also to receive deep insights and breakthroughs.

4. What impact does your own personal ethic, experience, or practice have on your role as a religious/social/political leader?

I was born and practice in the Sufi tradition of the Muslim faith. My order The Ismaili Faith (Chapter 3 of my book) has taught me a lot. However, the most important gift of my faith was to learn that my spiritual life and my material life were equally important. Even today as I read business book (I make a living as an international corporate finance consultant) I also am reading a spiritual book. I have always done this in my life. The practice of my faith and my career has always had equal importance. As human beings we have two journeys to travel. The inner journey and the outward journey. The outward journey is all our relationships, our work, health, community, etc while the inner journey is alone – it is journey to seek enlightenment and union with God. I feel both these journeys, in the human form, are equally important. I live my life with the same rules of integrity in both aspects of this life. By role modeling these qualities, by becoming the change I wish to create in our society – I hope to impact all that I encounter to invest in this vision. Peace is possible!

5. What do you think is important to share publicly about the relationship between inner character and outer responsibility?

The word “charisma” is from the Greek roots and I believe it means “off the spirit”. What that means is that you are the same person inside as you are on the outside. When you are that you are charismatic because your spirit is shining. How often do we meet people whose mouth is uttering one thing and the body language is the opposite. Living in Southern California in close proximity of Hollywood I see many who take their personality form some one on the screen than from who they are. We are all unique and have greatness of God in us. It is important to connect with who that person is. I only know how to be Azim. I am the same person inside as I am outside. I do not know how to be politically correct or be in concert with what is on Hollywood or Oprah! I don’t watch any TV. However, being who you are inside on the outside is authentic. When you are authentic you are in integrity and charismatic. The Dalai Lama is a perfect example of this. Coming from a center of deep compassion he does not need to worry about being politically right in any culture. His compassion just shines through wherever he is and in whatever language his wisdom is translated. So I feel it is important to be totally transparent – be the person who you are – all the time. The relationship between inner character and outer responsibility should never be at conflict. If it is – you need work at fixing that aspect of your character. The Universe gives you signs to do that on a daily basis. The gift when you are the same inside as you are on the outside is charisma. I am for a charismatic world, aren’t you?
Love is God

Love is God, God is Love.
Love is One, God is One.
Love is Absolute, God is Absolute.
Love is Pure Consciousness, God is Pure Consciousness.

Out of this Love all creation is created, this love is manifested in a multitude of forms and this love as God is meaningful in a multitude of forms.

Each atom contains this ëFormï as God. One of the most precious forms of God is mankind. To play, God expresses itself as humankind so it can experience itself as itself. Itïs a play, we are all playing himself, herself in the ëmanifest universe.ï

Because humankind has the power of discernment, discrimination, has a heart chakra, a mind--man is the only one who can consciously choose to experience her/his/the presence fully, realize herself/himself fully. All of you can realize she or he is a Living God and from there realize that the whole universe is Godly.

Instead of asking ëdoes God exist? where is God? what is God?ï ask yourself ëwhat is not God?ï All is presence, fragrance, love, victory, glory of her, of him. This power, this force is God. Yes, This is God Force. God in Truth. To experience this magnificence, this truth, one must drop everything, all falsehood, all ephemeral, attachment, all that does not last because this falsehood is killing you.

The fact that God/she is in everything, meaning inside and also outside, inward and also outward. One is attracted more outward because of the senses are strong. These senses are gifted to sense, to be sensitive with the Lord, for the Lord, to be attached to the Lord. Humankind misunderstood and got attached only to the worldly outside and forgot the inward. The Inner Presence of God is the creator. A Real Creator is not attached to its creation, She creates it for others, for the joy of creating--meaning the creator or self or presence is completely unattached. She is totally pure, totally loving, all ways in ecstasy as the creation is shared and enjoyed.

AND, And there is only ONE, as a huge mirror--millions can look at their face now, yet not a single face stays on itâ•‘ the mirror is all ways clean. When one is absorbed in light, in love, that will be the reflection in the mirror. And the mirror will reflect it back. When one is absorbed in anger, violence, pettiness, desires, animalistic passions that also will be a reflection.

Even though the self is huge, all powerful, glorious, blissful, it is invisible to eyes, to outer senses. Then the presence is ruling the whole, making your eyes look, ears listen, body sit, stand, hands write and move, this presence never dies, never is born, never, never changes. This presence is immutable, changeless. This truth is pure consciousness, existence, knowledge, wisdom. And there is nothing on this planet that can give you consciousness for the inner presence-- even the Vedas, the Bible. It is called experience and, and to experience that you must open the heart to purity, where the truth resides.

Yes, the presence is unseen, centered, the Godhead, and nothing can destroy it, not ever. This presence, this truth cannot be affected by anything, nothing. This presence witnesses, it never interferes, never blames, never judges. It is completely unattached, observes without interfering. This presence is the Lord of all Lords, Light of all Light, The Supreme. This is truth, meaning-- you are that, you are the truth.
What else can you be? You cannot tell me you are the body, because from a tiny baby you become an old person. So you can’t be the baby or older person; you can’t be the body. You can’t be the name, you change your name. You can’t be the mind because it changes all the time, as clouds. So who are you, if not The Truth?

The Presence is waiting for you to look at Her, to breathe to Her, to serve you, to merge with you. And the more you know about The Presence, the more you become Her. It does not matter what form you choose to recognize Her, as in the world of form, duality, it is easier to feel Her when there is a form. While choosing to love any form, you are loving The Supreme.

James Daniel McManis, Ph.D.

Describe the gifts you feel you bring to a new model of leadership:

Probably the most important gift of leadership that I possess is my passion for integrating values and ideals into personal practice that is then expressed in my spiritual and political leadership. I know explicitly that the only real gift of leadership we have is the gift that we practice. As a consequence I am an inveterate practice teacher.

I am also a risk-taker. Over the years I have combined this risk taking with accumulated experience. When I combine the motif of my emphasis on practice with my commitment to strategic risk taking, I am able to assert leadership in situations that demand ‘deep change’ in order to transcend institutional impasses and/or breakdowns. I know the value of strategic risk taking that brings about transcendent experience of the self and of the situation in which one has been captured or embroiled.

In sum, my three most useful contributions of leadership in my chosen field of endeavor are: emphasis on practice; strategic risk taking; commitment to deep change in self, other, in and through one’s organizations and institutions.

Share personally in the context of how your creative self is encountered in the service of your work and passion for living.

There is a way to live life as an artist; to be an artist of life. That is my aspiration and purpose. In the work that I do with others I weave into the stories that people report to me a subplot or subtext that allows these very same people to find their way beyond the impasses and obstacles that have frustrated them, as described in their stories.

There is that field described by the Sufi Master, Rumi, that lies beyond right doing and wrong doing. In this field I meet those with whom I interact. This field certainly does not lie beyond morality; indeed, it is a moral field composed of high purpose and transcendent spiritual experience. Getting to that field demands rigorous training and steadfast discipline. Being in that field and playing in that field call forth the creative imagination and spontaneity of those who are engaged. This creativity and spontaneity are the very expression as well as the fulfillment of ‘passion for living’.

What does spirituality mean to you? What other way(s) do you describe the sense that you are connected to a larger picture and participating with capacities that you have experienced as transformational or transcendent?

Spirituality is a practice, a way of being present, to the fact that I am a pilgrim from the realms of the unmanifest who is experiencing an Earth walk. Spirituality involves a wakeful contemplation of the fact that there is only One Reality. This Reality is Undivided and Seamless. It is Boundless and everywhere
infused with That One, Beyond the Beyond, Nameless, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Indivisible, Radically Sublime, Transcendent Beyond All Reaches of Perfection. Whose Nature is Love/Truth. Spirituality involves, among other things, a being consonant with This Reality. This being consonant involves a maintenance of the practices that support and deepen one’s interbeing (Thich Nhat Hahn) in and with This Reality.

Another way to frame this involvement in This Reality is ‘consciousness’. Consciousness is defined in various ways. A spiritualist perspective allows for consciousness to be the knowing of the Self within the context of manifestation or creation. In other words, consciousness is the experience of the Divine or the Self merged into Creation. The vitality or livingness of All Creation, in whatever guise or expression, is merely The One expressing in form, in whatever form.

What impact does your own personal ethic, experience, or practice have on your role as a religious/social/political leader?

My commitment, as referenced in the foregoing, is to have my personal ethic and cumulative life experience be embodied in and through me to then be expressed as the life I live in the world. My commitment is to bring into my professional practice all the learning and cumulative wisdom gained in my lived experience. My field of expertise lies on the boundary of the spiritual with the political. As large numbers of humanity begin to enter, at this time, the fifth or spiritual kingdom (after the mineral, vegetable, animal and human), the most significant contribution a spiritually awake leader can make is to be a model or exemplar of one’s lived values, in one’s professional persona. This necessarily requires of one that one be attentive to multiple aspects of one’s beingness, with a focus and commitment on congruence or inner with outer alignment. The less cognitive and spiritual dissonance; the less out-of-alignment, out-of-integrity practice, the better. Exemplary political practice reveals the inner man/woman.

What do you think is important to share publicly about the relationship between inner character and outer responsibility?

I believe that inner character is the source of public leadership. One’s capacity to function as an integrated leader in the public sphere depends on the depth and nature of one’s inner formation. The most important and significant way in which this inner character is to be shared is through one’s actions and one’s choices in the expression of one’s leadership. Opportunities inevitably arise for one to share in words through teaching, public speaking and small group work the tenets and sources of one’s own inner resolve and character. Action that reflects one’s inner resolve is the lynch pin, however.

James O’Dea
President
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Essay for Synthesis Dialogues
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Evolutionary leadership calls for a new integration of heart and mind. The heart has been undervalued as a mode of perception and as a servant of unifying processes, both within individuals and in the greater social context. The heart is both a creative force for social harmony and cohesion and a powerful healing agent when we wound each other.

Integrity flows from pursuing integration. When leadership is without integrity we see over time how inconsistency, hypocrisy, and selectivity show up, fueling confusion and conflict.

Having witnessed extremes of human suffering and human rights violations in my work, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of addressing the root causes and the psycho-spiritual dimensions of wounding and healing. Of particular interest has been the inter-generational transfer of wounds and

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experiences that remain unresolved in both the individual and collective psyche. I see the work of truth, reconciliation, forgiveness and restorative justice as indicative of the power that an engaged spirituality can manifest to transform the wounds of the past and offer new hope for a more humanistic global order.

Spirituality is that which uncompromisingly represents the whole. It is that which exists as an inexhaustible reservoir of loving, compassionate and creative being. It is available to all and cannot be taken over, controlled or merchandised by limited forms of self-interest. It is the ever-renewable collective resource of all being: of its nature it belongs to the whole and serves the whole.

Out of spirit’s universal essence we create cultural, religious, and institutional forms and diverse moral codes, and then mistake the particular for the expression of the universal. In an evolutionary sense, particularist claims and counter-claims are now at an apex: the limited is fighting the limited in the name of the universal. But the universal relentlessly seeks greater and more skillful reflections of the whole; it is guiding our evolution, pressing us to witness and understand our interconnected roles in the greater design.

The marriage of science and spirit, of philosophy and practice, of being and doing have also begun to serve a larger vision of integration and lived integrity, opening up breath-taking vistas of human health and wholeness. It is a time when everyday extraordinary new knowledge is shared about how our lives are interfused and interwoven. Some are threatened by this knowledge, particularly when it challenges their absolutist claims and their vested interest in a more exclusive hold on truth.

And so we are called to make conscious choices to move towards a greater embrace of the whole. As limited and self-serving claims become more shrill, as they demand and cajole us to polarize on either side of a false divide, the work of conscious and spiritual people will be to hold a space for dialogue, listening, and appreciation of others. We will choose to do so in the knowledge that competing narratives are insignificant in comparison to the unifying forces in the ground of our shared being.

We are not relieved of making our best judgments on any given day: judgments that will affect our individual wellbeing, or our collective peace and security. We invariably have to act in the face of finite resources, competing choices, incomplete information and the arrow of time. But we can cultivate a stance that attempts to be more responsive than reactive, a stance that seeks the discernment to base one’s strategies on eventual transformation rather than on annihilation of the problem. Our most strategic judgments will be those that create conditions for healing to begin. As the origin of the word suggests, to heal is to make whole.

There are crimes that are overt and those that are concealed within prejudice and belief, and some that are hidden deeply within structures and systems. If our judgments are to be developed on the basis of conscious and spiritual values they must be rooted in an integral vision and an experience, or even an intuition, of our greater wholeness. Legal sanctions serve to partially address the immediacy of abuse and crime but are overwhelmingly oriented towards punishment. The larger vision is one in which crimes are prevented and justice is restored. It is a vision that calls for communal participation and for leadership in spiritual, religious, and political realms, working to raise consciousness about the science of healing and the attitudinal changes that dramatically change negative human behaviors.

A commitment to healing ourselves and healing others inexorably leads us to a vision of reciprocal healing that one day will heal our world. And as we have discovered from the generations that have preceded us, reaching out to others is beset with challenges, although it is the most basic and natural expression of our humanity. For some this suggests that humans should seek their complete realization in transcendent reality. But I am called to also seek meaning at the burning center of human experience.

Despite every adversity I believe we must persist in finding multiple ways to express truth and create beauty. Truth will never be singular nor beauty without its mystery. Humans may share an infinite reservoir of being which can be experienced as a state of oneness in the deep heart’s core, but each is given a unique, and in some sense, solitary life to live. Each of us is invited to share in the great work of restoring dignity, meaning and purpose to earthly life.
It has been my experience that beauty manifests in the most forsaken, tortured and benighted places. Humans have offered to each other indescribable courage, love and wisdom in the course of our evolutionary journey. In touching what has been offered to me by these noble qualities of all my forbears and by their artistry, wit, ingenuity and shameless desire for merriment, I bow to them and to the sacred work of living a human life.

I choose to learn. I choose to grow. I choose to evolve.

**Jawdat Said**

I want to refer to four intellectual stances:

Bertrand Russell was an intellectual and philosopher who acutely felt the misery of the world to the point of sitting in the street to state his protest. Towards the end of his life, Russell also called to establish a court to condemn world leaders so that the intellectuals of the world would declare their independent authority. Russell and others like Sartre could not find a place on earth to hold a meeting. So, they decided to meet on a ship in the middle of the sea.

Toynbee, the British historian said, when a spying plane violated Soviet air space, that he would have supported such a violation if the plane dropped stacks of Russull’s book, “Is there a future to humanity?” over Soviet land.

And, in the Arab World, in the early 80s, Arab intellectuals wanted to have a conference about the crisis of democracy in Arab countries. But they too could not find a place on Arab earth. So, they met in Cyprus.

Neils Bohr, one of the nuclear scientists, asked Churchill and Truman to place the knowledge of nuclear energy in the hands of all the world and the UN to gain the trust of the world and prove their goodwill among the people of the world. And to prove that they don’t want a monopoly over this knowledge because the world would eventually have it, and the Soviet Union had not reached such a point. Here was a scientist, who wanted to spread goodwill among people, when the politicians, however, doubted his attitude and feared his intentions.

Since the burdens of culture and authority concern me, I would like to present my view of humanity, which is capable of knowledge. I would like to also briefly state how far we have come in understanding our world.

In the beginning, humans were endowed with the ability of understanding. And in Proverbs we read: “I am understanding; I have strength… My harvest is better even than fine gold, and my revenue better than choice silver” (Proverbs, 8:14-19) We also read in St. John: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (St. John, 8: 32).

All humans are born without knowledge but with the capacity to learn, and with time their understanding grows. Humans lived like the rest of creatures, but changed with the capacity to understand, into the capacity to communicate understanding with speech. And with both understanding and speech, humans learned to ignite fire, domesticate animals, and expand agriculture. Then they invented writing and experience became immortal. Ideas became eternal. Humans contemplated the meaning of the universe. They utilized fire, iron and steam, captured lightening and started traveling faster than the speed of sound, and started communicating information faster than the speed of light. Humanity learned while still on earth the source of the sun’s energy and that of stars. Humans learned the age of the planet, and how they themselves evolved on this earth, until their knowledge reached the realization that the universe started from a void, and learned how then the skies and earth were created. And still, human knowledge reached the heart of the cell and nucleus.
But through such brushing with knowledge of itself, humanity crowned this knowledge with the invention of democracy, and with this humans replaced the rifle with the ballot. And democracy expanded until the European Union was born above nations and languages, where they acknowledged the equality of all humans. Nations who fought for centuries are coming together as equals with no veto right.

War also has become obsolete. It’s a dead institution. War has stopped among big powers since the first explosion of the nucleus. And for the first time in history war is being defeated and is rolling back, and has no existence except among those who are ignorant of the history of humanity’s achievements, or among those who exploit this ignorance. This is why I consider the European Union—with their term of equity—a new creation in the history of humanity. They are uniting without armies, or wars, but rather on a pledge to end capital punishment. We wish these values to reach the United Nations so that there is finally an acknowledgment of human rights and that democracy is truly established and the veto right is abolished.

Democracy represents a shift in human history reminiscent of the shift of Earth’s centrality to that of the sun. Democracy socially shifted the centre from politicians to people. This is a social Copernican shift. This is what Prophets came for, but that which we lost, and which we are regaining after we paid high prices and still are.

Therefore, intellectuals who are concerned about these issues should network to think of ways to speed up the expansion of democracy, which should be done through a reliance on humans’ capacity for understanding, and understanding alone. Intellectuals should spread awareness so that they are a place of trust for people.

Just as people have learned to separate powers, so do intellectuals have to establish their own separate institution, some form of international intellectual alliance to represent their own separate cultural authority. Intellectuals should place their trust in ordinary people for they are the real capital so that people also place their trust in intellectuals. Intellectuals should also establish their avenues of communication with all nations. And with this, they would be consolidating the role of reason, and intellect in the life of people.

The sages and those of wisdom from the ancient times of Greece, China and India were leaning towards impacting political authority, whereas today’s intellectuals should acknowledge their responsibilities in communicating their vision and ideas to ordinary people all over the world. They have to come out of their individual isolations to cooperate in accomplishing their duties, and to perform the mission of their new authority. And through their integral representation of knowledge the powers of the other three authorities (legislative, judicial, and executive) would become automatically limited. With such a step, intellectuals would be joining their testimony and service towards the growth of humanity’s capacity to understanding the meaning of history and existence. They would be joining their testimony to all those who used their creativity to advancing knowledge. This will bring us out of pessimism and despair so that human effort would move towards higher goals. Intellectuals would testify that in the coming kingdom of the Lord, authority is only to knowledge. And knowledge is security, peace and it’s an effort that doesn’t cease.

And just as we vaccinate children against paralysis, they should also be vaccinated with knowledge against violence and the paralysis of ideas.

Elisabet Sahtouris
EVOLUTION BIOLOGIST, FUTURIST

Gifts I feel I bring to a new to a new model of leadership:

My experience working with people in business, government and other organizations is that people recognize, broadly and deeply, that old models have led us to unsustainability and are not working any longer. As an evolution biologist - a student of Nature's four billion years of experience in evolving healthy
living systems - I believe much of the problem lies in our having emulated the mechanical systems we invented, rather than the living systems of nature itself. Further, natural system themselves have been seriously misunderstood in the Darwinian paradigm of nature as the battleground for hostile competition in situations of scarcity. Darwin and his followers failed to see that nature overcomes scarcity through recycling and the efficiencies of learned cooperation. They also suffered from the historical separation of science and spirituality, thus being victims of a reductionist materialism that had no larger context in which to see the inherent intelligence and spiritual nature of all nature. Having worked many years to develop an alternative model of a self-creating universe with consciousness as its source, I use this as a context for understanding many problems faced by humanity and for seeing solutions in nature itself, including new models for leadership, conflict resolution, creative leadership and collaborative cooperation.

What spirituality means to me, including meaningful connection to a larger whole and transcendent experience:

I have always stood in awe of nature's amazing creativity and complexity, being in a sense a nature worshipper from childhood and finding traditional religion less interesting or appealing. As an adult, it was my work with indigenous people, who shared my profound love of nature, that led me to recognizing my relation to nature as spiritual, not just scientific. Through them I experienced repeated transcendent experiences - "magical" responses from nature during ceremonies and when in states of personal reverence. Coming to understand Taoist, Vedic and ancient Greek philosophies and sciences as well, I recognized that seeing the entire cosmos as a conscious creative process was a non-dual spirituality. Perhaps the best summation of this from my perspective is the concept of *jnana yoga*, the yoga of knowledge as "beholding the One Self everywhere," in Sivananda's words, and *ajnana* as "ignorance, identifying oneself with the illusory vehicles of body, mind, Prana and the senses."

The impact my personal ethic, experience and practice have on my capacity for leadership:

My conviction that we individually and collectively create our reality through our beliefs, emotions and values, together with my open mindedness - always being willing to see from other perspectives and adopt new and better explanations of things - gives me a benign, hopeful and flexible "mind set" along with a love of, and faith in, conflict resolution and problem solving more generally. As a "post-Darwinian" evolution biologist who knows nature to be most resourceful in crises, and as a living universe cosmologist who sees the boundless creativity available to us as aspects of Source or God, I carry an inspiring story that I see by experience helps people see ways out of crises and appropriate action toward building a better world.

**David Sluyter, Ed.D.**
Fetzer Institute

I start this essay with the third question: What does spirituality mean to you?

I was brought up in a conservative Christian home and church that had little room for diversity of thought or belief. As a teenager, I perceived my alternatives as total acceptance of the beliefs of my family and community, or total rebellion. I chose the latter, and must say that my resulting atheism served me well through college, graduate school, and early career.

Served me well, that is, intellectually. On the experiential side, my passion was wilderness travel, often alone, either backpacking in the mountains of North America or canoeing in the wilds of Canada. Here I found both wonder and awe and time to appreciate the beauty and majesty of the world untouched.

This is where I was when, through a series of synchronous events, I came to work at the Fetzer Institute, an openly spiritual organization. Early in my experience there, I found myself in a conversation with a devout
Christian, a Buddhist, and a Catholic priest. As we were talking of our spiritual paths, mine through nature, the others through their conventional cultural paths, the priest said, “My God is big enough to envelop all of this.” When he said that, a light went on for me. It was an epiphany. I finally “got it.” God is big. I discovered that what I had been rebelling from for most of my life was a traditional religion that limited God to its own definitions and interpretations. That God was too small.

So, what does it mean that God is “big”? To me it means that even the very concept of God, or at least my concept of God, is too small to really fathom the huge mystery of the universe. Science, I might add, is too small as well. I believe that the universe is so strange, so complex, so vast, and so beautiful, that we can barely sense it, either through science, through religion, or through our humble human musings. The very heart of my spirituality is, therefore, the mystery, and I find it energizing and transcendent.

If we cannot fathom reality, what can we do? This leads to question four—the impact of spirituality on my role as a leader. My personal belief is that what we can and must do is to live life with integrity and in right relationship to others, including not only other people but also in relationship to nature and the other life forms with which we share the planet. Early in my career as a mental health professional, I tried always to measure decisions that I made against their impact on relationships and on my own honesty and integrity, even decisions that, when based on these factors, were not in my own best interests. This did not come just out of an intellectual exercise, but was the mainstay of my career from the time I left graduate school and began working with people who had severe and profound mental retardation and behavior problems that resulted in their exclusion from mainstream society.

Questions one and two ask for my own gifts. One of the gifts that I feel I bring to a new model of leadership is the notion of integrity as being one of the foremost properties. In this group, that is probably neither a major insight nor particularly surprising. However, looking at the scandals that have rocked leadership, both political and corporate, in the United States, it seems to me to be important. I believe that this inner quality of leadership informs much of the action in which a leader engages.

For a model of leadership, therefore, I resonate greatly with that put forward by Dee Hock who was the founder and CEO of Visa USA and Visa International. Dee feels that the first and most important responsibility of leadership is self-management—to keep one’s own integrity intact. The second responsibility is to help those in authority over you maintain their integrity. The third responsibility is for the integrity of peers and constituents, the fourth for that of subordinates. Of course, it is not possible to force people to live with integrity. They need to be led. This seems to be the very difficult but essential part of leadership.

William Ury
Director, Global Negotiation Project, Harvard University

Allow me to answer with a personal story. Much of my work in this world is as a student and practitioner of mediation. I have sometimes been introduced as someone who has “meditated” in various parts of the world, and I wish it were true. Mediation is a little different from meditation, however. If I have a gift, it is in seeking to understand all sides of a conflict so as to be able to help the parties find a way to deal with their differences constructively through dialogue and negotiation rather than through bitter fighting and war. A year ago, I found myself engaged in this work in Venezuela which is currently embroiled in a fierce political contest, marked by a coup attempt and street violence, and which sadly has the real potential of escalating into a civil war. My colleagues and I are seeking ways to empower the people of Venezuela to prevent a war that would destroy many lives and the hopes of the future generation. We work at many levels — with grassroots organizations, with civic, religious, and business leaders, as well as with the political leadership on both sides.
I try to listen to what I can best call an “inner voice,” seeking guidance about how to proceed. This time in Venezuela, I began to feel a shift to a different level of listening to this voice from a higher self. After four visits to the country, I had at last an opportunity to meet one-on-one with the President, in whose hands much of the country’s future lay. It came at a moment of high tension in the country. Sitting in silence beforehand, I was mentally preparing what I might say in the few minutes I might have with the President. Here I was — a ‘Yankee imperialist’, a professor — what interest might he have in listening to me? I could feel fears rising inside me, doubts about whether anything I could say could make the slightest difference, anxiety about whether I could rise to this unusual occasion. The first things that went through my mind were ideas, advice I might give, based on my years of experience. I could watch my ego get easily engaged — what could I say that might be useful and intelligent and impressive? Then I heard this inner voice speak up. “Don’t give advice. That’s not your place,” it counselled. “Don’t play the expert. Let your ego be still. Don’t try to say anything intelligent. Just be yourself, be present, and see what comes up naturally in the moment.” In other words, surrender. Let myself be an instrument for a higher purpose.

For spiritual leaders such as many of you, this kind of surrender, I imagine, may be a very natural experience. But for me, a beginner still in these realms, it came as something new, a shock even. After working so hard to get to this point and faced with this unusual opportunity to be able to persuade the President, I was being asked by this inner voice to give up relying on my expertise and experience, take what seemed to me a big risk, and surrender. It naturally aroused a considerable resistance and anxiety inside me, but in the end, of course, the quiet voice of stillness prevailed.

The subsequent meeting with the President in his palace unfolded almost as if in a dream. I will not go into the details but suffice it to say, I allowed myself to say whatever my inner voice suggested. I found myself uttering things I would never have anticipated saying — speaking personally about my daughter Gabriela and the children of Venezuela and their future, making a personal appeal to the President to initiate a confidence-building dialogue with his most bitter political enemies, and persisting firmly despite his initial strong resistance to the idea. A meeting that could easily have lasted fifteen minutes stretched on for several hours. In the end, the President agreed to an experimental dialogue and, as he ushered me out, asked me to return the next day.

The little breakthrough in this meeting was just one small step in a much larger process, but it did open a dialogue that led to a temporary defusing of dangerously acute tensions between the President and some of his main political adversaries. It may have been a small step, but for me, it was a big lesson in humility, surrender, and spirit, a lesson that I continue to learn and re-learn.

I hope this gives you some concrete sense of how my inner life and outer life intertwine. For me, they are increasingly one. I look forward to sharing a rich conversation with each and every one of you.

**Dhyani Ywahoo**
**Sunray Meditation Society**

1. An inherent gift of broad-spectrum frequency response within me, supports deep empathy with living beings and the ability to sense the imprint of past events within an environment and situations. My sense of empathy continually reveals the interdependence of thought and actions with the results arising and has energized an ability to communicate with others, and share the experience of wisdom’s potential as an energy interpenetrating all experience and form.

Through direct experience I have seen those on death’s bed, arise healthy and with a revised view of their relationship with family, clan, neighbors and the world. The expanded view of interdependent relationship as a dance energized by emotion, thought, word and deed indicates the opportunity of rebirth in each moment.

2. My ‘creative self’ is experienced as energy unfurling in the breath of the moment. The potential within
each situation inspires me to energize those threads of thought that lead to cooperative action and skillful application of whatever energy or medicine to illumine clear view, that rests quietly as a potential in the moment.

3. I experience spirituality as awakened energy connecting all realms and revealing continually arising potentials in human and subtle realms of activity. The potential as energy has been revealed to me in many ways, the most significant being on a desert plateau running out of food and water, thinking ‘do I go or stay’ and a spring of water arising beneath me, and the pines trees releasing nuts, as green energy and birds surrounded me.

4. My direct experience of all beings as relatives in this dance of life and the experience of the direct impact of thought upon the environment or situation, and the recognition that ‘collected views’ can be limiting or liberating, is the basis of all my activities.

5. The clarion call to conscious awareness is the sound of reclaiming a collective and independent spiritual sovereignty through the sweeping away conditioned awareness. Through taming reactive mind, recognition arises that each person contributes to arising appearances locally and afar, when emotions are seen as inseparable from awakened action, aggression may become skillful understanding and cooperation.

Conceptualize a world of harmony, visualize and energize that potential with prayer and action and do what needs doing.