

# The Spiritually Intelligent Leader

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The most important thing to say about spiritual intelligence is that we humans have it in abundance. The challenge however is gaining access to it and using it effectively. Why it is a challenge is based on man's need to control his own destiny from his personality which has increasingly honoured the human mind but not the human spirit. The human spirit is the seat of its own intelligence.

Leadership is a quality belonging to all people. Leadership describes an energetic force a person has to forge ahead, to lean into the future, co-constructing reality as we meet it. There is a 'tipping point' which connects a person in his immediate and emerging reality. This quality allows a person to live between two worlds; the physical world and the metaphysical (imaginal) world. There is no doubt that we are capable of moving between these two worlds (Corbin, 1972, Heron, 1992). The capacity of the soul to inhabit both these domains is part of the physiology (or dynamic functioning) of the soul<sup>1</sup> and is an essential part of our spiritual nature. Spiritual intelligence is experienced within its own universe, where that universe holds our cognitive and emotional intelligence as well as many other forms of intelligence.

How to access our spiritual intelligence can be described under many strategies and spiritual practices, the most significant one being intentionality, by which I mean our Will. Intentionality is a philosophical concept attempting to describe the psychical direction the soul takes. In this respect, intentionality is a characteristic of psychical phenomenon, the phenomenon being the soul's natural tendency to reach out, to connect with its own form reflected in the environment. Intentionality does not mean focusing on an object but rather a reaching out, to create the uncreated; manifest the un-manifest, and all for the greater good.

Spiritual presence is a quality and property of the spiritual universe. It is the inhabiting of the psyche in the imaginal realm. This form of consciousness can only be experienced if we move through the personal self to the spiritual self that is part of the Divine Ground.

## How to encounter the Divine Ground

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<sup>1</sup> Soul in this context means the containment of the energy fields sometimes called astral, causal and subtle energy fields- or put more simply, our Essence or Higher Self).

Many mystics and seers would say that it is the imaginal world that bridges the sensing world to the Divine Intelligence, sometimes referred to as the Divine Ground. The imaginal world is the place of soul-development and divine alchemy. Our part in this creative process of soul development is to be receptive to these deeper layers of consciousness that is the imaginal realm: to find ways of cultivating the skill of 'thinning' the perceptual layers that divide the imaginal from our normal ways of perceiving, and divide the imagine world from Divine Intelligence. The reason for thinning the perceptual veils is based on the assertion that human beings long for union with the Divine Creator, of which we are a part and this can only happen through the deeper connection into the imaginal and into the Divine Ground.

### **Strategies for developing/ evolving your spiritual intelligence**

A deep inquiry process is called for that moves through the layers of the social personality to the existential and spiritual layers of our human nature.

- **Exercise: Deeper aspects of focusing work.** Listen deeply to the messages in your mind/body telling you to move on, to grow psychologically and spiritually. Ask existential questions about your own purpose for being in this world and how you are of service to others. Attempt to move from the formless world to the formed world, and from the formed to the formless world (*pure consciousness*) which is possible with in the imaginal realm. (Corbin 1972)

An understanding is required of the pre-reflective, reflective and post reflective states that form part of the human experience and therefore the human personality. Spiritual intelligence and therefore spiritual leadership sits within the post reflective state. (Welwood in Hart et al 2000)

- **Exercise: mapping where you are on the continuum of pre-reflective – reflective and post-reflective states.** Become deeply reflective about your own assumptions, beliefs, and motivations. Do this with the intention of holding fewer and fewer personal assumptions, beliefs, and values as precious and part of your identity. Go for a contemplative walk, contemplative swims, and meditate. Do bodywork such as dancing, tai chi, cycling. The idea is to strip yourself of social conditioning that fixes you; these are mental fixtures that make us rigid; keeps us in our psychic prison. Personal detachment for the greater good should be your motto.

The intention is to deconstruct rigid psychic structures and create a fluid, flexible psychic space that we step into and co-create reality as it comes to meet us.

The spiritually intelligent leader understands the role of political and social rhetoric that sees leadership as 'serving the head' that requires social submission of the masses. Spiritual intelligence sees past the many faces of leadership, whether transactional, relational or existential and the effects such leadership has to the essence of Beingness itself in communities and in organisations.

- **Exercise: Cultural Creatives' 'activism'** Create a peer learning group with others who have the same and more advanced leadership styles. Support and challenge

each other to be continually flexible in thinking, feeling and behaving. Give honest constructive feedback. Change your communication style to appreciative inquiry. Torbert's 7-stages of leadership development (Rooke & Torbert 2005) explore the upper stages of leadership as strategist and alchemist, with the alchemist situated in the spiritual dimension of leadership. The alchemist understands and works with actus et potentia.

**Actus et potentia** – terms straight out of Aristotle and Plato before him. It is to do with the continuum between the Formless and Form, the formless from the spiritual universe given form in the physical universe. But equally the universe as formless matter given form in physical structures. Potentia means an aptitude to be...; a becoming, or coming into being (formless with the capacity to be form). Actus means the fulfillment of such as capacity. Potentia refers to what is to become, which at present only exists as a germ to be evolved; actus refers to what is the completed reality. Potentia is the determinable being, actus is the determined being. The importance of understanding such concepts cannot be understated as it makes sense of 'walking between two worlds'. This energetic, dynamic, force is the force one surfs when working in Presence, which for me, is spiritual intelligence-in-action.

### **Presence**

To understand spiritual presence one must understand the relationship between the soul's journey in the imaginal world and its connection with Divine Presence (Ground). There are many theories and spiritual traditions which explain this relationship but here I will offer a non-religious description. Heron, a humanistic author writing on the nature of presence states:

"These three things - commitment of soul, charisma and bearing - all go together to make up presence. The result is a transfiguration of human expression in this world by potency in another world. It is as if the person is living, breathing, being and moving in two worlds at once; is in conscious command of their expression in physical space and in ka space at the same time. Hence the sense of a visitor, an entrant from the other world into this."

This transfiguration is transformation of a particular type, meaning a change in psychic state. A state is an ontologically real psychic state or energy system, with its own intelligence, emotions and behaviours particular to that state, with spiritual intelligence in the driving seat, guiding all energies for the greater good. The Alchemic generates social transformations and integrates material, spiritual and societal transformations (Torbert 2005) through the medium of this transformed state of Presence. The main characteristics of such a leader has been explored and written about since and even before Plato's time and now called virtue ethics.

### **Virtue Ethics**

The characteristics we are looking for are: an excellent virtuous person who has practical and moral wisdom and fosters happiness or human flourishing. A virtue is “habitual excellence”. It is a disposition practiced at all times, regardless of life’s challenges. The virtue of perseverance is needed for all the other virtues to work since it is a habit of character and must be practiced continuously in order for the person to maintain himself in virtue.

Tillich talks about virtue as: “The power of being is identified with virtue and virtue consequently, with essential nature. Virtue is the power of acting exclusively according to one’s own true nature. And the degree of virtue is the degree to which someone is striving for and able to affirm one’s own being. Self-affirmation, is so to speak, virtue altogether. But self-affirmation is the affirmation of one’s essential being, and the knowledge of one’s essential being is mediated through reason, the power of the soul to have adequate ideas. Therefore to act unconditionally out of virtue, is the same as to act out of the guidance of reason, to affirm one’s essential being or true nature. (Tillich 1952, 21) For Tillich, reason means moral reason.

Making the connection between the spiritually intelligent leader working out of the Ground of Being, that is, a virtuous leader is easy when one considers the main characteristics of the virtuous person:

- Wisdom and Knowledge: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective
- Courage: bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality
- Humanity: Love, kindness, social intelligence
- Justice: citizenship, fairness, leadership
- Temperance: forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, self-regulation
- Transcendence: appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality.

Notes on Virtue Ethics adapted from Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle 350 BC, translated by W. D. Ross.

The spiritually intelligent leader is a morally developed person, longing to bring the spiritually formless into form, wanting to bring the Divine Ground into the material dimension for the greater good of all.

(Author’s note: This article is by necessity brief to stay within the word count recommended. Fuller accounts can be obtained by reading the references.

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