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Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership

Louis Fry and Mark Kriger

ABSTRACT

This article proposes and develops a theory of leadership that utilizes five levels of being as context for effective leadership: 1) the physical world; 2) the world of images and imagination; 3) the level of the soul; 4) the level of the Spirit; and 5) the non-dual level. We first explore how each of the five levels of being provides a means for advancing both the theory and the practice of leadership. Second, we utilize these five levels to create the foundation for a theory of leadership based on *being* that goes beyond current theory which emphasizes *having* and *doing* – either having appropriate traits and competencies or doing appropriate actions depending on the situation. We present propositions for future research as we discuss each of the five levels of being. Finally, we discuss implications for leadership development and future research that arise from such a being-centered leadership theory.

KEYWORDS

leadership context ■ leadership effectiveness ■ leadership ontology and epistemology ■ spiritual leadership ■ workplace spirituality

He alone knows Truth who realizes in his own soul those of others,
and in the soul of others, his own.

(Rabindranath Tagore)

Introduction

What would leadership theory look like if it was based on *being* rather than *doing* or *having* (i.e. what a leader does or has in the way of competencies, skills or traits)? Is there already existent evidence for the formation of such a theory? How might leadership be exercised differently under such a being-centered theory?

For the last half century the field of leadership has struggled to understand what exactly leadership is, under what contexts or situations it is effectively exercised, and how to explain leadership processes in addition to leader traits, skills and competencies (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2006). This is especially a challenge in an increasingly uncertain and rapidly evolving global economy, where leadership is affected by situational dynamics which includes not only the values of national cultures, but also the belief systems and paradigms of the world's varying religious traditions. Clearly there still is a need for theories to be developed that can increase our understanding of the broader and often subtle contexts within which effective leadership takes place (see Scharmer, 2007, for a recent effort).

Leadership is generally viewed as one of the most complex of social processes. There are over 10,000 books and articles on the topic with no abatement of monographs in sight (see Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2006, for summaries and discussions of the major works, and Bolman & Deal, 1995; Daft & Lengel, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Quinn, 1996, for representative applied works that have either implicit or explicit spiritual underpinnings). The extant theories of leadership proposed over the past half-century have been based almost exclusively on behavior and interactions (i.e. doing) or traits, competencies or styles (i.e. having) (see Daft, 2008; Northouse, 2007).

Recently, a number of authors find that leadership is also a product of subtle and largely invisible inner feelings, thoughts, states and intuitions (Badaracco, 2002; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002; Kriger & Malan, 1993). These authors argue in varying ways that visible behavior is just the tip of the iceberg of effective leadership in organizations, and that we must also focus on the images, visions and values which are central to the social construction of organizational reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1994). Current theories of leadership that utilize vision and/or values include transformational leadership (Bass, 1995; Daft, 2008; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996), authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004), ethical leadership (Brown, 2007; Brown & Trevino, 2006), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998; Liden et al., 2008), and spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003, 2005a, 2008; Kriger & Seng, 2005).

However, these attempts to date have not yet gone to the root of the issues surrounding the larger ontology or essential reality of leadership as a

state of being appropriate to context and how a focus on being a leader from moment to moment may be essential for long-term group and organizational effectiveness. In this article we develop the foundation for a being-centered theory of leadership that goes beyond, but also includes and provides the context for, situation-appropriate behavior, images, vision, and values. Moreover, we argue that leadership researchers have focused mostly on questions of leadership as having certain qualities, states or doing certain actions based on the situation and that the literature has not sufficiently addressed leadership as a state of being.

Our main objectives in this article are to: 1) argue that a common underlying multiple level ontology exists that can serve as a foundation for a being-centered theory of leadership; and 2) explore how these levels can inform and enrich the understanding of effective leadership practice. Each of the ontological levels of being has a corresponding epistemology or way knowing (Kriger & Seng, 2005; Wilber, 2000a, 2000b). Epistemology and ontology are complementary disciplines of study, where *ontology* is the study of being, or the nature of reality, what exists. *Epistemology* is the study of our awareness and knowledge of reality. In addition, each level of being and awareness has different implications and criteria for effective leadership.

First, we describe a five-level ontological model as a means for expanding upon and enlarging currently accepted theories of leadership. We draw upon six of the major spiritual and religious traditions that have emerged as natural experiments in the creation of meaning over the past 1400 to 4000 years, depending on the tradition. These natural experiments in meaning-making provide the foundation for a being-centered model of situational leadership that we argue has validity owing to the presence of essentially the same underlying paradigm consisting of five levels of being. We then propose a way to incorporate the emerging areas of authentic, ethical, servant, and spiritual leadership, by utilizing the concept of ‘multiple levels of being’ (Wilber, 2000a). We present propositions for future research as we discuss each of the five levels of being. Finally, we discuss implications for leadership development and future research that arise from such a being-centered leadership theory.

Multiple levels of being

The overall theory of being-centered leadership this article proposes is summarized in Figure 1. This figure is grounded in and emerges from an analysis of the ontological paradigms that underlie six of the world’s religious traditions. We define *ontology* as the study of the nature of being and of its basic categories, with particular emphasis on determining what can be said

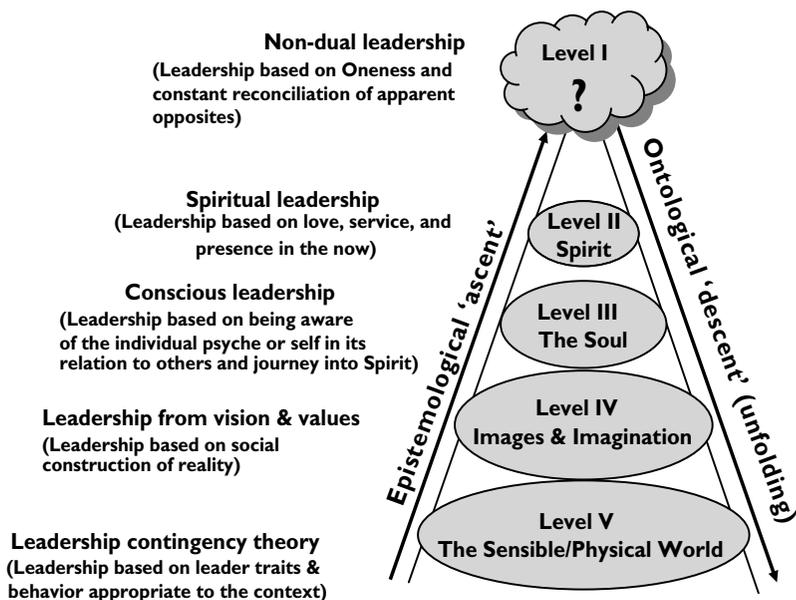


Figure 1 Multiple levels of being and leadership

to exist, and how these can be grouped and related within a hierarchy. To establish added validity for such a theory of being-centered leadership, we draw upon the ontological paradigms of four theistic religions and two non-theistic religions: the three Abrahamic religions consisting of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and the three Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism.¹ Each of these major spiritual traditions, although historically not totally independent of one another, can be treated as six natural experiments that have been ongoing for the past 1400 to 4000 years. These natural experiments have significant implications and hold insights for the development of being-centered leadership theory as context for effective leadership (Kriger & Seng, 2005).²

The advantage of theories based on multiple levels of being is described in the work of Wilber (2000a, 2000b), who draws upon developmental psychology, anthropology, and philosophy to argue that human consciousness is found by a wide range of researchers to develop in a series of stages (Graves, 1981). Consciousness in this view is marked by the subordination of lower-order systems to progressively more subtle, higher-order systems, where a higher level of being becomes salient as an individual's overall being evolves. All six religious traditions point to the same underlying five levels, although each uses differing terminology and names for the levels (see Table 1).

Table I Levels of being in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism

Levels of being	Islamic Sufism ^a	Jewish Kabbalah ^b	Christian Gnosticism ^c	Buddhist Vijnanas ^{d,e}	Taoism ^f
I The Non-dual	<i>hadrat al-Dhat</i> (the world of Absolute Mystery)	<i>En Sof</i> (Absolute Oneness)	'Prayer of Union'	nirvana/nibbana (Non-dual consciousness)	The Unconditioned Tao (Transcendence of all opposites) – <i>wu wu wu</i>
II Spirit	<i>ta'aayunat Ruhiya</i> (the world of Spirit)	<i>Keter/</i> <i>Chokhmah/Binah</i>	'Prayer of Quiet' (unification)	<i>alaya vijñana</i> (Archetypal Mind)	The One – <i>wu wu</i>
III Soul	<i>'alam ta'ayyunat nafsija</i>	<i>Chesed/Din</i> <i>Tiferet</i>	Prayer of Recollection (illumination)	<i>Manas</i> (higher mind) (Higher Mind)	The two (<i>yang & yin</i>)
IV Creative imagination & of forms	<i>'alam al-mithal</i> (world of images) images	<i>Netzach/Hod</i> <i>Yesod</i>	Prayer of Mind (sub-vocal)	<i>Manovijnana</i> (‘Gross mind’)	The three – the generative principle
V The sensible/ Physical world	<i>'alam al-Srahada</i> (the sensible and visible world)	<i>Malkhut</i> (the world of manifestation)	Prayer of Simplicity (vocal)	<i>samsara</i> (physical body senses)	The 10,000 things – <i>wan wu</i> (the physical world)

^a See Corbin (1969: 225); Izutsu (1967); Kriger (1975).

^b Wilber (2000b: 200); The Jewish Encyclopedia.com (2004) – Cabala.

^c Wilber (2000b: 211).

^d Wilber (2000b: 199).

^e The Hindu religion has very similar levels to the Buddhist with some differing terminology, but adds complexity which is beyond the scope of this article.

^f See Lao Tzu (1972, chapter 42); Izutsu (1967); Kriger (1975).

Such a system can be described as 'holonic'. A holonic system is one in which each level as a whole is embedded in a higher level of the system, creating a nested system of wholes. (Wilber, 2000b) In a holonic ontological system each successive level of existence is a stage through which individuals are hypothesized to pass on their way to progressively more subtle (and more complete) levels of being. When at a particular level of being, a person will tend to experience psychological states that are appropriate to that level. In addition, his or her feelings, motivations, ethics, values, learning system, and personal theories-in-use as to how leadership should be practiced are all hypothesized to become more appropriate to that level of being. Hence, the level of being becomes a context for appropriateness of response and engagement by leaders.

In this view, each higher level of being transcends and includes each of the lower levels of being. Moreover, each lower level can be activated, or reactivated, as an individual developmentally progresses and then, as often happens, falls back to a lower level as the situation and response changes. Reality, in this view, is composed of neither wholes nor parts, but of part/wholes or holons. For an example of a holonic model of organizational decision-making consisting of six levels, see Kriger and Barnes (1992) or for an extended discussion of holonic systems, see Wilber (2000a, 2000b). Each level can govern in any particular activity depending on the level of awareness and development of the individual (Graves, 1981). More important still, for the purpose of this article, every individual is hypothesized to have all of these levels potentially available, independent of the individual's current stage of development. As a result, each level is associated with its own relevant inner and outer ways of perceiving and knowing.

Multiple levels of being and leadership

Each of the five levels of being provide contexts that shape the appropriateness of response called for by leaders. The correlates to the five levels of being, from an epistemological viewpoint, are: 1) non-dual awareness; 2) awareness of Spirit; 3) awareness of the soul and its content; 4) awareness of images and imagination; and 5) awareness of the sensible or physical world (see Figure 1). Epistemology, as stated earlier, is concerned with the nature of knowledge and with related notions such as truth, belief, and justification. It also deals with how we create knowledge, as well as skepticism about different knowledge claims. Epistemology thus addresses such questions as: 'What is knowledge?' 'What are the processes by which knowledge is acquired?' 'How do we become more aware of both ourselves and the world around us?'

In the subsequent five sections we describe the ontological and epistemological attributes of each level and their corresponding approaches to leadership, starting with the most concrete level (Level V) and proceeding to the progressively more abstract and subtle Levels IV, III, II, and I.

Level V: Leadership in the sensible/physical world

The fifth level of being is the sensible or visible level (see Table 2 for an overview of the five levels of being and types of leadership at each level). Level V is the physical, observable world which is based in the five senses, wherein, epistemologically, a leader creates and transfers knowledge via an active engagement in worldly affairs (see Table 1, bottom line, for names for this level across the six religious traditions). Here the focus is on externally observable phenomena that can be directly measured, or inferred, using the scientific method. Ontologically, individuals are born into and live within a social world that is based on the sensible/physical world (Burrell & Morgan, 1994). This level of being is where most current theory and research on leadership has been conducted and written about to date. Space limitations will preclude a truly exhaustive review of this literature. For overviews of leadership theories on this level, see Daft (2008), Northouse (2007) and Yukl (2006). With this limitation in mind we shall briefly review some of most salient leadership research streams at this level.

The so-called 'Great Man' theory of leadership sought to identify the traits, or distinguishing personal characteristics, of effective leaders (Bass, 1990). Fundamental to this approach is the idea that great leaders are born with particular traits that predispose them to become natural leaders. Although, in general, research has found only a weak relationship between leader traits and success, a large number of personal traits and abilities appear to distinguish effective leaders from less effective leaders and non-leaders. Some distinguishing traits that have been identified include energy and stamina, intelligence, optimism, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and the drive to excel (Bass, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

The behavioral contingency approaches to leadership, rather than identifying the personal traits of an effective leader, argue that leaders should adopt behaviors which are appropriate for the situation to produce organizational effectiveness (Yukl, 2006). Research in this area has sought to uncover the situation-appropriate behaviors, rather than delineate which traits an effective leader possesses. It argues that, since behaviors are more readily learned than traits, those leaders who adopt these behaviors are found to be more effective (see Table 2, column 3, for a delineation of how the criteria for effectiveness will vary depending on the level of being). The

Table 2 Theories of leadership by levels of being

Level of being	Type of leadership theory	Criteria for effectiveness	Relevant works
I The Non-dual (The World of Absolute Mystery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-dual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional love • Absence of separation between 'self' and 'other' 	<p>Wilber (2000a); Kriger & Seng (2005)</p>
II The World of the Spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual • Servant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to relevant others • Are all stakeholders satisfied and taken into account? 	<p>Duschon & Plowman (2005); Fry (2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2008); Benefiel (2005) Greenleaf (1977); Liden et al. (2008)</p>
III The World of the Soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious • Authentic • Ethical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it feel right within the 'heart'? • Moral Consciousness 	<p>Benefiel (2005); Osborne (1970); Toille (1999, 2005); Wilber (2004)</p>
IV The World of Creative Images & Imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charismatic • Transformational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value congruence: fit with values and images 	<p>Bass (1995); Kanungo & Mendonca (1996); Avolio et al. (2004); Avolio & Gardner (2005); Brown (2007); Brown & Trevino (2006); Bass & Steidlmeier (1999); Price (2003)</p>
V The Physical World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trait, behavior, & contingency theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profit • ROI, ROA • Sales growth 	<p>Bass (1990); Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991); House (1996); Uhl-Bien et al. (2007)</p>

behavioral contingency approaches have generally found two factors, people-oriented behaviors and task-oriented behaviors, suggesting that these are fundamental overall behavioral orientations via which leaders meet the needs of followers (Bass, 1990). Appropriate measures of effectiveness at Level V include sales growth, profit growth, return of assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE).

The motivation behind the contingency approaches is to find the appropriate fit between a leader's behavior or style and the organizational conditions. These approaches focus on how leadership, subordinate characteristics and situational elements influence one another (Yukl, 2006). Examples include Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory, the path-goal theory, the Vroom-Jago model, and substitutes for leadership (see Daft, 2008; House, 1996; Northouse, 2007).

One recent emerging contingency theory of leadership called 'complexity leadership theory' focuses on enabling the creative and adaptive capacity of complex adaptive systems (CAS) (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This framework includes three leadership roles: adaptive leadership, administrative leadership and enabling leadership. The three roles partially overlap and encompass behaviors that reflect a dynamic relationship between the more formal administrative functions and the more emergent and informal dynamics of the organization.

In sum, effective leadership, in the behavioral contingency approaches, entails developing appropriate diagnostic skills to discern the characteristics of the tasks, the subordinates, and the organization and then being flexible enough in one's leadership behavior to increase the likelihood of desired effectiveness outcomes.

Level IV: Leadership at the level of images and imagination

The fourth level of being is the level of Images and Active Imagination (see Table 1, second line from the bottom). This is the level of being where reality is socially and personally constructed via the creation and maintenance of vision, values and images. At this level leadership involves the use of images and imagination, primarily through vision and values, to create agreement on a socially constructed reality that motivates followers to achieve higher levels of organizational commitment and performance. The focus here is on the characteristics of the subjective experience of individuals and groups as they relate to the development of awareness and knowledge (Almaas, 2004; Burrell & Morgan, 1994). Out of this level arises the legitimacy and appropriateness of a leader's vision, as well as the ethical and cultural values that individuals and groups should embrace or reject.

Current leadership theories on this level include: 1) transformational; and 2) charismatic leadership. Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability to bring about significant change in both followers and the organization. Transformational leaders generally create a vision of a desired future that gives followers a sense of meaning and purpose that goes beyond their own self-interests for the good of the group or organization. These leaders have a propensity to: 1) develop followers into leaders; and 2) elevate the concerns of followers from lower-level extrinsic needs and rewards to higher-level intrinsic needs and rewards. Many transformational leaders also are found to have charisma, the ability to inspire enthusiasm and receive affection from followers that can motivate them to engage in heroic efforts in order to overcome obstacles.

Charismatic leaders tend to create an atmosphere of change via images of an idealized future and often incur personal risks to influence followers. However, since it tends to be a personal attribute of the leader, this form of leadership also can have potential negative effects, especially if the leader attempts to manipulate or take advantage of follower attributions (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996; Price, 2003).

The transformational and charismatic leadership approaches described above rely on a vision and/or values that facilitate the social construction of a common positive understanding of organizational reality. An effective vision creates images that motivate and energize organizational members, increasing organizational commitment (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Overall, 'Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future' (Kotter, 1996: 68).

As a source of motivation for change, vision serves three important functions: 1) to clarify the overall direction of the group or organization; 2) to encapsulate a larger set of more detailed decisions and aspirations; and 3) to facilitate the coordination of the actions among relevant individuals. A vision that is appropriate to the situation has the potential to energize people, to give meaning to work, and to increase commitment. In sum, vision establishes a direction, sets a standard of excellence and mobilizes people by defining the overall destination via identification of ideals (Daft & Lengel, 1998; Nanus, 1992). Therefore:

P1: A leader operating at the level of Images and Imagination (Level IV) utilizes vision to motivate followers to a greater extent than leaders at Level V.

A salient vision is likely to form the basis for the social construction of an organization's culture as well as the ethical system and core values underlying it. These core values, in turn, are the foundation for relating to

and meeting the expectations of relevant stakeholders (e.g. customers, employees, managers, regulatory agencies). On one level culture consists of visible artifacts such as dress, office layout, ritual, symbols and ceremonies. However, at a deeper level are values, attitudes, and beliefs that are discernable from how people justify and explain what they do (Schein, 2004). It is thus important for leaders to embody the core values that are implied by their vision. Therefore:

P2: A leader operating at the level of the Images and Imagination (Level IV) articulates and leads from a clear set of moral values to a greater extent than leaders at Level V.

It should be noted, however, that the above-mentioned theories at Level IV leave open the possibility that the vision and values of self-serving leaders may result in deception and the exploitation of followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Price, 2003). The field of leadership is still developing a consensus on the values that best result in leadership that enhances the greater good of both leaders and followers for the creation of healthy organizations (Kriger & Hansen, 1999). Conger and Kanungo (1998) argue that most leaders tend to pursue simultaneously both personal and organizational interests. They point to a *dark side* to leadership, where leaders may have a tendency at times towards narcissism, authoritarianism, Machiavellianism, and a high need for personal power. This may be accompanied with lack of inhibition and the creation among followers of dependency, personal identification, and inadequate internalization of appropriate values and beliefs.

Level III: Leadership from the soul

The third level of being is the level of the soul where individual awareness occurs as a localized phenomenon. Ontologically, the soul ‘. . . is the locus of ourselves, the place where we experience ourselves . . . the locus in Reality where we experience the self’ (Almaas, 2004: 20). It is the locus where all of our experiences are integrated into a whole and functions as the vessel that literally contains our inner personal world (Almaas, 2004). Here we use the term soul to refer to the individual self, including all of its elements and dimensions. The self is then defined as that which tends towards enhancing the individual’s overall well-being. It is therefore not separate from what is normally understood as the self and, in fact, includes both a spiritual aspect as well as the more conventional levels of experience.

Many people perceive themselves as independent agents who are the sum total of their personal experiences, thoughts, feelings, sensations, actions and perceptions. Epistemologically, these experiences provide a basis for the

awareness of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and sensations, all of which are temporary, arising and disappearing in a somewhat obscure medium. Such individuals are barely aware of the soul as the locus of experience and aspiration, if at all, and, thus, often do not even think that it exists.

To be conscious at Level III involves the capacity to be aware from moment to moment of our experience, whether thoughts, feelings, body sensations or of the mind itself (Tolle, 1999). Without an understanding of the soul as the locus of felt experience, a person's thinking will tend to focus on the past or on the future, creating a hindrance to being in the present. The individual will then often become trapped in ego-centered experience, where there is an 'experiencer' separated from what is 'experienced' (Osborne, 1970; Tolle, 2005). Each of the major spiritual and religious traditions of the world proposes that without this locus of awareness, individuals will tend to perceive themselves simply as the sum of their thoughts, feelings, emotions and body sensations. Level III awareness is essential for leaders to be in touch with subtle feelings and intuitions that can result in better understanding of the overall context as well as the needs of followers (see Table 1, third line from the bottom for differing terms at this level).

Current leadership theories on Level III include: 1) authentic; and 2) ethical leadership approaches. Avolio and Gardner (2005), drawing from positive psychology, positive organizational behavior, transformational/full-range leadership theory as well as ethical and moral perspective-taking, have created an emerging theory called authentic leadership development (ALD). This theory proposes that there is a 'root construct' underlying all forms of positive leadership. In authentic leadership development organizational leaders facilitate processes wherein both leaders and followers gain self-awareness and establish open, transparent, trusting and genuine relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; May et al., 2003).

The advantages proposed by proponents of ALD include: 1) the development of leaders who have purpose, values and integrity, and who genuinely relate to an inclusive set of relevant stakeholders; 2) the fostering of greater self-awareness; 3) the building of optimism, confidence and hope; 4) the promotion of transparent relationships and decision-making that in turn build trust and commitment among followers; and 5) the nurturing of inclusive structures and positive ethics that result in moral organizational cultures.

Ethical leadership is a still-emerging construct that attempts to explain how people actually perceive ethical leadership. This theory investigates both the antecedents and outcomes of ethical beliefs and perceptions (Brown, 2007; Brown & Trevino, 2006). Ethical leadership is based on three factors: 1) the leader's moral character; 2) the ethical legitimacy of the leader's vision

and values; and 3) the morality of the choices and actions that leaders engage in. In this view, leaders and followers are ideally willing to have their behavior evaluated against generally accepted values that are part of the larger society or social group (Fry, 2005a).

The greatest obstacle to experiencing the reality of Level III is over-emphasis on the thinking mind, which results in thoughts and feelings becoming repetitive, in turn resulting in inability to shift and adapt as external conditions change. This overemphasis on repetitive thoughts and feelings also prevents leaders from accessing the inner stillness that is necessary for deeper awareness at Levels III and II. It also creates a false conception of self:

Identification with your mind creates an opaque screen of concepts, labels images, words, judgments, and definitions that blocks all true relationship. It comes between you and yourself, between you and your fellow men and women . . . It is this screen of thought that creates the illusion of separateness, the illusion that there is you and a separate 'other'. You then forget that underneath the level of physical appearances and separate forms, you are one with all that is.

(Tolle, 1999: 17)

Over-identification with the thinking mind decreases when attention comes to rest in the present (Keating, 1999; Tolle, 1999). It is thus important for leaders at Level III to develop and refine the ability to be present by withdrawing attention from past memories and future imaginings, whenever they are not needed. This process of becoming progressively more aware of the present, and the practices that increase such awareness, are a major focus of the world's spiritual traditions (Benefiel, 2005; Kriger & Seng, 2005; Osborne, 1970; Tolle, 1999, 2005; Wilber, 2004). Deeper investigation of related areas such as presence (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Senge et al., 2007; Tolle, 1999, 2005), mindfulness (Davidson et al., 2003; Feldman et al., 2007; Hirst, 2003), and meditation (Cianciosi & Kornfield, 2001; Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006; La Forge, 2004; Manocha, 2001; Scharmer, 2007) are important subjects that are currently being researched that are relevant for Level III but are beyond the scope of the current article.

Being at Level III can trigger ever more subtle programs of change and transformation at both the individual and organizational levels. 'The more the potential manifests, the wider and deeper is our experience, and the more expanded the sense of who we are and what we can do' (Almaas, 2004: 109). Consciously leading from the soul thus involves a continual process of awakening to the awareness that we are more than the sum total of our thoughts, emotions, body sensations and overall mind content.

As an individual leader aspires to realize progressively higher levels, the spiritual (Level II) and non-dual (Level I), the soul progressively comes to be aware of more hidden elements of the psyche. This, in turn, allows the leader to realize successively deeper and more refined states of awareness (Almaas, 2004; Wilber, 2000a). In this process leaders operating from Level III may experience what some have termed the 'dark night of the soul', which though appearing at the time to be negative often results in greater moral sensitivity and a concurrent decrease in egocentrism (Benefiel, 2005; May, 2004). Many leaders come to experience a subtle surrendering of the ego, reside at this level briefly, and then often are found to regress back to more ego-centric states. However, as leaders continue to refine their inner experience they develop, along with the capacity to be more fully present, increased freedom from negative emotions, such as anger, resentment and fear. Leaders who are predominantly at Level III are hypothesized to be more sensitive to the needs of others, especially those they serve in their organizations (Benefiel, 2005). Therefore:

P3: A leader operating at the level of the soul (Level III) is significantly less egocentric and more other-centered, compassionate and aware of the difficulties facing followers than leaders at Levels IV and V.

P4: A leader operating at the level of the soul (Level III) is significantly more present and less influenced by negative emotional states than leaders at Levels IV and V.

Level II: Leadership from the level of spirit

Spirit is the vital animating force traditionally believed to be, in the world's spiritual and religious traditions, the intangible, life-affirming force that is present in all human beings (Anderson, 2000; Moxley, 2000). *Spirit* is that aspect of one's being that gives rise to the possibility of self-transcendence and deepening connectedness with all things in the universe. Deepening awareness of the Spirit often involves cultivation of inner practices such as contemplation, prayer and meditation, which serve to refine individual and social identity so as to include the 'other' (Benefiel, 2005; Duschon & Plowman, 2005; Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992). The focus at Level II is on leadership through love and service to others. Recognized exemplars of leadership at Level II include Mother Theresa, Gandhi, Abraham and Saint Francis. Very few organizational leaders consistently are at Level II, though organizational leaders are hypothesized to lead from this level as a temporary state.

Reave (2005) in a review of over 150 scholarly articles found eight areas that have implications for establishing the conceptual domain of

spiritual leadership (see also Dent et al., 2005). Reave also found a clear consistency between enacting spiritual values and overall leadership effectiveness and argues that values that have long been considered spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, have an effect on leadership success. Duschon and Plowman (2005) found work unit performance to be positively related to the presence of work unit spirituality. Work unit spirituality, in turn, is associated with the leader's ability to enable workers to experience meaningful work and a deeper sense of community.

Current leadership theories that foster workplace spirituality include servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998; Liden et al., 2008), which holds that the primary purpose of business should be to create a positive impact on its employees and relevant communities. The servant leader brings together both service and meaning. As leaders become more attuned to and encourage basic spiritual values (see Table 3), they serve not only organizational members but also the larger society. Servant leadership consists of helping others discover their inner spirit, earning and keeping the trust of others, valuing service over self-interest, and role modeling effective listening. The results of servant leadership are hypothesized to include ongoing

Table 3 Underlying values of spiritual leadership

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1. *Trust* – Choosing relationships where one has faith in and relies on the character, ability, strength and truthfulness of others.
 2. *Forgiveness/Acceptance* – Not being burdened by failed expectations, gossip, jealousy, hatred, or revenge. Instead, choosing forgiveness through acceptance and in gratitude.
 3. *Integrity* – Behaving consistent with one's espoused values – 'walking the talk'.
 4. *Honesty* – Being truthful and basing one's actions on it.
 5. *Courage* – Having the firmness of mind, as well as the mental and moral strength, to prevail in the face of extreme difficulty, opposition, threat, danger, hardship or fear.
 6. *Humility* – Being modest, courteous, and without false pride. Not being jealous, rude or arrogant nor setting oneself above others.
 7. *Kindness* – Being warm-hearted, considerate, humane and sympathetic to the feelings and needs of others.
 8. *Compassion* – Perceiving and understanding the feelings of others. When others are suffering, doing what one can to help decrease it.
 9. *Patience* – Bearing trials and/or suffering calmly and without complaint. Remaining constant to a purpose or task in the face of obstacles or discouragement. Not quitting in spite of opposition from others or discouragement.
 10. *Excellence* – Doing one's best and recognizing, rejoicing in, and celebrating the efforts of others.
 11. *Happiness* – Perceiving daily activities and work as intrinsic sources of joy and inner balance.
-

organizational healing, the creation of value for both external and internal communities, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and high levels of ethical behavior (Liden et al., 2008). The most effective leadership in this view is not provided by those who seek leadership roles but rather by those who have a compelling vision and desire to serve others first.

Another still-emerging Level II theory, spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003, 2005a, 2008), was developed using an intrinsic motivation model that incorporates vision, hope, faith, altruistic love, theories of workplace spirituality, and spiritual well-being. The purpose of spiritual leadership, in this view, is to: 1) create vision and value congruence across the individual, team, and organization levels; 2) enhance spiritual well-being through the calling and membership of both leaders and followers; and 3) foster higher levels of employee well-being, corporate social responsibility, and organizational performance. This entails:

- Creating a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders wherein leaders and followers experience a sense of calling, that is, life has meaning, purpose, and makes a difference; and
- Establishing an organizational culture based on prescribed values of altruistic love and other spiritual values, where leaders and followers have a sense of membership, feel understood and appreciated, and have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for *both* themselves and others (see Table 3 for a list of values enacted by spiritual leaders).

Therefore:

P5: A leader operating at the level of the Spirit (Level II) manifests the virtue of altruistic love in serving others to a significantly greater extent than leaders at Levels III, IV and V.

P6: A leader operating at the level of the Spirit (Level II) experiences greater positive psychological and spiritual well-being and empowers and intrinsically motivates followers to a significantly greater extent than leaders at Levels III, IV and V.

Level I: Leadership from the non-dual

From true emptiness, wondrous being.

(Suzuki Roshi, 1970)

The most inclusive level of being is the non-dual, in which there is only a Transcendent Unity that is beyond all qualification. This level is beyond all dualities and sense of otherness. The non-dual thus embraces both pure being as well as pure emptiness. Logically, this level of being appears to involve a contradiction; however, all of the world's spiritual traditions refer in one way or another to this level of being that is so inclusive that it includes both pure emptiness and pure fullness or plenitude. Level I is thus the integration of all of the previous levels of being into an Absolute Oneness, which is beyond all distinctions, including the distinction between transcendence and worldly immanence.

This non-dual oneness lies at the heart of all of the major religious and spiritual traditions (Kriger & Seng, 2005). Underlying this level is a central theme: the goal of living in this world is to know the Absolute, through the transcendence of all opposites, and to realize Self-actualization. A leader operating at this level is aware of an infinite range of possibilities existing in each moment. Leadership at Level I, the highest level of being-centered leadership, is one where leaders respond to each situation as it arises within a unique context and configuration of forces in the moment. Underlying Level I is a central theme where the goal of the leader is to know the Absolute through the transcendence of all opposites.

Level I, as the highest level of being, is the source of inspiration that directly affects and infuses Levels II and III, and indirectly Levels IV and V. Level I is thus proposed to be the source of both spiritual perception at Level II as well as the ultimate source of moral sensitivity at Level III. Moral sensitivity is then hypothesized to influence the formation of requisite leader values, which in turn, are hypothesized to directly influence leader vision on behavior. In essence, leaders, depending on their level of inner development, will have varying aspects of spiritual perception and moral sensitivity that require further inner work. Such a theory of leadership encourages leaders to understand that their inspiration and creativity, as well as moral standards, are the product of other levels of being, often only partially perceived or understood (Smith, 1991).

In Figure 1, the non-dual variable identified as '?' is variously referred to as 'Yahweh', 'God', 'Allah', 'Shiva', 'Buddha Nature' or the 'Tao', depending on the name as adopted in the respective religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. In Buddhism it is referred to as that which is Uncreated and Unborn or *bodhi*. Thus, we are using a '?' to refer to that which is ontologically prior to and beyond names and uncreated, yet the source of all creation. There are several possible explanations, where the '?' is either: 1) a 'socially constructed reality' that is created by those with religious beliefs, aspirations or experiences to make

sense of 'reality'; 2) an 'emerging reality' that is co-created between human beings and 'God'; or 3) a 'Being' that is real unto itself. We posit that the salience of the '?' proposed in Figure 1 is not dependent on which of these three interpretations is the veridical meaning of what is signified by the '?' since it is the constructed and lived sense-making of the '?' that infuses meaning, inner perception and deeper values in leaders.

However, this '?' from a spiritual viewpoint is not simply endogenous to the individual leader, since, according to each of the religious traditions, it is the very source of inner perception and belief. It is thus both endogenous to the leader, as well as exogenous, by being the totality of the external environment as well. Thus, context at Level I is both internal and external to the individual leader. The former is 'the God within' in Christianity and the inner Spirit of G-d in Judaism. In the words of Ibn 'Arabi, one of Islam's greatest philosopher-mystics: '. . . if you contemplate Him through Himself, it is He who is contemplating Himself through Himself . . .' ('Arabi, 1975: 57).

From a normal science research perspective this '?' becomes highly problematic to anyone who is a researcher from a structural-functionalist paradigm (see Burrell & Morgan, 1994; Wilber, 2000a), since it is not a variable that is controllable in any scientific sense. A graphic expression of Level I non-dual leadership is found in the Christian tradition in the following: 'But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well' (Matthew, 5: 39-40). In such value-based non-dual leadership the leader not only embraces the apparent 'other', but advocates going still further: 'If you are forced to go one mile, go with him two miles' (Matthew, 5: 41). Examples of Level I leaders would be Jesus, the Buddha or Krishna, respectively from the Christian, Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

Although a comprehensive review is beyond the scope of this article, there are some examples of recently living individuals who are likely Level I leaders. However, few, if any, reside or work within organizational contexts. Thus, Level I leadership is a stage of being that is more to be aspired to rather than a current reality within organizational settings. For example, Ramana Maharshi, an Indian sage of the 20th century (Osbourne, 1970), emphasized in his teachings that the point where all religions converge is in the realization that God is everything and everything is God. This is the essence of the non-dual paradigm. He further maintained that this should not be in a mystical, symbolic or allegorical sense but rather in a most literal and practical sense. Obviously this level of being is at the limits of what most individuals in the workplace can even imagine, let alone actualize in their

lives or jobs. Nonetheless, being-centered leadership provides us with an indication and description of what leaders can become or actualize at the highest level.

Tolle (1999, 2005) provides a more recent characterization of the Level I leader where he states that being, at the highest level, can be felt, but by its nature cannot be understood fully by the discursive mind. To be at the level of the non-dual involves abiding in a state of 'feeling-realization', which is a natural state of non-separation with Being. When situations arise that need to be dealt with, appropriate actions become spontaneously clear as they arise out of deep present-moment awareness. As Tolle (1999) states:

The beginning of freedom is the realization that you are not the possessing entity – the thinker. Knowing this enables you to observe the entity. The moment you start watching the thinker, a higher level of consciousness becomes activated. You then begin to realize that there is a vast realm of intelligence beyond thought, that thought is only a tiny aspect of intelligence. You also realize that all the things that really matter – beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace – arise from beyond the mind.

(p. 18)

Therefore:

P7: A leader operating at the level of the non-dual (Level I) manifests unconditional regard for the other as oneself (whether a follower or a leader of an opposing organization or group) to a greater extent than leaders at Levels II, III, IV and V.

P8: A leader at the level of the non-dual (Level I) intuitively needs of the group more quickly than leaders at Levels II, III, IV and V.

P9: A leader at the level of the non-dual (Level I) fosters equality and makes less of a distinction between leader and follower to a greater extent than leaders at Levels II, III, IV and V.

To reiterate: the manifestation of unconditional regard for the other as oneself and the immediate intuition of the needs of the group as a result of the merging of 'self' and 'other' are likely to be rarely observed in organizational settings. Thus, the non-dual level of being and awareness is to be aspired to and realized usually via much inner work and provides a vision of what leadership can become at the highest level.

Discussion

Our objective in this article has been to show how differing levels of being can provide levels of context for a more complete understanding of effective leadership. As discussed in the previous section, these levels of being are *holonic* in that they constitute collectively an organic whole, where each higher level is more encompassing than the ontological levels below. The downward arrow in Figure 1 indicates the ontological unfolding from more subtle to progressively coarser levels of being. For the five levels of being there is a corresponding epistemological level by which leaders can develop over time a more integrative awareness of options available that can result in increased leadership effectiveness (Kriger & Seng, 2005). The upward left-side arrow in Figure 1 signifies the developmental journey of leaders as they increase their awareness of more subtle levels of being as contexts within which their leadership takes place, along with increasingly more encompassing indicators of effectiveness (see Table 2).

In proposing a being-centered approach to leadership, we take the view that a human being dynamically resides in and responds to an ever-evolving open system of levels of being. At the highest level of being, an individual, whether a leader or not, actualizes all the levels of being that reside at each of the lower levels. Throughout the preceding is a non-dual orientation and concurrent belief that leaders can aspire to and reach Self-realization, a state of non-separation from being in its most inclusive sense. At this level of being, it is posited by all of the world's spiritual traditions that the experience of duality, that is, of separation, will dissolve. Therefore, a leader living and behaving from the non-dual level would tend not to see a distinction between the 'leader' and the 'led'. From the non-dual level of being, followership and leadership are simply labels that overly constrain the possible role sets of individuals. In the ideal, individuals have the potential to enter roles as needed to enact leadership in specific moment-by-moment situational contexts.

Being-centered leadership: Shifting from 'having' and 'doing' to 'being'

Levels I, II, and III provide differing ontological contexts and indications for the discovery and creation of meaning, that is, how to lead in a world where organizational members seek to live true to their individual values. This ongoing challenge is undertaken within a larger set of organizational values that often is in tension with the values and beliefs that are unique to the individual. Thus, one of the major challenges, which many organizational leaders face today, is the enactment of leadership with deep inner meaning for both

themselves and their followers. This is related to the ontological level that we form our worldview around. Stated simply, it is a question of whether leadership is based on ‘having’, ‘doing’, or ‘being’. ‘Having’ and ‘doing’ are constructs that are central to the ego-based self. Unfortunately, the direct experience and understanding of ‘being’ has atrophied in the world today, largely owing to an overemphasis on ‘observables’. Essentially, if something is not directly observable or measurable, behavioral scientists tend to question or even deny its ontological status. However, a residual vestige of an earlier familiarity with the concept of being is that we still call ourselves, in English, human *beings* – not human *doings* or human *havings*. This vestigial language perhaps reflects a direct experience and understanding of being that has existed for centuries, if not millennia, within most traditional cultures.

On one level this may appear to be a somewhat trivial observation. However, upon closer examination of the extant organizational leadership theories it is clear that most organizational leadership theories are based either on: 1) *having* the right skills, competencies, resources or personality traits appropriate to the task; or 2) *doing* (behaving or expressing) activities at an appropriate time for the situation (situational leadership of one sort or another; see Yukl, 2006, chapter 8 for an excellent overview), rather than incorporating levels of *being* as the basis for theory.

By shifting from leadership based on *having* and *doing* (respectively, Levels IV and V) to leadership that is based on Levels I, II, and III (differing levels of spiritual *being*), it is likely that some behaviorally oriented researchers may have difficulty understanding what such leadership conceptually consists of. This in part is because Level I, the ‘non-dual’, is epistemologically beyond concepts *per se* and *as se* (‘Affifi, 1939). For example, ontologically, in the Judaic tradition, leadership is not primarily a question of having the right traits, competencies and behaviors for the situation, but a question of acting out of and being in touch with the source of meaning that the leadership is drawing inspiration from and directing individuals in the community towards (Pava, 2003). Researchers have recently argued that this similarly holds for Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism (Kriger & Seng, 2005).

Leadership, according to a non-dual worldview, manifests through progressively more coarse levels of *being*, where each higher level of being is ontologically prior to the visible world (Wilber, 2000a, 2000b). This is reflected in Figure 1 by the downward arrow on the right side of the five levels of being, labeled as ontological unfolding or descent. According to Judaism, Islam and Christianity human beings draw their being-ness from God (or ‘?’ in our model), the ultimate source of meaning. These three modes of having,

doing and being are also mirrored in progressively more subtle forms of prayer and contemplation. These include: 1) prayer for wealth, health, or a partner (having); 2) prayer that something will be done (doing); or 3) prayer without an intended object or action, to be simply in deep inner connectedness with some aspect of the One Being, such as love, truth, peace or compassion.

Implications for leadership development

In most leader development processes there is a sharp distinction that is usually made between leaders and followers. A main focus is often placed on having individual intrapersonal skills and abilities, such as self-awareness (e.g. emotional awareness and self confidence), self-regulation (e.g. self-control, trustworthiness, adaptability), and self-motivation (e.g. commitment, initiative, optimism). In the case of leader development, the emphasis typically is on individual-based knowledge, skills and abilities associated with a formal leadership role (Day, 2001). From the perspective of our model, being-centered leader development first requires that a leader values honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to seek and embody higher levels of being. Leaders need to be able to engage in other-centered values and attitudes that build the competence needed to form accurate self-assessments and to use these self-understandings to effectively perform in increasingly complex leadership roles.

It is especially important for a being-centered leader to engage in a continual quest for greater awareness, consciousness, and experienced oneness with Being. At a minimum this involves several key spiritual practices, which usually include: 1) knowing oneself; 2) respecting and honoring the beliefs of others; 3) being as trusting as one can be of others; and 4) maintaining a regular inner practice, such as meditation or constant prayer (Kurth, 2003). These practices are found to be necessary for the development of well-being, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Fry, 2005a; Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; Ryff & Singer, 2001).

Effective long-term being-centered leadership is not just based on the level of being of the individual leader but also consists of an ongoing social process that engages all relevant stakeholders enabling people to work together in deeper and more meaningful ways (Day, 2001). Leadership from this perspective involves building the capacity for better individual and collective adaptability across a wide range of situations (Hooijberg et al., 1999). In this view leadership involves developing the interpersonal competence to build trust, respect, and ultimately organizational commitment and performance. Each person is then potentially a leader in the right context. Being-centered leadership is thus concerned with not only the

characteristics of effective leadership but also how to develop as a leader in increasingly subtle contexts.

One of the necessary conditions for the creation and maintenance of workplace spirituality is an inner life that is nourished by a calling for the transcendence of self within an organization or community that is built on spiritual values such as altruistic love (Fry, 2005b). Overall, we argue that progressively more subtle levels of being require leaders that have a greater commitment to: 1) developing greater awareness of one's inner life; 2) a vision of service to key stakeholders; and 3) altruistic values based on reciprocal trust and respect.

In sum, organizational leaders who are conscious of *being* need to role model this awareness for relevant others around them. Day (2001) notes that the practices of 360-degree feedback, executive coaching and mentoring, and action learning are all recognized as beneficial for effective leadership development. These practices can also be used to develop being-centered leadership in organizations.

Implications for future research

Researchers who have been trained primarily in the Western behavioral science traditions, such as behavioral psychology or industrial organization economics, are likely to be uncomfortable with the use of concepts such as 'spirituality', 'God', or the 'transcendent' because these terms are outside the normal paradigmatic lens of their discipline. This discomfort is understandable given that normal science, for most behavior-anchored scientists, is generally based on what is directly observable or on the artifacts of behavior, and questions the validity and usefulness of theories based on phenomena that are only subjectively observable, that is, residing within the individual (Fry, 2003).

Being-centered leadership is, in part, a refinement of the still-emerging spiritual leadership construct. For example, when researchers (e.g. Fry, 2003, 2005a, 2008) use the term 'spiritual leadership' they are referring to leadership at multiple ontological levels, usually Levels II, and III, and sometimes Level IV. Thus, one of the intended contributions of the currently proposed theory is to give future researchers a more fine-grained theory and better way of understanding the construct of spiritual leadership as well as the contexts in which it is applicable. The current model, in this vein, distinguishes between spiritual and servant leadership (Level II), on the one hand, and transformational, charismatic, authentic, and ethical leadership on the other (Levels III and IV).

In addition, research on several fronts is needed to establish the validity of being-centered leadership theory. Only then can it be applied as a model

of leadership for the fostering of systemic change and transformation. For example, studies are needed that incorporate effectiveness measures from multiple sources for each of the five levels of being (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Individual outcomes, such as an increase in the experience of joy, peace, and serenity, are hypothesized to increase as higher levels of being are actualized and should be the subject of research. Finally, the conceptual and empirical distinctions between being-centered leadership theory and other leadership theories, such as spiritual leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, positive leadership, and servant leadership need still further refinement (Fry & Matherly, 2006; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Fry & Whittington, 2005b; Fry et al., 2005, 2007).

There are also several other implications ripe for exploration. First, as one moves ontologically up from the lower levels, from Level V to IV to III to II to I, the leadership issues and dynamics become increasingly more subtle, requiring greater perceptual sensitivity. Second, the moral judgment of leaders is hypothesized to evolve as one changes the ontological subtlety with progression to higher levels. Finally, the spiritual contingency models of leadership, that are anchored in several millennia of wisdom traditions (e.g. Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism), are ongoing natural experiments that arise out of differing spatio-temporal cultural contexts. All of these traditions are found to converge in terms of values and underlying paradigm (Kriger & Seng, 2005) but have differing terms, symbols and customs reflecting differences in culture and history (see Table 1).

Conclusion

Returning to our opening question as to ‘what would leadership theory look like if it was based on *being* rather than *doing* or *having* . . .?’ we find that being-centered leadership, at root, concerns a leader’s quest for personal self-transcendence, along with simultaneous service to others, irrespective of the level of being of those ‘others’. Recent developments in the field of workplace spirituality, character ethics, positive psychology and spiritual leadership are converging and finding consensus on the internal processes, altruistic values, attitudes, and behavior necessary for positive human well-being. From this vantage point being-centered leadership has the potential to provide a truly dynamic, multi-level contingency theory of leadership that indicates where and how the highest levels of self-actualization can be lived and consistently enacted by leaders, whether in organizations or more widely in society.

Contingency leadership, as currently conceptualized, is a theory that focuses almost solely on Level V, the plane of the physical and sensible. This

generally accepted leadership approach advocates that leaders understand the characteristics of the external context, the needs of followers and the task requirements, and then enact the leadership behaviors appropriate for the specific context for effectiveness to result. We have proposed and developed the concept of being-centered leadership in order to incorporate differing levels of being, along with advocating appropriate indicators of effectiveness for each level. Such a theory implies the eventual removal of unnecessary dualities, including the often emphasized duality between leadership and followership. As such, the theory also attempts to begin to bridge the observed gap across religious and spiritual worldviews of leadership via a multi-level model of being. Being-centered leadership argues against the efficacy of strict hierarchy as the basis for effective leadership and organization. The proposed theory of being-centered leadership implies a vision of service to all relevant stakeholders via altruistic values and attitudes. In this theory all organizational participants have the potential to be leaders as their level of being increases, by enacting appropriate roles and behaviors dynamically, as the situation or context changes.

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Notes

- 1 We note that 72 percent of the world's population, 4.6 billion people out of a total world population of 6.4 billion in 2004, were members and practitioners of the belief and value systems of the Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist religions. More precisely, according to the *2004 Encyclopedia Britannica book of the year* there were 4.353 billion members of differing religions in the world in mid-2003. There was a total of 149 million atheists and 784 million non-religious people (figures rounded) resulting in 82 percent of the world's population believing in or following a religious or spiritual tradition. If we assume that a similar ratio of religious believers to non-believers exists for employees in organizations, then it is likely that the topic of spiritual leadership in general is far more salient to organizational leadership research than is currently acknowledged by researchers. If we, as social scientists, are to understand and explain the overall determinants of effective leadership in organizations, it is incumbent upon us to understand the beliefs, values, and paradigms that to varying degrees form the epistemological and ontological foundations and shape the cognitions, beliefs and behavior of more than 80 percent of the human population on the planet.

- 2 For example, Buddhism, in part, grows out of the earlier Hindu ontology, and Christianity and Islam, at the paradigmatic level, are highly cognate with aspects of the earlier Judaic ontology, especially the Abrahamic construct of monotheism (Kriger & Seng, 2005; Kung, 1992).

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Louis (Jody) Fry is a Professor of Management in the College of Business Administration at Tarleton State University, Central Texas. He has previously published articles in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Human Relations*, *Organization Science*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Leadership Quarterly*, and *Academy of Management Review*. He is a co-editor of the *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion*, the founder of the International Institute for Spiritual Leadership (<http://www.iispiritualleadership.com/>), and on the editorial review board of *Leadership Quarterly*. His current interests are centered on maximizing the triple bottom line through spiritual leadership.

[E-mail: fry@tarleton.edu]

Mark Kriger is Professor of Strategic Management and Leadership at the Norwegian School of Management in Oslo, Norway and Visiting Professor at Alliant International University in Los Angeles, California. He has a doctorate in Business Administration from Harvard University and is the author of numerous published articles in the areas of strategy process and leadership, which include the *Academy of Management Journal* ('Structure and meaning of organizational vision'), *The Leadership Quarterly* ('Leadership with inner meaning'), *Sloan Management Review* ('The hidden side of organizational leadership'), and the *Strategic Management Journal* on boards of directors. He is on the editorial review boards of the *Journal of Strategy and Management*, *Leadership Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion*. His consulting and research interests are in the areas of executive leadership, strategy implementation, and the creation of value, especially in technology intensive industries.

[E-mail: mark.kriger@bi.no]